

vol. [٩]

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

المجلد [٩]



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

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the chapter of

at-Tawba

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

Every chapter of the Noble Quran begins with a *basmalah* which is ‘*Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim* (In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, and the Giver of Mercy)’, but the chapter of *at-Tawba* is the only exception. Quran exegetes have had several opinions all attempting to explain the reason behind this exception.

Some have said that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the one who specified the beginning of every chapter of the Quran, did not mark the beginning of this chapter by a *basmalah*. However, this is inaccurate, for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to specify the place of each verse within each chapter of the Quran.

The Noble Quran is comprised of a hundred and fourteen chapters, all beginning with a *basmalah* except for *at-Tawba*. This should draw our attention that starting chapters of the Quran with ‘In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy’ is not a matter of routine, but it is for a purpose even if we do not realize that purpose by our limited minds. It is essential to underline that everything in the Quran was thus revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by Allah *Glorified is He*. This includes the *basmalah*, the name of every chapter, order of the chapters, and the verses of every chapter, etc. This is exactly how Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received the Quran from Jibril (Gabriel) by the command of Allah. We know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* revised the Quran with Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* once a year in the month of Ramadan and revised it with him twice in the year of the Prophet’s death. Everything in the Quran is a direct Revelation from Allah and not the outcome of anyone’s reasoning.

An aspect of the greatness of Islam is that it calls people to think, yet meanwhile just submit to what Allah commands even if they do not see the wisdom behind it. We may find things that are difficult for the mind to comprehend. In this case, the role of faith comes to prevent the mind from getting stuck on matters above its limited scope and just submit to Allah because, even if we do not understand, this is what He wills. If everything in religion could be explained by the mind, what would prove whether one is a true believer or not?

Let me give you an example. When we observe *hajj* (pilgrimage), we kiss one stone (the Black Stone), yet hurl pebbles at another stone (the one symbolically representing Satan). It is the command of Allah to hold the former sacred and the latter despised. This should let us know that nothing in this universe is inherently sacred, but it is the ordinance of Allah that confers sacredness on anything. They are only stones, but we kiss one because He commands us so and pelt the other because He commands us so.

An army commander would say to the soldiers, 'Attention!', and they would stand up the very moment and give him undivided attention. Even if one of them had some food in his mouth, he would stop chewing it! This is discipline, so is faith not worthier of discipline? Soldiers would not question every order of their commander, so should we obey every command of Allah *the Exalted and Almighty*?! A true believer, whenever his mind cannot comprehend a matter pertaining to religion, should remember that it is the Will of Allah and he should obey it because his Lord so commands.

Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* gave a wonderful example to follow in this respect. When he was told that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was taken to Jerusalem and raised up to the heavens overnight, he did not subject the matter to rational enquiry, but rather said, 'Did he (Prophet Muhammad) say this?' They said yes, so Abu Bakr replied, 'Then I testify that if he has said it, he has spoken the truth.' People exclaimed, 'Do you believe that he went to the Levant and returned to Mecca overnight?!' 'Yes', he said, 'as I believe him concerning a more miraculous matter that he receives revelations from Allah.' It is narrated on the authority of Abu Salama that it was on that occasion that Abu Bakr was given the honouring appellation of As-Siddiq (the truthful one; the constantly sincere one; the one truly firm in faith).

Back to the issue of the *basmalah*; some exegetes argue that the chapter of *at-Tawba* and the chapter of *al-Anfal* are in fact just one chapter; the former completes the latter. The latter includes covenants and the former deals with the disavowal of these covenants. For instance, Allah states in the chapter of *al-Anfal* the law of distributing battle-spoils, ‘... one-fifth of your battle gains belongs to Allah and the Messenger...’ (*al-Anfal*: 41). Then, in the chapter of *at-Tawba*, He details the law of distributing Alms (*zakat*), ‘Alms are meant only for the poor, the needy, those who administer them, those whose hearts need winning over, to free slaves and help those in debt, for Allah’s cause and for travellers in need. This is ordained by Allah; Allah is All Knowing and Wise’ (*at-Tawba*: 60). Some scholars argue that this is why the chapter of *at-Tawba* comes right after the chapter of *al-Anfal* without a *basmalah* which marks the beginning of a new chapter of the Quran.

Some scholars have come up with a different opinion. The chapter of *at-Tawba* begins with the verse, ‘A release by Allah and His Messenger from the treaty you [believers] made with the idolaters [is announced]’ (*at-Tawba*: 1). With such a powerful announcement, it would not be appropriate to begin the chapter with, ‘In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy’. The statement of the *basmalah* denotes security, yet the aforesaid verse is a disavowal, so associating them together would be implausible. It is worthy of notice that the chapter is named *at-Tawba* (repentance) and not *bara’ah* (disavowal). The reason is that even though the chapter opens by giving notice of the severance of the treaty with the idolaters because they had broken it, the bulk of the chapter deals with the Expedition of Tabuk and those who lagged and failed to support Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The chapter declares that the door of repentance is open for them to turn to Allah again, hence the name *at-Tawba* (repentance). The chapter begins with a disavowal, yet its name is *repentance*; this is meant to allude to the fact that Allah’s Mercy prevails over His Wrath and Punishment. Repentance (Allah turning to His servants in Mercy) is mentioned in several verses of *at-Tawba*, ‘... Allah turns to whoever He will in His mercy...’ (*at-Tawba*: 15), ‘In His Mercy, Allah has turned to the Prophet (Muhammad), and the Emigrants and Helpers who followed him in the hour of adversity...’ (*at-Tawba*: 117) and ‘...He turned to them in Mercy in order for them to return [to Him]...’ (*at-Tawba*: 118).

Allah has opened the door for repentance as a grace and mercy from Him. If He had not prescribed repentance, a single sin would be enough to destroy a sinner. If there were no chance for repentance, a sinner would despair of ever being forgiven and would, consequently, persist in sinning and strays into deviation and error. If a single sin were enough to deprive one of Allah's Mercy and cause him to end up in the Hell Fire, there would be no difference then between committing one sin and a thousand sins; a sinner would inevitably perish anyway. What then would prevent him from committing a crime every day?! Allah has willed to open the door for repentance to prevent the spreading of crime in society. Every sinner may well turn to Allah in repentance and do good after he had done evil, and society can live in peace and security. It is out of His Mercy that He has prescribed repentance and accepts repentance from His servants when they turn to Him; it is a further manifestation of His bounty.

Allah says, '...He turned to them in Mercy in order for them to return [to Him]...' (*at-Tawba*: 118). What does this mean? Allah has turned to His servants in Mercy by prescribing repentance in the first place. Then, if they repent to Him, He bestows His Grace on them by accepting their repentance.

Thus, Allah has prescribed for us two things to grant us deliverance: He has made repentance available to us and, when we do repent, He accepts us. Allah describes Himself as the 'Ever-Relenting' which means His Mercy and acceptance of repentance have no limits. If one commits a sin and then repents, Allah accepts his repentance. If he weakens and sins again, if he yields to the insinuations of the devil or the whims of his own self, he may repent again still. If he does, Allah will accept him. He is the Ever-Relenting, the Most-Merciful.

The chapter of *at-Tawba* deals with the disbelievers, Jews, Christians, hypocrites and a group of the believers at the end of it. It explains the status of each.

Such explanation is necessary. The hypocrites, for example, suffer from an inner conflict because they profess faith even though they do not really believe. The disbelievers do not have such a conflict, but what they have in common with the hypocrites is their enmity towards the believers. In the chapter of *at-Tawba*, Allah exposes them both and unveils what they conceal in themselves and the enmity they harbour to Islam and Muslims. A large

portion of the chapter deals with the hypocrites because they claim to have faith only to draw close to Muslims and infiltrate them. It is hard for one to encounter discord with a dear person, so what about one who encounters discord with his own self?! This was the state of the hypocrites who lived among early Muslims, and such was their conflict. They were more dangerous to the believers because they acted as though they belonged to them, whereas they concealed disbelief.

In the chapter of *at-Tawba*, Allah explains how the hypocrites act in total defiance of the laws all other creatures act upon. They profess faith, conceal disbelief and harbour enmity and hatred to the believers. In this, they hold themselves up to censure since they degrade themselves to such a status that is even lower to plants, animals and inanimate objects, with respect to obedience and devotion to Allah. He says in the Quran, ‘Do you not realize [Prophet] that everything in the heavens and Earth submits [literally: prostrates] to Allah; the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains...’ (*al-Hajj*: 18). These are the inanimate objects, and the verse says they submit to Allah. Then comes the mention of plants and animals when Allah says, ‘...the trees and the animals...’ (*al-Hajj*: 18). Then comes also the mention of humankind, ‘...So do many human beings, though for many others punishment is well deserved...’ (*al-Hajj*: 18). So all the creatures of Allah glorify Him and prostrate themselves to Him: inanimate objects, plants and animals, all without exceptions. Only people defy Him and rebel against His ordinance and only a few people are devoted to Him, as the aforesaid verse tells.

Among the sublime manifestations of Allah’s Mercy is that He provides for the believers and the disbelievers alike, even though He declares in this chapter a disavowal of the disbelievers who breached their covenants with Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah’s Mercy prevails over His Wrath, hence the name of the chapter *at-Tawba* (repentance). It gives hope that there is always another chance to return to Allah after having disobeyed Him.

Before we begin our reflections about the chapter of *at-Tawba* and how it deals with the status of the disbelievers, people of the Book and the hypocrites, we must first shed adequate light on the issue of the *basmalah*. This issue was the object of much interest among Quran exegetes.

We know that the *basmalah* (In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy) occurs one hundred and fourteen times in the Noble Quran: one hundred and thirteen times at the beginnings of the chapters (except *at-Tawba*) and once in the chapter of *an-Naml*, when Allah says, 'It is from Sulaiman (Solomon), and it says, "In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy."' (an-Naml: 30). This is acknowledged by the consensus of opinions to be a verse, but what about the *basmalah* which occurs at the beginning of the chapters of the Noble Quran?

Exegetes agree that 'In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy' is one of the verses of the Noble Quran, but they have disagreed as to whether it is a verse of every chapter it comes at the beginning of. Most exegetes agree that it is a Quranic verse which has been revealed for the purpose of separating chapters and marking their beginnings, not for separating chapters only. Some argue that it is not for separating chapters from one another, for it comes at the beginning of *al-Fatiha*, which is the first chapter of the Quran and no other chapter precedes it. However, this may not be very accurate. Whoever studies sciences of the Noble Quran understands that the written order of the chapters does not follow the order of revelation. The Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in parts, and *al-Fatiha*, for example, was revealed after the chapter of *al-Muddaththir*. The *basmalah* at the beginning of *al-Fatiha* can therefore be seen to mark a separation between it and *al-Muddaththir* which was revealed earlier.

When we examine the text of the Quran, we find that 'In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy' is a verse of *al-Fatiha*, for it is numbered (1) in it and the following verse 'Praise belongs to Allah; Lord of the Worlds' is numbered (2). In the other chapters of the Quran (except *at-Tawba*), verse number (1) comes after the *basmalah*. Accordingly, most scholars consider the *basmalah* (In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy) to be a verse of the chapter of *al-Fatiha* only.

May Allah amply reward the author of *Al-Mu`jam Al-Mufahras* (the Indexed Lexicon) of the Noble Quran. By looking up a word (in Arabic), the lexicon tells its number of occurrence and the chapters where it is mentioned. However, man errs. Allah has willed that the good man and able researcher who authored this useful lexicon should forget to count 'In the Name of

Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy', among the verses of the Quran. He lists 980 occurrences of the word 'Allah' ending in a *dammah* (a diacritic representing the short vowel sound /u/), 92 occurrences ending in a *fatha* (a diacritic representing the short vowel sound /a/) and 1,152 occurrences of the word 'Allah' ending in a *kasrah* (a diacritic representing the short vowel sound /i/), which means he does not count the occurrence of the word in this verse 'In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy' where 'Allah' ends in a *kasrah* and this makes the number of occurrences 1,153 instead of 1,152.

When we start reciting the Quran, we start by seeking Allah's refuge from Satan then we say the *basmalah*, for revelation of the Quran started in the Name of Allah, so whoever recites it should start in the Name of Allah, too.

We know that the first instance of the revelation was sent down to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he was observing solitary worship of Allah in the Cave of Hira' when Jibril (Gabriel) went down to him and said, 'Read...' (*al-'Alaq*: 1). To ask someone to read means you either want him to recite something he has learnt by heart or you are asking him to read a written text before him. However, neither case applied to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then. He *peace and blessings be upon him* could neither read nor write. That is why Prophet Muhammad- who had not yet known that was a revelation from Allah- replied, 'I cannot read!' Jibril (Gabriel) repeated it a second time, 'Read!', yet Prophet Muhammad gave just the same reply.

That repetition has an important significance. It suffices as a refutation to the devious suggestion raised nowadays by the opponents of Islam that the Quran is but the inner whisperings and thoughts of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In Prophet Muhammad's reply to Jibril (Gabriel)- 'I cannot read!' - is sufficient refutation of this groundless allegation.

Here we have two distinct persons: one giving a firm command and the other declining to obey. If this were an inner thought, there would have been no conflict. There would not have been two persons, one ordering a thing and the other rejecting it, knowing his abilities were short of complying to that order. Therefore, we are before two different persons here, not one person.

Prophet Muhammad's reply, 'I cannot read' was plausible and realistic. However, when the angel Jibril (Gabriel) asked him- as Allah commanded him- to read, he did not mean to ask him to read based on any knowledge he previously had, but to read in the Name of his Lord Who would teach him. It is as though he were saying to him, 'O Muhammad, you will read in the Name of your Lord, not in the name of your learning'.

Then, Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* continued, 'Read! In the Name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clinging form.' (*al-'Alaq*: 1-2) Just as Allah has created man, by His Power, from a clinging form, He can make you read, O Muhammad, even though you had never learned to read. He was commanded to read in the Name of Allah, not in the name of his knowledge or previous learning. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not asked to read that which he had learned from people, but that which he would learn directly from the Creator of people.

Allah says in the following verse, 'Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One.' (*al-'Alaq*: 3) We learn reading and writing from one another, which manifests the Bounty of Allah who has made us capable of teaching and learning. When knowledge comes directly from Allah without any human intermediary who teaches us, this is a more elevated manifestation of Allah's Bounty. That is why He says, 'Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One.' (*al-'Alaq*: 3) Such was the message that was intended to be conveyed to Prophet Muhammad, 'You will not read in the name of your learning or based on any knowledge your memory has saved, but rather, you will read in the Name of your Lord'; He has Absolute Power: if He wills something, He just says to it 'Be! – And it is' (*Ya Sin*: 82).

So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* read the Quran in the Name of Allah, and so do we. The *basmalah* should be considered from two different perspectives: the first can be observed in the language we use on the different occasions that occur in life. When a person speaks to you with an air of authority or to persuade you of something, you would ask him, 'In whose name are you speaking?' so he would tell you the authority in whose name he is speaking. This authority may be that of the government, the police, the tax authority etc. In the context of politics, for example, a ruler would start his speech by saying, 'In the name of the people', which is quite common.

Another aspect to be highlighted about the *basmalah* is that it reflects the belief of whoever says it that he is starting his work depending on the Absolute Power of the Creator, not his own limited power. You plough the soil, and it gives you crops. Do you create that soil or control the nutrients it contains? Do you create the seeds you plant in the earth, or do you bring down rain from the sky to irrigate the earth? No, you use the mind and powers Allah has endowed you with to employ the means and resources He has created for your service.

Saying, 'In the Name of Allah' is an acknowledgment of your limited power and that you depend on the Limitless Power of Allah in whatever you are doing. It is an acknowledgement that you cannot farm the earth in your own name and you have no power to make the earth give forth the various kinds of crops.

One should ask himself when he begins any action, 'What power do I have to make this action happen?' We have no power on our own, but Allah has, by His Power, made the earth and its resources subservient to us. Starting every action by saying, 'In the Name of Allah' shows reverence to the Lord Who has created the earth and all that is in it and subdued them to the will of man.

Think of how life goes. Can we influence the motion of the sun or make it rise or set? We cannot control the sun, the moon, the air or the stars. Glory is to Him Who has created them all for our service.

If you begin any action without having Allah in your mind, if you depend on the means rather than Him Who has created them for you, then what is the difference between a believer and a disbeliever? A disbeliever thinks only of the available means and resources and believes they have the power to bring the desirable fruits. In whatever he does, farming, industry etc. he does not think of the Creator even the blinking of an eye.

As for a believer, he always acts in obedience of the laws Allah enjoins. He always keeps Allah in his mind and heart. This grants him attainment of the fruits desired by his action, a reward shared also by the disbelievers, yet also brings him reward in the Hereafter for his obedience to Allah, so praise is to Allah for all His favours. 'Praise be to Allah, to whom belongs all that is in the heavens and Earth, and praise be to Him in the life to come...' (*Saba'*: 1).

When the believer sees the fruits of his labour in the life of this world, he will say, 'Praise is to Allah!' When he sees Allah's abundant reward for him in the Hereafter, he will also say, 'Praise is to Allah!' Indeed, all praise is due to Allah in the beginning and end, in this life and the life to come.

Saying, 'In the Name of Allah' as you begin any action is an acknowledgement that if Allah did not subdue for you the earth and what is in it, nothing would respond to you or give you the fruits you desire.

I never get tired of giving this example! Allah has created animals of which some are fit to be tamed, whereas others are not. We tame camels, and perhaps elephants, but it would require special skills to tame a snake or a wolf. Allah has made some of His creatures free from the control of human beings. This is for us to know that we have no power or might of our own; if Allah did not tame certain animals for us, we would not be able to tame any by ourselves. Allah directs our attention to this truth, saying, 'Can they not see how, among the things made by Our hands, We have created livestock they control, and made them obedient, so that some can be used for riding, some for food.' (*Ya Sin*: 71-72)

Allah has left some animals wild and untamed to make us aware that we do not possess the power to tame and subdue, but rather, He *the Exalted and Almighty* is the One Who creates the power to subdue and tame what He wills for whom He wills. This is a clear caution to people so they would not go astray or be taken by delusions. It is in the Name of Allah that everything in life goes.

Someone might wonder, 'A disbeliever does not start any action "in the Name of Allah", so how is it that he receives the results he desires?' The answer is that a disbeliever only gains the immediate result of his action and no reward awaits him in the Hereafter; he is unlike a believer who is rewarded by reaping the fruits he expects and is also rewarded for being mindful of Allah.

Moreover, Allah may make certain things in the universe go against their normal course and laws which He has made for them. The universe is governed by laws and norms Allah has set, so why does He reverse these laws and norms sometimes? This is to show us one of the manifestations of His Might. In our life, causes must be employed to achieve results. If we do not follow this normal course, no results will come out. As for Allah, if He wills, He suspends the laws and brings results- by His Might and Power- despite absence of causes.

A place where rain always falls may well be suddenly struck by drought. By doing this, Allah directs our attention to the fact that the universe is not subject to these laws, but rather to the Will of the Creator of these laws. Allah, Glory is to Him, breaks these laws to draw our attention to His Absolute Power so that we know that it is ‘in the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy’ that everything in the universe goes.

There are countless examples of this in our lives. We know that human reproduction occurs when a man and woman marry and enter an intimate relationship. However, Allah is the One Who decides whether they will be given a boy, or a girl or no children at all, according to His will: ‘Allah’s is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, He creates what He pleases; He grants to whom He pleases daughters and grants to whom He pleases sons. Or He makes them of both sorts, male and female; and He makes whom He pleases barren; surely, He is the Knowing, the Powerful’ (*ash-Shura*: 49-50).

Thus, even when a man and woman marry, even when everything is ready, Allah may decree a different result. The law does not act according to its own will, but rather the Will of its Creator.

Allah tells us in the Quran the story of Zakaryya (Zechariah) and Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon them*. He took charge of her and provided for her. One day, he went to her and found that she had some food which he had not given her. Hence, he asked her that well-known question which teaches us how to be careful with our sons and daughters and guard them from being corrupted, ‘...Mary, how is it you have these provisions?’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 37) This teaches us to watch over those under our charge; otherwise, they would be spoiled. If a mother finds with her son an expensive pen his father did not give him, she must ask him, ‘How is it you have this pen?’ Or if she sees her daughter wearing a dress she did not buy for her, she must ask her, ‘How is it you have this dress?’ A wife whose husband spends on the family more than his salary affords must ask him, ‘How is it you have this money?’ Otherwise, sons and daughters may grow up in corruption, and families may be provided for by ill-gotten money. This essential question, ‘How is it you have such-and-such?’ establishes a principle that needs to be borne well in mind by those who have others under their charge. This way, corruption would be cut off at its roots. Allah guided Zakaryya (to asking Maryam this question after he had taken

charge of her, ‘...Mary, how is it you have these provisions?’ (*Al-‘Imran: 37*) to which she replied, ‘...They are from Allah; Allah provides limitlessly for whoever He wills.’ (*Al-‘Imran: 37*) Zakaryya witnessed a miraculous breaking of natural laws. He saw how Allah sent provisions to Maryam without any effort, so he aspired to earning such a favour from Allah. He called upon his Lord to grant him a son even though he had reached old age and his wife was infertile. Since Allah bestows His blessings limitlessly on whomever He wills, Zakaryya called upon Him, ‘There and then Zechariah prayed to his Lord...’ (*Al-‘Imran: 38*). Allah responded to Him and sent down to him the good news of Yahya (John), and Zakaryya’s faith in the Bounty of Allah was thus manifested.

It is worthy of mention that by this miraculous provision, Allah was preparing Maryam (Mary) and firming up her faith in Him because she would have to undergo a test which no other woman in the world had ever or would ever undergo. Allah wanted to brace her for something extraordinary so when that thing did occur, it would not shock her human nature or shake her beliefs; she already knew and already acknowledged that Allah has Power over all things, ‘...Allah provides limitlessly for whoever He wills.’ (*Al-‘Imran: 37*) Through Maryam (Mary), Allah Almighty would break the natural law of reproduction and make her bear a child with no father. She had already acknowledged His Power of creation that is not limited by natural laws and witnessed the experience of Zakaryya *peace be upon him* when Allah gave him a son even though, ‘...I am so old and my wife is barren?’ (*Maryam: 8*), as Zakaryya himself said.

Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* saw it was easy for Allah to do that. Allah says, ‘...This is what your Lord has said, “It is easy for Me”’ (*Maryam: 9*). When the angel came to her in the form of a man to give her the news of a son, she said, ‘...How can I have a son when no man has touched me? I have not been unchaste.’ (*Maryam: 20*) The angel who was sent to her replied, ‘...This is what your Lord said, “It is easy for me...”’ (*Maryam: 21*). Thus did Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* bear the child, and thus did Allah break the natural law of reproduction by His Omnipotent Power.

It is worthy of notice that Allah states twice in this verse that He has chosen Maryam (Mary) above the women of the world, ‘... Maryam (Mary),

Allah has chosen you and made you pure: He has truly chosen you above all women.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 42). This repetition is for a reason. Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘and as the angels said, ‘O, Maryam (Mary), surely Allah has elected you and purified you and has elected you over the women of the world.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 42) The first elevation of Maryam’s (Mary’s) status mentioned in this verse was her election to have esteemed virtue. Allah *the Exalted* chose her to enter the circle of the elite and righteous people. The second elevation of Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her* was bearing her child, Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon them* without being touched by a man. Thus, she was raised above all the women of the world who can only bear children by means of male partners. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* specified the names of the people involved in this story because such a miracle would never happen to any other woman.

There are some stories in the Noble Quran in which the names of the characters are not specified, such as the story of the People of the Cave: ‘Behold, they were young men who had attained to faith in their Lord, and [so] We deepened their guidance to the right way.’ (*al-Kahf*: 13) Allah *the Almighty* did not specify their names or exact number as these specific details of the People of the Cave do not add to the significance of their glorious story. Likewise, Allah *the Most High* did not specify the land or the time in which they lived. If He had given us these particular facts, some people might think that the lessons and obligations of this story applied specifically to these personalities and would not be applicable to different people and times. Thus, He did not specify the distinctive details of these men, in order to clarify that their endeavour could be attempted by any group of people in every time and place. The ambiguity used here increases the benefit of the story.

On the other hand, in other instances in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* specified the names of the people in the Quranic story. For example, we find a verse saying: ‘for those who are bent on denying the truth, Allah has struck a parable in [the stories of] Nuh’s (Noah) wife and Lut’s (Lot) wife. They were married to two of Our righteous servants, and each one betrayed her husband (by disbelieving in their messages). Also, neither of the two [husbands] will be of any avail to these two women before Allah when they are told [on Judgment Day], ‘Enter the fire with all those [other sinners] who enter it!’ (*at-Tahrim*: 10)

Allah *the Almighty* specified the wives of these two prophets because they adhered to their false beliefs and the prophets (they were married to) could not guide them to the right path. On the other hand, the wife of Pharaoh believed in Allah, and even though Pharaoh claimed to be a god, he could not convince his wife to believe in him. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and for those who have believed, Allah has struck a parable in [the story of] Pharaoh's wife, as she prayed, 'O my Lord! Build for me a house in your Providence in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his doings and save me from the unjust folk!' (*at-Tahrim*: 11) So, she was a believing woman who had her own convictions independent of her husband. When Allah *the Most High* mentioned Maryam (Mary) Allah *be pleased with her* He specified her name and the name of her father, saying: 'Maryam (Mary), the daughter of Imran.' (*at-Tahrim*: 12)

The Noble Quran also tells us the story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* was asked about Dhu Al-Qarnayn's name, Allah *Glorified is He* did not give his name in the Quran, rather, He stated his attributes: 'Behold, We established him securely on Earth and endowed him with [the knowledge of] the right means to achieve anything [that he might set out to achieve].' (*al-Kahf*: 84)

Allah *the Almighty* willed this ambiguity (by not mentioning the names) of people in many Quranic stories. If anyone asks you, 'Who was Dhu Al-Qarnayn's, you should answer, 'Do you not understand the purpose of this ambiguity? The purpose of the Quranic story is to keep his name insignificant to emphasise the man's attributes.' Dhu Al-Qarnayn's strength was established firmly on the earth by Allah *the Most High*. He surrounded himself with good people, kept away from evil companions and stood up for the weak. This example set by the man must remain as a lesson to people of all times and backgrounds.

Since Allah *Glorified is He* began His Quran with the words: 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful', we must also begin our recitation of the Noble Quran with it. Remember the words of Prophet Mohammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Every significant matter which is not begun with 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful' shall be cut off from blessings.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by as-Suyuti and Ibn Kathir

Any action not begun in the Name of Allah is deficient. Never be assailed by delusion and fallacy, imagining yourself to be the one who subdues things to obey you, thereby losing the proper perception of your powers. When you do not mention the Name of Allah *Glorified is He* at the start of an action, this means that Allah is not on your mind, and your action will not be rewarded in the Hereafter despite yielding the benefit of the action in this world. This saying at the beginning of any action of importance, preserves the worldly gains and the goodly rewards in the Hereafter.

People should get married in the Name of Allah and as long as they begin the relationship in His Name, they will be giving more thought in distinguishing the lawful from the unlawful. Naturally, you would not begin any action in the Name of Allah unless it was something that Allah *Glorified is He* has made lawful. Similarly, a man does not naturally steal or accept bribes in the Name of Allah. When you begin a lawful action in the Name of Allah, you will submit that you are worshipping Him and that He has commandments that ordain your obligations and forbid you from committing sins. Even if you are a sinner, do not be ashamed from beginning your lawful actions in His Name, for Allah *Glorified is He* does not bear malevolence towards His creation or change His Mercy towards their worldly affairs. When He ordained punishments for particular sins, this means that He had prior knowledge that his servants would possibly commit these sins. He is the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful. We know that the Arabic words for ‘Most Gracious’ (*ar-Rahman*) and ‘Most Merciful’ (*ar-Raheem*) are derived from the Arabic root word for ‘womb’ (*rahim*). The womb is the place where the foetus grows in its mother’s body and is the epitome of compassion and care. Therefore, in the Qudsi Hadith which is a saying by Allah *Glorified is He* that has been narrated by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* apart from Quranic verses, Allah says about keeping family ties, ‘I am God, and I am the Most Gracious (*ar-Rahman*). I created the womb (*rahim*) and gave it a name from My own Name. Therefore, whoever keeps connected to his kinsman (and family ties), I shall maintain my connection to him, and whoever severs his family ties, I shall sever my ties with him.’⁽¹⁾ Thus, Allah *the Almighty* is always

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, and at-Tirmidhi*

compassionate to His servants, and sinners should not be ashamed to say: 'In the Name of Allah,' and 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful,' at the beginning of their worldly actions. By doing so, sinners will prevent themselves from having the delusion that they act by their own powers, and instead, will be reminded that they have the power to act because Allah *Glorified is He* had facilitated this for them. In addition, they will not deny themselves the reward of the Hereafter for their worldly efforts.

When a believer says, 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful', he enters into Allah's protection. The phrases, 'The Most Gracious' and 'The Most Merciful' are Arabic expressions of intensiveness (*mubalagha*) that indicate Allah's refined and deepened Mercy towards His creation.

However, do not fall under the assumption that Allah's attribute of Mercy fluctuates between states of weakness and strength. Some may falsely assume that Allah *Glorified is He* is only 'Merciful' (*Rahim*) at times, while being 'Gracious' (*Rahman*) at other times. The Arabic intensive adjective form only applies to Allah's created beings who are subject to changes and fluctuations. It may be said that a certain person is 'knowledgeable' (*Aleem*), another person is 'thoroughly knowledgeable' (*Allaam*), while a third person is 'an authority in the field' (*Allaama*). Indeed, human attributes may vary. In our discussion, none of Allah's attributes are weaker or stronger than any other attribute. In fact, it is the manifestations of these attributes which can be intensified or decreased by Allah's Will.

In the Arabic language, we have the three words to indicate 'a person who eats'. These words are as follows: '*akil*' (eater), '*akkal*' (intense eater) and '*akul*' (constant eater); and they indicate different degrees of the habit of eating. For example, the *akil* may eat one slice of bread per day, whilst the *akul* might eat five slices at once in a single daily meal. The *akkal*, on the other hand, might eat five meals a day instead of three. Therefore, the increased intensity can sometimes be describing the degree of the action itself as the number of slices per meal the *akkal* eats, and sometimes the increased intensity is describing the frequency of the action as the increased number of meals the *akul* eats per day.

It is important for us to recognise that human attributes, being accidental, are subject to changes and variations. Allah *the Most High* does not change, nor are His attributes subject to variation. Only the manifestations of His attributes

can decrease or intensify, according to His Will. He is the Most Gracious (*Ar-Rahman*) since He shows Mercy to both believers and disbelievers in this world, and therefore, His Mercy is vast. At the same time, He is the Most Merciful (*Ar-Raheem*) in the Hereafter since He shows intense Mercy to believers therein. Allah *the Exalted* does not change His attributes for us, rather, we are the ones who change and are obligated to change for Him. If Allah *Glorified is He* changed according to our actions, the earth would certainly swallow up the servant who disobeyed Him in secret. Yet, a sinner disobeys Allah *the Almighty* and He conceals his sins from other people, for He is truly forbearing, and His attributes are inviolable.

When Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to begin our recitation of the Noble Quran by saying, ‘In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful’, we should recognise that He subdued everything for us. Additionally, Allah *the Most High* does not want our worldly actions to go unrewarded. Even a married couple’s conjugal relations are rewarded since they intend to satisfy themselves lawfully to produce righteous offspring. Actions should be initiated in the Name of Allah to be rewarded. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘For one of you to have conjugal relations (with your spouse) is an act of charity.’

The companions said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* ‘Does that mean that if one of us satisfies his passion, he will be rewarded for it?’

Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* said, ‘Tell me. If one were to satisfy his passion unlawfully, would he not incur a sin? Likewise, by satisfying it lawfully, one gains a reward.’⁽¹⁾

Therefore, every significant action not started in the Name of Allah is fruitless. ‘Significant’ actions are the actions that a person does consciously. On the other hand, he will be excused for actions that are habitually done automatically, that he might forget to begin them by mentioning the Name of Allah. These actions are excused since there are three aspects to everything that we do: the mental aspect, the verbal aspect and the external (material) aspect. For example, if a person is thirsty, the mental aspect is the thought which comes to his head saying, ‘I want a glass of water.’ The person may then say aloud, ‘Please hand

(1) Narrated by Imam Muslim

me a glass of water' which is the verbal aspect. Then, when the glass of water is brought for the thirsty person to drink, this is the external aspect. The external aspect only occurs as a result of the other two premises. Every action that you do with an external aspect or a verbal aspect without possessing a mental premise, is an insignificant action.

Imagine that an electric lamp which gives you light at night is suddenly burnt. You may exclaim, 'O, Allah who protects us from harm!' and move swiftly away from the dangerous area without saying, 'In the Name of Allah'. This action does not have a mental aspect, and therefore is insignificant.

As for the external material actions that require conscious thought, you will be able to take the benefits of this world and also the reward of the Hereafter if you say, 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful'. Some of us may notice that when a disbeliever farms the earth, the land may give him the appropriate yield he desired. However, he does not gain any heavenly reward along with this worldly yield.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us to begin our recitations of the Quran by saying, 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful'. This is how chapter *al-Fatiha* is started and how every chapter in the Noble Quran begins, except the chapter of *at-Tawba* which we are currently examining.

We find in the formula of '*basmala*' ('In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful') three of Allah's names. These are the following: Allah (God), *Ar-Rahman* (the Most Gracious) and *Ar-Raheem* (the Most Merciful). The word 'Allah' is a noun which refers to the Essential and Necessary Being Who owns all the attributes of perfection. *Ar-Rahman* (the Most Gracious) refers to the breadth of Allah's actions and attributes, while *Ar-Raheem* (the Most Merciful) refers to the breadth of Allah's Mercy to us in the Hereafter.

Since we do not have the ability to control any of the genera in existence unless Allah *the Almighty* subdues them so as to serve us, it is natural for us to begin our interactions with any object in the universe by saying the Name of the Power Which subdued this thing for you. You do not deal with these forces using your own power for your power only lies within the limits that Allah *the Most High* ordained. Similarly, you do not deal with anything with your own knowledge since you have no knowledge except that knowledge

Allah *Glorified is He* gives you. When a man begins an action in the Name of Allah, He gives him the benefits of this action along with blessing him in it.

It is true that the natural laws also obey disbelievers when they utilise material objects without mentioning Allah's name since He ordained His Lordly sustenance to all mankind. Since Allah *the Exalted* created both believers and disbelievers into existence, He made the natural laws responsive to the believer and the disbeliever alike. However, when a believer begins any action with Allah's name, the action is counted in his good deeds as an act of worship. The material benefits may be the same, but the heavenly reward for your remembrance of Allah's blessing will be preserved until the Day of Reckoning.

Thus, the word 'Allah' is a noun that refers to the Essential and Necessary Being Who owns all the attributes of perfection. These perfect attributes are described in the ninety nine Most Perfect Names of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'And to Allah (belong) the Fairest Names, so invoke Him by them ...' (*al-A'raf*: 180).

To explain the concept of these Perfect Names of Allah *the Most High* let us look at our daily lives. If you meet a person who is forbearing and dignified, you may describe him as being 'tolerant' and 'patient'. You might meet a rich man and say that he is a wealthy person, and then meet a man of prudence and say that he is wise. In each of these cases, you noticed a relative attribute in a created being, and you described it accordingly. Yet, when you want to use the words 'patient', 'wealthy' and 'wise' in an absolute sense, you can refer to no one else but Allah *Glorified is He*.

We use the words *Al-Hakeem* (All-Wise), *Al-Raheem* (the Most Merciful) or *Al-Ghani* (the Rich) in the absolute form when we are referring to Allah *Glorified is He* alone. For instance, Mercy in its absolute sense refers only to Him since the mercy that is exhibited by all the compassionate created beings in the world is only a part of Allah's Mercy to His creation. Since Allah *the Most High* is the only source of this Mercy, when the word '*Al-Raheem*' (the Most Merciful) is uttered, it only applies to Him. On the other hand, if you describe a human as being merciful, this mercy is limited and relative.

This is true to all the attributes of Allah *the Exalted* which are also His Names, As for the name 'Allah', it does not refer to an attribute, rather, it refers to the Essence which is described with all the attributes of perfection. Thus, it cannot

be used for anyone else. This Noble Name was the Name of the Necessary Being Who is the True Lord *Glorified is He*, both before and after Islam.

When people give their new-born children names, one of them may call his son 'Mohammad'. However, that parent will certainly not give his next son the same name since the name 'Mohammad' has become the personal identifier of the first son. Some people in the countryside still love to seek the glad tidings associated with the Prophet's name by giving the name 'Mohammad' to their following sons. So, one of them might call his first son 'Mohammad, the Elder' and call his next son 'Mohammad, the Younger'. They may distinguish their different sons who share the same name by giving them combined names such as '*Mohammad at-Tayyib*' and '*Mohammad At-Tahir*'.

When the Lord *the Most High* chose the Name Allah which refers to His attributes of perfection, no one from His creation, believers or disbelievers, will have the same name or its attributes. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* said: '... Do you know any name that is worthy to be mentioned with His Name?' (*Maryam: 65*) Allah *Glorified is He* thereby provoked the pagans with a challenge, as they may have said, 'This idea never occurred to us, to call other things with the same name as God.' Allah *the Exalted* made it clear to them that there is no other being worthy of the Name Allah, and its attributes of perfection, except Him.

The pagans did not dare expose themselves to this experiment. This shows that these pagans of Quraysh who disbelieved in Prophet Muhammad's message of monotheism and associated partners with Allah *the Almighty* in worship, really only worshipped their idols in doubt. If they were certain of their false ways, they could have responded to the challenge by giving a similar name to any created being, worshipped it with their idols and claimed that Allah *Glorified is He* is similar to His creation. However, they knew that any response to that challenge would be ludicrous and realised their paradoxical practices in associating partners to Allah *the Most High*. Thus, deeply knowing that Allah was distinctly different from their idols, the pagans were unable to respond to the Quranic challenge.

When you say, 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful', you also mention two of Allah's names which are 'The Most Gracious' and 'The Most Merciful'. You are mentioning the Names and Attributes of the One Who can help you with your task. If you wish to do an action which

requires strength, you would say, 'In the Name of (Allah), the Strong,' so that Allah *Glorified is He* will aid you with the secrets of His attribute of strength. If you are seeking knowledge, you would say, 'In the Name of the All-Knowing'. A person who desires wisdom would say, 'In the Name of the All-Wise'. Another person who wants Allah *Glorified is He* to help him overcome an adversary would say, 'In the Name of the All-Dominant'.

You are free to engage in your actions with any of Allah's Names. However, many attributes are usually required for any action in this world. No matter how trivial an action may seem to you, it needs Allah's Power, Wisdom, Patience, Forbearance, as well as other attributes of Allah *Glorified is He*. Instead of repeating every single distinct attribute of Allah *the Exalted* He taught us that His Name 'Allah' encompasses all the attributes. Therefore, when you say, 'In the Name of Allah', it is as though you have said, 'In the Name of the Strong', 'In the Name of the All Knowing', 'In the Name of the All-Wise', 'In the Name of the Most Gracious', 'In the Name of the Protector', 'In the Name of the All-Powerful' or 'In the Name of the All-Dominant'. You have initiated your action by invoking all of our Lord's Most Perfect Names by saying the name 'Allah' since it is the Name of Essence that is endowed with all the attributes of perfection.

Following Allah's command, we must put this concept into practice and compensate for all the previous occasions when we did not observe this command. We can call this compensation the '*basmala* of restitution' since in these sayings of *basmala*, we are amending many previous actions with which we missed uttering the *basmala*. You can also add, 'In the Name of Allah' for everyone who forgot to begin his actions with the words, 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful'. By doing this, you pay your debt for the present and the past actions, along with paying your brother's debt for the times he forgot to say the *basmala*. Allah *Glorified is He* will give you additional blessing in all that you do, and the rewards are multiplied by the intention you had while doing your work.

Therefore we hear that some imams say the *basmala* silently when leading their followers in prayers, after which they read the chapter of *al-Fatiha* aloud beginning with Allah's Words: 'All praise is due to Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds.' (*al-Fatiha*: 2). However, the more knowledgeable

imams amongst them will add a silent *basmala* even before the start of their prayer. This is because they realise that prayer is a significant action, and every significant action must begin with 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful'.

The Sacred Hadith related by Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* stated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah says, "I have divided the prayer into two halves between Myself and My servant, and My servant shall have what he asks for. When a servant says, "All praise is due to Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds" (*al-Fatiha*: 2), Allah says, "My servant has praised Me." And when he says, "The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful" (*al-Fatiha*: 3), Allah says, "My servant has extolled Me." Also, when he says, "Owner of the Day of Judgment" (*al-Fatiha*: 4), Allah says, "My servant has glorified Me." When he says, "Thee alone do we worship, and unto Thee alone do we turn for aid" (*al-Fatiha*: 5), Allah says, "This is between Me and My servant, and My servant shall have what he asks for." When he says, "Guide us to the straight path – the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, not of those who have been condemned [by Thee], nor of those who go astray" (*al-Fatiha*: 6-7), Allah says, "This is for My servant, and My servant shall have what he asks for."' (1)

We can observe that we read 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful' (*al-Fatiha*: 1) in the beginning of the chapter of *al-Fatiha* which is read in the beginning of every unit of prayer. Allah *Glorified is He* began the Quran with the chapter of *al-Fatiha* and began *al-Fatiha* with 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful' (*al-Fatiha*: 1) to teach us that every action should be started with these words, and every action has its own purpose and goal. In this Qudsi Hadith, Allah *the Most High* starts by mentioning the servant's praise of Him. Some scholars see this as an indication that the text of the chapter of *al-Fatiha* is distinctive from its opening *basmala*. 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful' (*al-Fatiha*: 1) is part of the Quran, but these scholars consider it apart from the text of the first chapter since Allah *the Almighty* does not mention this starting *basmala* in this Qudsi Hadith. This is why some imams

(1) Narrated by Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nisa'i, and Ibn Majah

sometimes say it silently during the announced prayers instead of saying it aloud as the rest of the chapter.

We should bear in mind that Allah *Glorified is He* devoted His Mercy to His creation, and He wants to alleviate the shame of sinners. Thus, a sinner has the right to seek Allah's Aid when he does a lawful deed. No sinner should question themselves out of shame: 'Should I seek the aid of Allah Whom I have disobeyed and angered?' Truly, Allah *Glorified is He* is the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful. The fact that you have disobeyed Allah in previous times should not prevent you from beginning every action with His Name. Were it not for His Mercy and Compassion, the world would not exist for us all. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'If Allah were to punish mankind [immediately] for the evil that they do [on the earth], He would not leave a single living creature upon its face. However, He grants them respite until a term set [by Him], but when the end of their term approaches, they can neither delay it by a single moment, nor can they hasten it.' (*an-Nahl*: 61) We still live in this world, in the blessings and the gifts of the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, despite our sins.

We must consider carefully the words of Allah *the Exalted* mentioned in the following two verses in the Quran. In the first verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'For should you try to count Allah's blessings, you could never compute them! Behold, Allah is indeed Much-Forgiving and a giver of Mercy.' (*an-Nahl*: 18) In the second verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... and should you try to count Allah's blessings, you could never compute them. [And yet,] behold, man is indeed most persistent in wrongdoing and stubbornly ingrate!' (*Ibrahim*: 34) The two verses are similar in their introductions and different in their endings. The first verse was mentioned in the context of Allah's Abundant Mercy. On the other hand, the second verse was directing out attention to a sinner's wickedness when he exploits Allah's blessings to commit sins against his Lord *Glorified is He*. If we read the chapter of the second verse, we find this indication in its former verses: 'Art thou not aware of those who met the blessing of Allah with disbelief and [thereby] invited their people to inhabit the abode of utter desolation?' (*Ibrahim*: 28) Thus, the statement in the second verse is appropriate in indicating man's wrongdoing and his ingratitude to Allah's blessings.

If man wanted to count Allah's blessings, he would never be able to complete counting, for Allah *Glorified is He* is the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful. A blessing, as we know, consists of three elements. There is the giver of the blessing, the one who receives the blessing and the blessing itself. We know that the Arabic particle '*in*', which translates in this verse as 'should you try', has a similar function to the English article 'if'. It is a conditional particle used to indicate matters of doubt. Another article in Arabic is '*idha*' which can be translated as 'when' in such sentences as, 'When this event happens, carry out the following.' In this verse, the word 'when' (*idha*) is used in Arabic to certify that something will surely happen in the future. When Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... and should you try to count Allah's blessings, you could never compute them' (*Ibrahim*: 34), this verse uses the word '*in*', as it expresses doubt, since nobody with a finite time would even attempt to count Allah's blessings. A person only attempts to count something if he believes the process of counting is accessible. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* used the Arabic word '*in*' instead of the Arabic word '*idha*' here. A person might be able to start counting Allah's blessings, but he would never succeed in completing it. The One Who gives the blessings sustains a gracious flow of benefaction to the receiver since Allah *Glorified is He* is the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful. He does not abandon sinners or deny them His blessings for He called them all into existence and continues his blessings even when man is persistent in wrongdoing and ungratefulness.

Now, let us turn our attention to an examination of the chapter of *at-Tawba*. We have seen it appropriate to discuss this chapter after discussing the meanings of '*basmala*'. In the chapter of *at-Tawba*, Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned the various factions of people who have disbelieved in the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*. These were the idolaters, the people of the Book and the hypocrites.

We said earlier that a hypocrite has conflicting faculties since he claims to be a believer while concealing his disbelief. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And when they (the hypocrites) meet those who believed, they assert, "We believe [as you believe]"', but when they find themselves alone with their evil impulses, they say, "Verily, we are (disbelievers) with you. We were only mocking (the believers)!"' (*al-Baqara*: 14) When a person has two faculties that are

incompatible, he is an object of people's contempt and similarly scorns himself. Most of the scholars agree that one of the names of the chapter of *at-Tawba* is 'The Revealer' since it revealed the attributes of hypocrites.

Sa'id ibn Jubayr narrated that he asked Ibn 'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* about the chapter of *at-Tawba*, and he replied, 'It is the Revealer (of people's intents). It kept speaking about (the attributes of disbelief) in one group of people after another, until we feared that it would mention all of us (as having attributes of disbelief).'

One of these hypocrites said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* before the Battle of Tabuk: '... Grant me permission [to remain at home], and do not put me to too hard a test!...' (*at-Tawba*: 49) This hypocrite had sought this permission to stay behind at the time of the battle, and the excuse he claimed was his weakness towards women. The Roman women were known to be beautiful, so he claimed that he feared being tempted by them. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* responded to this by saying: '...Oh, verily, [by making such a request] they had [already failed in their test and] succumbed to a temptation to evil!' (*at-Tawba*: 49)

There were others amongst them who criticised the way Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* distributed the charitable offerings by saying, 'He favours some and leaves out others!' Allah *Glorified is He* said about this: 'And among them find fault with thee [O Prophet Muhammad] concerning [the distribution of] the offering.' (*at-Tawba*: 58)

There were also other hypocrites who accused Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of injustice claiming that he gave his ear and judgment to whoever spoke to him first, then based the ruling on what he heard from that party. These hypocrites forgot that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* paid the best of attention towards and adhered to the truth. He only listened to the truth and delivered his message by speaking the truth. Allah mentioned that claim and disproved it in the verse by saying: 'And among those [enemies of the truth] are those who malign the Prophet by saying, "He is all ears." Say, "[He is] an ear of charity for you. He believes in Allah and believes (i.e. trusts, reassures) the believers, and (is) a mercy for the ones of you who have believed. The ones who hurt the Messenger of Allah, for them is a painful torment.'" (*at-Tawba*: 61).

One of them was named Tha'laba. He was stingy with the wealth and bounties that Allah *the Exalted* had bestowed upon him. He had previously pledged to Allah *the Most High* that he would give part of his blessings in charity. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'And among them are those who vow to Allah, "If indeed He grant us [something] out of His bounty, we shall most certainly spend in charity and shall most certainly be among the righteous! But as soon as He (Allah) has given them [aught] out of His bounty, they cling to it greedily and turn away in their obstinacy [from all that they have vowed].' (*at-Tawba*: 75-76)

There were others who considered their spending in Allah's cause to be a loss: 'And among the Bedouins are those who regard all that they might spend [in Allah's cause] as a loss.' (*at-Tawba*: 98) Some of the Bedouins were hypocrites, so Allah *the Almighty* said concerning them: 'But some of the Bedouins who dwell around you are hypocrites, and among the people of The [Prophet's] City [too], who have grown insolent in [their] hypocrisy. You do not [always] know them, [O Muhammad – but] We know them. We shall cause them to suffer doubly.' (*at-Tawba*: 101)

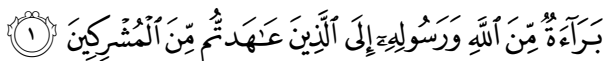
In this way Allah *Glorified is He* revealed, to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers, all the factions who were opposed to them. Therefore, this chapter was known as 'The Revealer' since it revealed the various faults in these people's disbelief. It did not do this in order that people would insult one another, or in order that some people would gain satisfaction by seeing others exposed and revealed. Rather, it did this to purify the ranks of faith from the blemishes of falsehood and to expel any weakness of faith from the ranks of the believers, so that the true and devoted believers would remain steadfast.

Some of the scholars called this chapter 'The Sweeper' since it swept away hypocrisy and removed it, along with clearing the ground of faith from the attributes of hypocrisy. Others called it 'The Scatterer'. Only something which is piled up can be scattered. When you scatter a pile, you bring to plain view what is hidden in the middle. This chapter scattered the secrets of the hypocrites. The chapter is also known as 'The Digger' since when one digs the earth, he finds what is concealed under the dirt. It is also known as 'The

Awakener' because it brings to light that which the eyes were not able to see, and 'The Destroyer' since it made clear the punishment which awaits every evildoer. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Their Lord brought upon them utter destruction for their sin, destroying them all alike.' (*ash-Shams*: 14) It is also known as 'The chapter of Torment' since it lifted the veils of hypocrites' hearts and appointed to every enemy of Allah the appropriate requital. It is narrated that Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'You call it the chapter of Repentance, but it is really the chapter of Torment!'

Therefore, the chapter has many names, and every name has its meaning and connotation. Many of these names are referring to what the chapter did to the hypocrites: The Exposer, the Sweeper, the Scatterer, the Awakener, the Digger and the Destroyer. All of these are connected to the exposure of the hypocrites. The chapter begins with the words: 'Disavowal by Allah and His Prophet [is herewith announced] unto those who ascribe divinity to partners beside Allah, [and] with whom you [O, believers] have made a covenant.' (*at-Tawba*: 1) The name of the chapter is '*at-Tawba*' (Repentance), even though the word 'disavowal' means rejection. So, what are the indications of these names?

We know that Allah *Glorified is He* created man and made him His vicegerent, and Allah is the Lord of all beings. Therefore, He has two forms of bestowal. The Lordly bestowal means that He created and possesses everything. It also means that He provides for all His creation equally. This includes both believers and disbelievers. It includes righteous people and sinners. Whoever of these people utilises the means and the natural laws of the Universe will partake in the goodness of Lordly bestowal. In fact, if a believer does not utilise these means, he will remain behind a disbeliever in gathering worldly benefit. This is the Lordly bestowal. Thus, Allah is the Lord of all His creation since He called them all into existence and provided them with the essential constituents of life. On the other hand, the Divine bestowal is related to the degree of moral responsibility of man, in obeying the ordained laws that obligate him to perform certain tasks and forbid him from other actions. Hence, this Divine bestowal is related to acts of worship. The chapter says:



**A release by God and His Messenger from the
treaty you [believers] made with the idolaters [is
announced] [1] (The Quran, at-Tawba: 1)**

As we said, disavowal means the annulment of an accord, or *'esma* in Arabic. To have an accord means to hold onto something. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... But he who holds fast (*ya 'tasim*) unto Allah has already been guided onto a straight way.' (*Al-'Imran*: 101) Allah also says: 'Today there is no protection (*'asim*) [for anyone] from Allah's judgment.' (*Hud*: 43) Therefore, disavowal implies that there was a pact which had previously been adhered to between believers and disbelievers. The chapter was announcing the disavowal of this pact which the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had with them. Believers were still adhering to this pact, but then the commandment came from Allah *the Almighty* for it to be annulled.

The Arabic word used for 'disavowal' (*bara'a*) is also used in credit transactions. When a person has 'disavowed himself (*bari'a*) of a debt', it means that he repaid it and is no longer bound by its contraction. Similarly, when a person is 'disavowed of his illness', it means that he is cured. The illness once had a grip on him, and the grip has now eased.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made pacts with the Quraysh and the Jews, and they did not honour these pacts. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad was obligated by Allah to annul these pacts. Someone might ask, 'Why were these pacts not annulled until the ninth year after Emigration, even though Mecca was regained by the Muslims in the eighth year after Emigration?'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* removed the pagan idols from the *Ka'ba*. After the Muslims' state settled, it was time for a distinction to be made clear regarding those who lived near the Inviolable Sanctuary. The believers had to identify the idolaters, the people of the Book and the hypocrites living among them. This happened in the ninth year after the Emigration in order that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would not make the pilgrimage unless the place was set free from the shackles of false slavery and disbelief.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* clarified, with this verse, to those who had made pacts with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘You have proved yourselves neither worthy to be trusted, nor have you fulfilled your pacts. Therefore, We have annulled these pacts.’ Thus, this annulment was not the human will of Prophet Muhammad or his Companions; rather, it was an annulment by Allah’s Decree. It might be that human beings know some things and are ignorant of others, but Allah, the Knower of All, said: ‘Disavowal by Allah and His Prophet [is herewith announced] ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 1).

Allah *Glorified is He* did not say: ‘Disavowal by Allah and disavowal by His Prophet’ since it was a single disavowal which came from Allah, the One Who ordained the Sublime Laws, to be conveyed by His last Messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The disavowal was directed at the idolaters who did not honour the pacts they had with Prophet Muhammad.

We know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had made a pledge with the tribe of Khuza‘a, who had a rival tribe named Bakr that stood with the Quraysh. The Quraysh had assisted the tribe of Bakr against the tribe of Khuza‘a, so a poet from Khuza‘a named ‘Amr ibn Salim al-Khuza’i went to Medinah and said his famous poem which included the following verses of poetry:

O Lord, I call upon Muhammad,
By the old pact of our fathers
You were a father to us, and we were sons,
And then we embraced Islam, and therein still we remain.
So aid us, may Allah guide you, with the firmest aid,
And allow Allah’s servants to come in droves.
Quraysh have indeed broken their promises to you,
And violated your avowed pledges
They have plotted against us with all their cunning,
And slain us even as we bowed and prostrated!

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard this, he said, ‘You have found succour and aid, O, ‘Amr ibn Salim! I shall not be aided (by Allah) unless I support you!’

Thus, the idolaters were the ones who broke the pact first, and thereby, proved themselves untrustworthy since they respected no pact or pledge. Allah revealed the verse: 'Disavowal by Allah and His Prophet [is herewith announced] unto those who ascribe divinity to partners beside Allah, [and] with whom you [O, believers] have made a covenant.' (*at-Tawba*: 1) These words are addressed to the Muslims, and the disavowal is announced unto the idolaters.

After these verses, Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the following verse:

فَسِيحُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُحْزِي الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢﴾

you [idolaters] may move freely about the land for four months, but you should bear in mind both that you will not escape God, and that God will disgrace those who defy [Him] [2] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 2)

These words are addressed to the idolaters. Someone might ask, 'How could Allah's Words in the first verse address the Muslims, concerning their disavowal of the idolaters, and in the next verse, He addresses the idolaters directly?' Some scholars said that since the disavowal had been announced by Allah *the Most High* He was ordering the believers to transmit the next verse to the idolaters: 'Go, then, [freely] about the earth for four months ...' (*at-Tawba*: 2). Our opinion is that when a pact made between two parties is annulled by Allah *Glorified is He*, there had to be a verse addressing both those parties: those who severed the agreement and those who were severed by it. The first verse addressed those who were harmed by the pact, and the second verse addressed the disbelievers who broke the rules of the agreement.

The justice and tolerance of this religion that Allah *the Almighty* has revealed is clear in the second verse. Allah *the Exalted* gave a period of four months as a respite, free from any attacks towards disbelievers, so that it would not be said that Muslims had attacked them without prior notice. Allah gave this period to disbelievers whose pact was to end in less than four months. For those disbelieving tribes whose pacts were signed for more than four months, Allah ordered the Muslims to give them security until the end of their pact's term. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* despite annulling the pacts with the disbelievers, forbade the Muslims from any attacks during the pact times that they had originally agreed upon.

‘Go, then (*seehu*), [freely] about the earth for four months ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 2) The words ‘Go, then’ give a faithful assurance to disbelievers. The Arabic word ‘*saaha*’ (or *seehu*) means to move slowly; while another Arabic word ‘*saala*’ means ‘to flow quickly’. Thus, the word ‘*saaha*’ (or *seehu*) can be used to describe the melting of butter, whereas the word ‘*saala*’ is used to describe a quicker fluid movement. Why did Allah use the word ‘*seehu*’, which indicates a slower movement when talking about the disbelievers? The answer is that the tolerance of Islam forbade the Muslims from attacking the disbelievers without prior notice. Those with whom the Muslims had severed the pact had the right to travel in safety and security, without being threatened by anyone, for the allocated time.

The scholars deliberated the reason for the respite term being specified as four months. Some of the scholars considered this specification to be related to the time at which the verse was revealed, which was the month of Shawwal. So, the four months would have been *Shawwal*, *Dhul-Qi‘da*, *Dhul-Hijja* and *Al-Muharram*.

Other scholars said that the time at which the verse was revealed has nothing to do with the four months ordained by Allah *the Most High*. The four months began the moment the announcement was made which was during the pilgrimage since Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘and a proclamation from Allah and His Prophet [is herewith made] unto all mankind on this day of the Greatest Pilgrimage.’ (*at-Tawba*: 3). Based on this, the four months would have been from the tenth of *Dhul-Hijja* until the tenth of *Rabi-ul-Akhir*. Still, other scholars had the opinion that this verse was revealed during the year of the *Nasee’* in which some Arabs altered the sanctity of the four sacred months according to their convenience. Allah *Glorified is He* says about this practice: ‘The *Nasee’* [intercalation (of months)] is but one more instance of [their] disbelief – [a means] by which those who are bent on denying the truth are led astray. They declare this [intercalation] to be permissible in one year and forbidden in [another] year, in order to conform [outwardly] to the number of months which Allah has made sacred’ (*at-Tawba*: 37).

Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* delivered a sermon during the pilgrimage

wherein he said, 'Indeed, time began to turn in its natural way the day Allah created the heavens and the earth. The year consists of twelve months, of which four are sacred; three are consecutive: *Dhul-Qi'da*, *Dhul-Hijja* and *Al-Muharram*; and (then there is) the month of *Rajab Mudarr*, which lies between *Jumada* and *Sha'ban*.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* declared that from the beginning of the world, this system of time had existed. Thus, the practice of *Nasee* was forbidden. In this practice, Arabs used to advance or postpone the sacred months according to their choosing. If the sacred months came during the middle of a war, they would delay the sacred months so that their war would continue. Therefore, that year, the pilgrimage took place in *Dhul-Qi'da*, and since the pilgrimage took place in *Dhul-Qi'da*, this meant that the four months of respite would have ended on the tenth of *Rabi-ul-Awwal*.

It is also said that the four months were chosen to reflect what Allah *Glorified is He* decreed when He said: 'Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months, [laid down] in Allah's Decree on the day when He created the heavens and the earth; [and] out of these, four are sacred...' (*at-Tawba*: 36). According to this opinion, the number of months of respite, mentioned in this chapter, was the same number of the sacred months ordained by Allah *Glorified is He*. The problem with this opinion is that only three of the sacred months are consecutive. These are *Dhul-Qi'da*, *Dhul-Hijja* and *Muharram*. The fourth sacred month which is not in this succession is *Rajab*. Therefore, we say that this opinion is not right, and these are not the same four successive months of respite as the four sacred months ordained by Allah *the Exalted*. Our opinion is that the four sacred months, which include *Rajab*, are the constant sacred months, whilst the four months this verse mentions are ordained by Allah *Glorified is He* to forestall the end of the pact.

Allah *the Almighty* established the sacred months to protect people's lives from one another since the wars of Arabs lasted for long years without any decisive victory. Thus, Allah established the sacred months so that people would incline towards peace and use their reasoning to end these wars.

(1) Narrated by Imam Ahmad and Al-Bukhari

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* informs us that He gave the idolaters four months to travel freely. Why is that? The army that is weak will seize any opportunity to defeat its enemy and will not give any days of respite or peace, let alone four months. On the other hand, a strong established army does not fear to give its enemy time of peace and respite since they can overcome their enemies at any time they please. Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... but know that you can never elude Allah.’ (*at-Tawba*: 2)

When it is said that a person ‘eluded’ (*a‘jaza*) another person, it also means ‘to overpower’ or ‘overwhelm’. This means that they made the other person weak and powerless (*‘ajiz*). You will find that any transcendent force that overpowers a worthy opponent is an honour for the overpowered opponent. For example, when the Noble Quran came as an overwhelming miracle and challenge to Arabs, this was an honour for them since they were a people of eloquence and rhetoric. Allah does not challenge the weak, but only challenges the strong and established. The language of the Quran overwhelmed their eloquence and rhetorical brilliance.

Therefore, when Allah *Glorified is He* gave this respite to the idolaters, it was subject to certain conditions. The leader of the pilgrimage that year was our master Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* and he would be the one to deliver to the idolaters the articles of the disavowal. These articles stated that no idolater could enter the Sacred Mosque, perform the pilgrimage or perform circumambulation around the *Ka’ba* naked and that no one would enter Paradise except those who had faith.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew with his prophetic wisdom that the Arabs would only accept the severing of pacts to be done by a kinsman who had written the pact with them. Thus, he sent ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* to announce the disavowal. This would prevent the idolaters from saying, ‘We do not accept the severing of the pacts from Abu Bakr, rather, we must hear it from a close kinsman of the one who has severed them.’

Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘...but know that you can never elude Allah.’ (*at-Tawba*: 2) Allah *the Exalted* gave this long period of respite since He has sublime control over everything, and nothing escapes nor eludes Him. Despite their trials to find allies that support them, they would not be able to do

anything against Allah *the Most High*. It is true that they were weak at this time, and the weak armies can often be deadly to the strong armies since they are using their last straw. However, Allah has complete control over everything. An Arab poet wanted to express this, so he said:

When the weak have their one chance,
This is when the power of the weak emerges.

Since weak people will seize their opportunity to defeat their rivals, whilst the strong people know that they can deal with their enemy at any time.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘... and [know] that, verily, Allah shall bring disgrace upon all who refuse to acknowledge the truth!’ (*at-Tawba*: 2) To bring disgrace to them means to humiliate them by revealing and exposing their flaws. This humiliation brings its toll only to someone who is arrogant and full of pride. This means that Allah *Glorified is He* can bring disgrace upon disbelievers by exposing them, however strong and mighty they appear. Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

وَأَذِّنْ مِنْ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِنَ
الْمُشْرِكِينَ وَرَسُولُهُ إِنَّا بُشِّرُكُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا
أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣﴾

**On the Day of the Great Pilgrimage [there will be] a
proclamation from God and His Messenger to all people:
‘God and His Messenger are released from [treaty] obligations to
the idolaters. It will be better for you [idolaters] if you repent;
know that you cannot escape God if you turn away.’ [Prophet],
warn those who ignore [God] that they will have a painful
punishment[3] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 3)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Disavowal by Allah and His Prophet’ (*at-Tawba*: 1) in the first verse. Why are the words repeated in the third verse: ‘and a proclamation (*adhan*): Allah disavows all who ascribe divinity to partners beside Him, and [so does] His Prophet.’ (*at-Tawba*: 3)? We say that the first verse was meant to announce the concept of disavowal, while the third verse’s proclamation

was meant to convey the disavowal to disbelievers. A ‘proclamation’ (*adhan*) means an announcement given to all the people just like the call to prayer (*adhan*) is an announcement to the people that it is time to pray. The word ‘*adhan*’ is derived from the word ‘*udhun*’ which means ‘ear’ since when someone wants to tell the people something, he must announce it so that they hear it with their ears which are the primary means of perception. Before you can speak, you must hear, and if you have never heard spoken words, you will not be able to speak properly. Therefore, Allah says about the disbelievers: ‘deaf, mute ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 18) which means that they cannot hear the truth, and as long as they cannot hear the truth, they cannot speak it unto others.

The ear is the first means of perception to function as soon as one is born. If you signal with your fingers to the eye of a new-born baby, it will not react since the eye does not begin to function until a few days after birth. However, if you shout near a baby, it will hear and be startled.

When Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the means of perception, He mentioned hearing first by saying: ‘... He has blessed you with hearing, sight and minds.’ (*an-Nahl*: 78). This is due to the fact that the ear begins to function right away, as we said, whilst the eye only begins to work properly after some time. The ear is able to receive several sounds all at once, whilst the field of vision is limited. When you do not want to see something, you can turn your eyes away from it, but sounds enter your ear from all directions without you being able to stop them easily. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* uses the word ‘*sam*’ (hearing), which is an Arabic singular noun, while using the plural noun for ‘sight’ by saying ‘*absar*’. The ears can hear sounds whether you are awake or asleep. Different sounds can be heard, and the perception of them is united in one single wave. So, it is a means of recollection and awakening. Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* spoke about the People of the Cave, He made them sleep for three hundred and nine years, even though the most a man sleeps is a single day or part of a day. Allah *Glorified is He* says about this: ‘And thereupon we veiled their ears in the cave for many years.’ (*al-Kahf*: 11)

He veiled their ears so that they would not be woken by the loud voice of a man or a beast. When they finally awoke, they said, ‘We have remained thus a day, or part of a day,’ (*al-Kahf*: 19) since a man does not usually sleep

longer than this. This indicates that when they awoke, they were in the same condition they had been in before they slept, and nothing had changed about them. This indicates that Allah *the Exalted* stopped time from moving for them. Had Allah not veiled their ears, they would have been startled by the sounds of thunder, wild animals or similar noises.

Modern science has affirmed that if someone remains unconscious for a long period of time due to illness, doctors fear that he will be afflicted by bedsores. The doctor does not only worry about the illness itself, but also the effects of prolonged recumbence. Allah *Glorified is He* alludes to this fact when He says: '... And We caused them to turn over repeatedly, to the right and to the left.' (*al-Kahf*: 18) Since the ear is the means of hearing, we find that Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'When the sky is split asunder, obeying its Lord (*adhinat le-rabiha*), as in truth it must.' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 1-2) The Arabic verb used for 'obeying' was '*adhinat*', derived from the Arabic noun '*udhun*' (ear). This indicates that as soon as the sky hears Allah's command to split, it will immediately obey by splitting on the Day of Resurrection.

The one who delivered the proclamation from Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to all the people on the day of the pilgrimage was 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him*. Then, why did Allah say: 'And a proclamation from Allah and His Prophet' (*at-Tawba*: 3)? Allah *the Most High* told His Messenger Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and Prophet Muhammad told 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him*. Then, 'Ali made the announcement and conveyed the message to the disbelievers.

Someone might object that Allah *Glorified is He* instructed that the proclamation be addressed to all the people even though the disavowal was concerned with the idolaters only. The proclamation was made to all the people, believers and disbelievers alike so that everyone would know their situation. They should know that the pact was annulled in light of the proclamation issued by Allah, and no one would be attacked by surprise. Allah *the Almighty* wanted to make matters fair and balanced between the believers and the disbelievers. Therefore, He did not address the believers alone, but addressed the whole world. The believers must be the ones who strive to harmonise the motions of the world with the ways that please Allah *Glorified is He*. Both the believers

and the disbelievers will then benefit from this justice, security and integrity, which Allah's Way establishes on the earth.

Therefore, the True Lord *the Most High* alerts us that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* came bearing Allah's Way in order to rectify the whole world, as He *Glorified is He* says: 'Behold, We have bestowed upon you from on high this Book, setting forth the truth, so that you may judge between people in accordance with what Allah has taught you ...' (*an-Nisa*: 105). What this means is to judge between all people according to the way of Heaven is what Allah wants from His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*.

The Words of Allah *Glorified is He* 'and a proclamation from Allah and His Prophet [is herewith made] unto all mankind on this day of the Greatest Pilgrimage ...' (*at-Tawba*: 3), are universal with respect to both place and people on the day of the pilgrimage, where all the people gather in one place.

Someone might ask why He called it the 'Greatest Pilgrimage'. We say that it is because it was the only pilgrimage which was attended by both disbelievers and believers; for after this, there was no longer a pilgrimage for disbelievers and idolaters. Some scholars say that the words 'Greatest Pilgrimage' were meant to distinguish the 'lesser pilgrimage' (*'umra*) from the major pilgrimage in which the pilgrims stand at '*Arafa*, but we say that '*umra* is not known as the 'lesser pilgrimage.'

It is said that the 'day of the Greatest Pilgrimage' is the Day of '*Arafa*, but other scholars say that it is the day of the sacrifice because this day contains many rites: pelting the stones, cutting the hair and making the going-forth circumambulation (*tawaf al-ifadah*). Therefore, the day of the sacrifice is called the 'day of the Greatest Pilgrimage' because of its numerous rites. It is also said that in this verse all of the days of the pilgrimage are meant which are called 'the days of the pilgrimage' after a tradition of the Arabs to refer to a single event, with all its many happenings, as one single event. For example, Allah *the Exalted* refers to the 'Day of Hunayn' even though the battle of Hunayn lasted several days; it is as though the word 'day' in this phrase means the unifying period of time in which a great event occurred, and therefore, all the days of the pilgrimage are called 'the day of the pilgrimage.'

Or it means that the message which our master 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* delivered was announced on the Day of 'Arafa, and everyone who heard this announcement told those who did not hear it. The noble verse says: 'And a proclamation from Allah and His Prophet [is herewith made] unto all mankind on this day of the Greatest Pilgrimage: "Allah disavows all who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and [so does] His Prophet ..."' (*at-Tawba*: 3).

This was a proclamation from Allah unto His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and from the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* and from 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* to the believers, and from the believers who heard to those who did not, that Allah had disavowed the idolaters. This was an announcement of exclusion, but in His Mercy Allah *Glorified is He* never closes the door to His servants, and therefore, He then says: '... Hence, if you repent, it shall be for your own good ...' (*at-Tawba*: 3). What this means is that Allah opened the door of repentance to them so that if they repented, He would pardon them, and if they did not repent, then the final word was the following: '... and if you turn away, then know that you can never elude Allah! And unto those who are bent on denying the truth give you [O, Prophet] the tiding of grievous chastisement.' (*at-Tawba*: 3)

Therefore, the True Lord *the Most High* had absolute power over them and could take them to task no matter where they were. Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and those who conveyed his message had to give disbelievers the tidings of a grievous chastisement. A 'tiding' (*bisharah*) is news of something good, and a warning is news of something bad. So is chastisement a tiding or a warning? We say that this is an aspect of the beautiful rhetorical style of the Noble Quran: it announces a glad tiding to disbelievers so that they expect something good, and then it gives them the bad news of the chastisement which awaits them. It is like going to a very thirsty person with a glass of ice cold water, and then when you almost reach him and the water all but touches his lips, you pour the water onto the ground. This is an even worse torment and a worse disappointment; the soul first expands, and then contracts. A poet said of this:

It is as though a cloud formed above a people waiting for rain,
And then as soon as they saw it, it dissipated and cleared.

Therefore, there are two wounds, not only one: a hopeful beginning, and then a crushing end. In the case of a warning, there is only one wound. Consider the Words of the True Lord *the Exalted*: ‘... and if they beg for water, they will be given water ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 29). When you hear ‘they will be given water’, you expect that there will be relief, but then the full answer is given: ‘... they will be given water [hot] like molten lead, which will scald their faces ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 29).

In this verse, Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘... and if you turn away, then know that you can never elude God! And unto those who are bent on denying the truth give you [O, Prophet] the tiding of grievous chastisement.’ (*at-Tawba*: 3) Sometimes Allah's chastisement is described as being ‘severe’, other times as ‘humiliating’ and other times as ‘grievous’. This is due to the attribute differing according to the attributes of those who are being chastised, and He will give every sinner and disbeliever the punishment which is most appropriate for them: there are men who can withstand punishment, but cannot withstand being humiliated, and there are others who can withstand humiliation, but cannot withstand grievous pain. It is as though everyone will be given the chastisement which will affect them the most; if nothing but severe chastisement affects them, they will be given it; if nothing but humiliation affects them, they will be given it, and if nothing but grievous pain affects them, they will be given it. Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا
عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا فَأَتِمُوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مُدَّتِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤﴾

**As for those who have honored the treaty you made
with them and who have not supported anyone against
you: fulfil your agreement with them to the end of their
term. God loves those who are mindful of Him [4]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 4)**

This is an exception, but it is an exception on the condition that these people were faithful to the covenant they made and held to it, contravening no part of it. This means that they did not block your trade, seize any booty from

you or steal your weapons, along with none of them trying to turn others against you or aid others against you. These were the tribes of Banu-Damrah and Banu-Kinanah, who did nothing against the believers, and therefore, the commandment came to hold to the pact made with them as long as it lasted. Someone might say, 'An exception means that there must be people from whom the exception is made.' We say that the people from whom the exception was made were the idolaters (those who ascribed divinity to aught besides Allah) of whom the True Lord *the Exalted* says: 'But excepted shall be – from among those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah– [people] with whom you [O, believers] have made a covenant and who thereafter have in no wise failed to fulfil their obligations towards you, and neither have aided anyone against you ...' (*at-Tawba*: 4).

The word *inqas* which translates in this verse 'to fail to fulfil one's obligation', literally means 'to decrease the amount of something' and can be applied both to human beings and human assets. When it is applied to human beings, it means 'to kill', and when it is applied to human assets, it means to forcibly seize goods, livestock or weapons.

Therefore, there are two levels of *inqas*: one concerns human beings, i.e. to kill, and one concerns human assets, i.e. possessions. Thus, He says, '...and who thereafter have in no wise failed to fulfil their obligations towards you ...' (*at-Tawba*: 4) in any way at all, whether regarding human beings or human assets, and also they did not try to turn anyone against you nor encourage anyone to work against the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: '... and neither have aided anyone against you ...' (*at-Tawba*: 4).

To 'aid', or *yuzhahir*, in this verse means 'to assist' and is derived from the word *zhahr* which means 'back', and the back can carry more than the hand. For example, a man cannot carry a sack of wheat in his hand, but he can carry it on his back. Therefore, the popular Egyptian saying goes: 'If someone has your back, you shall not be hit on the belly.' Thus, the back symbolises assistance. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '... But [now] we have given strength against their foes unto those who have [truly] attained to faith, and they have become the ones that shall prevail (*zhahirin*).' (*as-Saff*: 14). This means that they shall be ascendant.

When Allah *Glorified is He* tells us the story of how two of the Prophet's wives contrived against him, He says: '... And if you uphold (*tazahara*) each other against him [who is Allah's message-bearer, know that] Allah Himself is his Protector, and [that,] therefore, Jibril (Gabriel) and all the righteous among the believers, and all the [other] angels will come to his aid (*zhahir*).' (*at-Tahrim*: 4). Thus, the word *zhahir* in this noble verse means 'aid', and the True Lord *the Most High* is alluding here to man's area of strength. Therefore, it is said, 'So-and-so backs me up', which means he aids me with his strength. Furthermore, in Arabic, the verb *zhahara* can mean 'to defeat', and it can be said that so-and-so 'overcame the other's back' which means that he overcame his strength. Thus, we find that when Allah *the Exalted* spoke about Dhu Al-Qarnayn in the chapter of *al-Kahf*, He mentioned some events in his life by saying: 'And he marched on] till, when he reached [a place] between the two mountain-barriers, he found beneath them a people who could scarcely understand a word [of his language]. They said, "O, you two-Horned One! Behold, Gog and Magog are spoiling this land. May we and then pay unto you a tribute on the understanding that you will erect a barrier between us and them?" He answered, 'That wherein my Lord has so securely established me is better [than anything that you could give me]. Hence, do but help me with [your labour's] strength, [and] I shall erect a rampart (*radm*) between you and them!'" (*al-Kahf*: 93-95)

Allah *Glorified is He* draws our attention to a scientific fact which we only came to know recently. If a dam is entirely made of hard material, it will be in risk of collapsing if it is struck by a tremor which affects all sides of it. However, if there is a hard layer on the outside and then another small layer in the middle, and a third and a fourth layer, each layer separated from the other by a soft layer (*radm*) of soil, these soft layers will absorb the force of the impact. The same principle is behind the sponge in which we wrap things that we fear might break in order to protect them. If we placed these fragile objects in a box made of wood, steel or any other hard material, the contents would break as soon as the box was placed firmly on the ground. However, if we wrap the fragile objects in sponge, the sponge will absorb the impacts. The kinds of dams which can handle impacts are called rubble-filled dams.

Therefore, we can note that the True Lord *the Most High* says: '... do but help me with [your labour's] strength ...' (*al-Kahf*: 95). This shows us that the strong must aid the weak in a way which will mean he does not have to seek his aid again thereafter. Therefore, it is said: Do not give a hungry man a fish but teach him how to catch fish so that he will rely on himself from then on. This is the right way to give assistance. Thus, we find that Dhu Al-Qarnayn refused to take any payment for building the rampart since the mission of strong people on earth who possess the power of faith is to ward off evil without taking any payment so that the balance of life will be restored; the weak might not be in a position to repay them. Also, if any strong person wanted payment for succouring the weak, the balance of life would be disturbed, and people would become tyrannous. However, in our world, the strong people may seek to use their power to do evil, and therefore, the balance of the world in which we live will be disturbed. Let us then consider the decision which Allah entrusted to Dhu Al-Qarnayn, how he ruled the people well and established justice amongst them and how he dealt with the evildoers. The Noble Quran tells us that Dhu Al-Qarnayn said: 'as for him who does wrong [unto others] – him shall we, in time, cause to suffer, and thereupon he shall be referred to his Lord, and He will cause him to suffer with unnameable suffering. But as for him who believes and does righteous deeds, he will have the ultimate good [of the life to come] as his reward ...' (*al-Kahf*: 87-88).

Thus, Dhu al-Qarnayn established justice by chastising evildoers and honouring believers and doers of righteous deeds.

The Words which Allah *Glorified is He* tells us Dhu Al-Qarnayn uttered were 'help me' which teach us how to maintain justice on the earth. If the one to whom Allah has given means wants to help the weak, he must include them in his actions, not work, whilst they look on, otherwise, they will become used to laziness, and their determination will be spoiled. On the other hand, if he makes them work with him, they will do the work and then become adept at it, so their skills and their ability to face life with strength will increase. Therefore, we find that Dhu Al-Qarnayn had the weak ones work alongside him and said to them, 'Bring me ingots of iron!' (*al-Kahf*: 96). Therefore, he had them work and build with him, and this is the duty of a strong person regarding the

strength which Allah *the Exalted* gives him. Indeed, we find that he communicated with them even though the True Lord *the Exalted* says the following about them: ‘... a people who could scarcely understand a word.’ (*al-Kahf*: 93)

So, how did he communicate with them? Perhaps he used sign language and tried to make them understood what he meant. The Quran indicates that they understood him when Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that they said: ‘... O, you Two-Horned One! Behold, Gog and Magog are spoiling this land. May we, then pay you a tribute on the understanding that you will erect a barrier between us and them?’ (*al-Kahf*: 94)

The barrier was built with the aid of these weak people, and this barrier was built in a way that challenged the power of the enmity of Gog and Magog; each of them attempted to scale the barrier and pass over it, but it was beyond the ability of either one of them to get past it. Allah *Glorified is He* makes this clear to us when He says: ‘And thus [the rampart was built, and] their enemies were unable to scale it, and neither were they able to pierce it.’ (*al-Kahf*: 97)

Therefore, the True Lord’s Words ‘...and neither has aided anyone against you. Observe, then, your covenant with them until the end of the term agreed with them ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 4) mean that they have not aided or abetted any of your enemies to overcome you. Also Allah’s allowing the covenant to be completed to the end of its term means that the term must have been longer than four months. Thus, He *the Almighty* shows us the magnificence of His justice: He allowed those whose pact would have lasted less than four months to have a four-month respite. Furthermore, since the True Lord *the Most High* does not love to see covenants broken, He instructed the believers to give the idolaters, who had made covenants with them, the full duration of theirs, even if it was due to last more than four months, so that a believer would know that he must adhere to covenants as long as the other party respects them. The increased period of time here, or the increased respite, was a product of the Power and Might of Allah *Glorified is He* for no one on the earth can escape Him; so whether the period was long or short, it would not give the idolaters any special advantage, and Allah could take them to task at any time or place.

Allah *Glorified is He* ends this verse by saying: ‘...Verily, Allah loves those who are conscious of Him.’ (*at-Tawba*: 4)

Allah-conscious, or *muttaqun*, is those who place a barrier, or *wiqaya* between themselves and anything which angers Him. If some people are astonished that Allah would say, 'Be conscious of Allah' and also 'Be conscious of the fire', we say, 'Be conscious of Allah' means to place a barrier between yourselves and Allah's attributes of Might; be conscious of Allah's attributes of Might so that you are not afflicted with His chastisement. Allah has attributes of Majesty such as the Lord of Retribution, the All-Compeller and the All-Dominant, and He has attributes of Beauty such as the Dispenser of Mercy, the All-Giver, the All-Provider and the Superb Arbiter; so place a barrier and a means of protection between yourselves and Allah's attributes of Majesty lest you incur Allah's Wrath. A man can protect himself from Allah's attributes of Majesty by following His Way and obeying His Commandments, thus attaining the gifts of the attributes of Beauty. Also, when the True Lord *the Most High* says, 'Be conscious of the fire', this means place a barrier between yourselves and hell so that the fire does not touch you.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخَذُواهُمْ
وَأَحْصُواهُمْ وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ إِن تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَوْا
الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

When the [four] forbidden months are over, wherever you encounter the idolaters, kill them, seize them, besiege them, wait for them at every lookout post; but if they turn [to God], maintain the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms, let them go on their way, for God is most forgiving and merciful [5] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 5)

The word (*insalakha* means 'to end', which basically means 'when the sacred months come to an end'. The root of this verb *s-l-kh* means to remove something which is stuck to something else; the verb *salakha* means 'to skin', or, in other words, to remove the skin of a slaughtered animal such as a sheep from its flesh; also, the skin is always firmly attached to the flesh. It is as though Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell us that the sacred months are a period of time, and time is a container – people are contained within time and space

– so it is as though the sacred months surround them as a protection for them from disbelievers, and once the sacred months are over this protection will be removed from them after it had been firmly attached to them. The verb *insalakha* has two meanings: it can mean ‘to be removed’ from something (*insalakha ‘an*), or it can mean ‘to remove oneself’ from something (*insalakha min*). Therefore, we find in the Noble Quran that the True Lord *the Exalted* says: ‘And tell them the tiding of him to whom We vouchsafed Our messages and who then discarded them (*insalakha minha*) ...’ (*al-A’raf*: 175).

This noble verse was revealed about Ibn Ba‘ura’, to whom Allah gave knowledge, wisdom and messages, but he treated them lightly and discarded them; it is as though he was the one who removed himself from them willingly, and it was not they that were removed from him. Therefore, he was in a similar position to that of the sheep from which we remove the skin.

Allah *Glorified is He* also says: ‘And [of our sway over all that exists] they have a sign in the night: We withdraw (*naslakh*) from it the [light of] day ...’ (*Ya Sin*: 37). It is as though the night is like a slaughtered animal, and then the day comes and not only strips away the darkness, but removes it along with bringing light. It is as though the night is a dark garment which is covered with the white garment of day, and when the time for night comes, the white garment is pulled back, or the light is stripped from the dark of night so that the world becomes filled with the darkness of night. It is as though the light intrudes upon the darkness and covers it with whiteness, or in other words,, the light is what comes and goes, whilst the darkness is always there; when the light of the sun comes it becomes day, and when it is taken away, it becomes night.

Also, what would happen when the sacred months were over? The True Lord *the Most High* says: ‘And so, when the sacred months are over, slay those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah wherever you may come upon them, take them captive, besiege them and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 5).

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* decreed that, after the idolaters were given a four month respite and those whose pacts would last longer than that were given until the end of them, the punishment of the idolater would then be death. Why is this? The reason is that there could not be two religions in that one place

Someone might say, 'What about religious freedom?' We say that there is a difference between the environment in which the Quran was revealed in the language of its inhabitants (to a messenger from their own selves whom they knew well including all about his history and past) and an environment which has its own rules concerning how revelation comes. These were the ones in whose land the Quran was revealed and to one of whose own people the message was given, and he was known by them to be faithful; they recognised his honesty and trustworthiness, and they would trust him with any of the valuable treasures they possessed. All of this was a prelude to the coming of the message, and this prelude was enough that if he said to them, 'I am the Prophet', they should not have disbelieved him, for if he had never told a lie to any of them in the forty years he had lived amongst them, would he tell a lie about Allah? Would the one who never lies about men lie about Allah? This notion is illogical and irrational. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* said: '... a Prophet from among yourselves ...' (*at-Tawba*: 128). What this means is that he is not a stranger to you, and you know him well to the point that you would even trust him with the most valuable of your possessions. Furthermore, you knew him as 'The Trustworthy One' in all of your worldly affairs. So, how could the trustworthy one lie to you? Moreover, the Noble Quran which was the miracle of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was revealed in your own language and its rhetorical style is the same kind as that in which you most excel. It was therefore an unanswerable miracle for you, and Allah challenged you to bring forth a chapter like it, yet you were unable to do so, even though you are the kings of rhetoric and eloquence. Therefore, the twin unanswerable miracles of the Messenger's honesty and trustworthiness and the Quran's miraculous rhetoric meant that you had to believe, and for you not to believe in such a situation is a grave sin, deserving of a stern punishment.

Thus, if someone asks, 'Is there religious freedom?' Is there implementation of the True Lord's Words 'There shall be no coercion in matters of faith ...' (*al-Baqara*: 256)? We say that, indeed, no one must be compelled to believe in Allah and in His religion, but as long as you have believed, you must do what this belief demands of you; as to whether you are thinking of accepting

the religion or not, you are free to choose to believe in Allah or not. However, if you believe, we must expect of you full adherence to this belief.

Moreover, the True Lord *the Most High* willed that there should not be two religions on the Arabian Peninsula. As for other lands, such as Persia and Byzantium, they could not appreciate the miraculous nature of the language of the Noble Quran, but they could hear the lofty teachings, which it imparted in the form of effective laws that gave life order and raised it to a higher level.

As for those who knew the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and the eloquence of the miracle which he brought, it was not acceptable for them not to enter Islam, nor was it acceptable for them to remain in the land of the message without submitting to it; if they wanted to continue with their idolatry, they would have to move far away from this land.

There are those who say that 'Islam spread by the sword' or 'by the non-Muslim poll tax (*jizya*)'. We say that Islam spread because of the sound role-model it embodied; as for the sword, it was used to defend the people's right to choose their beliefs in the lands which Islam entered by conquest. Furthermore, the purpose of the non-Muslim poll tax was to protect those who wanted to remain in their old religion.

We find in our daily lives people who take 'There shall be no coercion in matters of faith' (*al-Baqara: 256*) out of its proper context. When a Muslim says to another, 'Why do you not pray?', he replies to him by saying, 'There shall be no coercion in matters of faith.' (*al-Baqara: 256*) We say: 'There shall be no coercion in matters of faith' (*al-Baqara: 256*) is concerned with the peak of faith, namely whether you wish to profess yourself a Muslim or not. However, once you have professed your faith and become one of the Muslims, you must adhere to what the religion has made incumbent upon you; so you cannot drink wine or commit adultery.

So, 'There shall be no coercion in matters of faith' (*al-Baqara: 256*) means that no one should be compelled to embrace Islam, but once someone has embraced it, they must be diligent in adhering to all of the religion's requirements.

Therefore, why were the Arabs compelled to enter Islam? It is said that there were two reasons for this: the first is that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was one of them, and the second is that the miracle was in their language.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues His words: ‘...Take them captive and besiege them ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 5). If it is too much for you to slay them, then take them captives; however, as long as they do not defend themselves by fighting you or threaten your lives, their blood should be spared, and they should be benefited from as captives. Likewise, if you fear their evil, then besiege them in a well-guarded place so that if they attempt any act of aggression, it will be easy for you to expose it and chastise them for it. To ‘besiege’ in this verse means to restrict their movement whilst allowing them a certain amount of it so that they never escape your sight.

Allah *the Exalted* then continues: ‘...and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place...’ (*at-Tawba*: 5). What this means is watch their movements so that you are protected from their plots and so that they cannot get to one another and band together in aggression against Islam. Observe their movements, their speech and their actions; do not let them out of your sight and do whatever you can to be safe from their evil. However, do not observe them to such a point that you humiliate them, for to examine is not to humiliate.

Someone might ask: 'What is the reason for this difference in punishment, being slain, besieged or observed closely in streets and alleys?' We say that the punishments differed according to the different attitudes of the idolaters in the enmity they showed towards Islam. There were the leaders of disbelief who waged war against this religion and called the people to refrain from believing in it. Likewise, they strove to fight the believers, kill and hurt them; also, they would never be rectified and would never cease trying to hurt the believers, so they had to be requited with death.

There were also those who did not harm the Muslims but only publicly proclaimed their enmity to the message; these were less dangerous, so they were taken prisoners. Then there were the disbelievers who were guilty of nothing but refusing to be believers; as for these ones, their movements were observed to protect the believers from their evil, and so that the believers would always be ready to face them if they decided to harm, attack or fight the Muslims.

So, there was not one single punishment to deal with everyone since they were not all alike in the scale of their enmity towards Islam. There was one ruling for the leaders of disbelief and another ruling for those whose enmity

towards Islam was less severe. Then comes the Mercy of Allah, for He is merciful to His servants and never makes them despair of the possibility of returning to Him. He says: ‘... Yet if they repent, take to prayer and render the purifying dues, let them go their way, for, behold. Allah is Much-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy.’ (*at-Tawba*: 5)

Allah *Glorified is He* opens the door of repentance to His servants always, never closing it upon them. Therefore, Abu Hamza Anas ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him* the servant of the Prophet narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah rejoices at His servant's repentance more than one of you does when he finds his camel after having lost it in a barren land.'⁽¹⁾

For example, you are travelling in a barren desert very far from any settlement, and then you sit to take a rest along with the camel you are travelling on, loaded with your water and food and all your provisions. Then, you lose track of the camel, and it strays into the middle of the desert, and you cannot find it when you look. Suddenly, as you are stumbling along blindly you come across the camel there before you. How happy would you be? Doubtlessly, you would be exceedingly joyful having found the only thing which could save you from certain death, and this joy would completely fill your soul and overwhelm it. This is the joy of Allah at His servant's repentance. Therefore, He *the Exalted* clarifies that if these idolaters repent of their enmity to Allah's religion and His Messenger, take to prayer and render poor-dues, the Muslims must leave them alone and give them their freedom.

Therefore, we find three conditions: the first is repentance and the return to faith, the second is to take to prayer and the third is to render poor-dues. All three of these must be fulfilled; for to repent of disbelief is to embrace faith, and to embrace faith is to testify that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is His Prophet, and then to take to prayer, render poor-dues, fast the month of Ramadan and perform the pilgrimage, if one is able.

If you consider the Five Pillars of Islam, you find that a Muslim might perform some of them but not others. For example, the poor Muslim who

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

possesses nothing but the bare necessities of life is not obligated to pay poor-dues nor perform pilgrimage, and the Muslim who is seriously ill is not obligated to fast. Thus, there remains the testimony that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is His Prophet, which a Muslim is only legally obligated to say once in his life, along with the pillar of prayer which is never excused, whether in poverty or riches, or in health or sickness. This is due the prayer being the difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim, and it is the fortress of the whole religion since it is offered and repeated five times every day. So, an ill person must pray in sickness as well as when he is able; if he cannot perform it standing, he may sit, and if he cannot perform it sitting, he may lie down.

We know that every prayer incorporates all the other Pillars of Islam, for in every prayer you testify that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is His Prophet. In essence, every prayer contains a kind of poor-due since the poor-due is giving money to the poor, and money comes from work, and work requires time, and the prayer takes up some of the time which you could otherwise use to work and earn provisions, which you could give as poor-due; therefore, it is as though when you pray, you give some of your wealth to Allah *the Most High* since you take the time in which you otherwise could have worked and earned money to pay to the poor. Thus, it is as though to pray means to give up one's time as poor-due.

Time is what we require in order to work and earn money, so prayer is a kind of poor-due. After this, comes fasting. When you fast, you refrain from the desires of the stomach and the desires of the libido from just before dawn until sunset. Likewise, during prayer, you cannot eat, so it is as though you have to fast from the desire of the stomach whilst you pray, and similarly, you must fast from the desires of the libido since you cannot pray or do anything with your spouse at the same time. Indeed, when praying, you must abstain from even more things than when fasting, since you are prohibited from moving or speaking.

Then, we come to the pilgrimage to Allah's Inviolable House. We say that when you pray, you must face Allah's Inviolable House and determine the prayer-direction (*Qibla*); so it is as though Allah's House is on your mind and

in your thoughts when you face it during every prayer. Thus, we see that prayer combines all the Pillars of Islam, and therefore, our master ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Prayer is the fortress of the religion.'⁽¹⁾ If prayer is the fortress of the religion as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stated, then whoever performs it has performed the whole religion. One of the amazing aspects of the arrangement of the Quran's verses is that you find that prayer is always linked to poor-due since to pay poor-due is to offer money whilst performing prayer is to offer time, and we need time in order to work and earn money.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... Yet if they repent, take to prayer and render the purifying dues, let them go their way ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 5). This implies that if they do not fulfil these three things, they must not be allowed to go their way; furthermore, as long as we do not allow them to go their way, they are included in the punishments which Allah specified when He said ‘slay them’, ‘take them captive’, and ‘... besiege them. Lie in wait for them at every conceivable place ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 5).

The first of the punishments specified in this verse is death which was reserved for the leaders of disbelief. If a disbeliever embraced faith but neglected to pray, it could not be said that he had repented and embraced faith, nor could this be said if he neglected to render poor-dues. Therefore, if they did not perform these three acts of worship, they would not be left alone; this is why some scholars have the opinion that the one who refuses to pray should be executed. However, we say that one should not be executed since he who refuses to pray either does so because he denies that it is obligatory and disparages it, or it could be due to him being too lazy to do it. If he has abandoned prayer due to laziness and cannot keep himself from worldly distractions, we must try to use wisdom and sound counsel to advise him and encourage him to go back to praying at proper times. Then after that if he abandons it wilfully out of laziness, he should be punished with a severe blow. However, some scholars say that Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* fought against those who apostatised and refused to pay poor-dues. We say to

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bayhaqi*

them that he did not fight them because they were sinners, rather, he fought them due to their denying Allah's Law along with the obligation of poor-due, and thereby they had become apostates. There is a difference between those who deny Allah's Law and repudiate it and those who acknowledge Allah's Law and admit that although they believe in this law, they are unable to obey it, or those who confess that their observance of it is remiss. Therefore, we say to those who seek to defend usury and make it lawful. They may say, 'It is forbidden, but we cannot control ourselves' so that they do not thereby become disbelievers, for if they say that usury is not forbidden, they thereby disavow Allah's Law and take the position of disbelievers. However, if anyone of them were to say 'Usury is forbidden, but my circumstances have forced me to indulge in it, and I cannot help it', then he is only a sinner.

As we have said, this is the difference between the sin of Satan (Iblis) and the sin of Adam *peace be upon him*. Allah commanded Satan (Iblis) to prostrate, and he disobeyed, and Allah commanded Adam *peace be upon him* and he also disobeyed. Therefore, why did Allah *the Almighty* condemn Satan (Iblis) to be cursed until the Day of Resurrection, whilst Adam *peace be upon him* received words of repentance from his Lord and thus repented, and He forgave him? We say that it is because Satan (Iblis) disavowed Allah's commandments by saying: '... Shall I prostrate myself before one whom You have created out of clay?...?' (*al-Isra'*: 61) Furthermore, he said, '...I am better than he. You have created me out of fire, whereas him You have created out of clay.' (*Sad*: 76)

It is, therefore, as though Satan (Iblis) disavowed Allah's ruling. Adam *peace be upon him* however, did not say anything of the kind, rather, he said, 'Your ruling is correct, Lord, and what you commanded me to do was right. However, I could not help myself, and I sinned. So turn to me in forgiveness and pardon me!' Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us: 'The two replied: "... O, our Lord! We have sinned against ourselves – and unless You grant us forgiveness and bestow Your Mercy upon us, we shall most certainly be lost!' (*al-A'raf*: 23)

This is the difference between sin and disbelief. So, if the idolaters did not repent, take to prayer or render poor-dues, and Muslims were unable to deal with them, what should they do? Muslims must try to apply what Allah *the Exalted* commanded them to do about them.

However, what about the case if an idolater sought the protection of the Muslims? The True Lord *the Exalted* says:

وَأِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلِمَ
اللَّهِ ثُمَّ آتِلْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ، ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦﴾

If any one of the idolaters should seek your protection [Prophet], grant it to him so that he may hear the word of God, then take him to a place safe for him, for they are people with no knowledge [of it] [6] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 6)

Allah *Glorified is He* previously specified the period of respite which was either the sacred months or the duration of the pact, if there had been one. Also, He affirmed that if idolaters repented, took to prayer and rendered poor-dues, along with confirming their faith with action, the True Lord *the Most High* would forgive them for all they had done. Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* showed the greatness of Islam and the mercy which this religion brought with it by telling us that for disbelievers who did not repent and remained as they were, and we were not able to punish them in any of the prescribed ways, and then one of them came to the believers seeking protection – what should we do with him? Allah's verdict was that as long as he seeks your protection, give it to him. Furthermore, if you give him protection, then let him hear the Word of Allah and try to guide him to faith and the straight path; if he embraces faith and is convinced and proclaims his Islam, he will become one of the Muslims, and if he does not listen to the Word of Allah and is not convinced, then do not kill him. Rather take him to his secure place, or in other words, ask him where he came from. If he tells you the name of his tribe or the place where he comes from, make sure that he has safe passage to whatever place he can feel secure. This is the final stage of the relationship of faith with disbelief, the stage of protection and security for those who seek the believers' protection.

Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed graces upon mankind on the earth by sending to them His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which occurred a long period after the time of the messengers who preceded him. The people had forgotten the way to Heaven, and even the people of the Book had corrupted the teachings which had been revealed to them.

It was therefore necessary for Heaven to intervene by sending the Seal of Prophets and Messengers, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for the True Lord *Glorified is He* has placed various preventative measures within faith which reside first of all in the soul. When a soul inclines to sin, the faithful conscience diverts it from this sin, and this person repents and returns to Allah by his own accord and his own faithful conscience – this is the 'self-reproaching soul'. The existence of reproach in the soul means that there is still faith in it, and this faith is what holds back passion and prevents the soul from becoming accustomed to sin, along with returning the individual to the right track and the straight path.

However, suppose that a soul becomes so attracted to contravening Allah's Way that it no longer reproaches itself; it keeps sinning until it is accustomed to sin, and the faithful reserve within it dies so that we find it begins to love – Allah forbid- to contravene the way of the religion. It thereby becomes the 'soul which enjoins evil', and at this point, Allah transfers the preventative measure of faith from this individual soul to the people who live around it so that those who live around this sinner divert him from sin and take a faithful stance with him by preventing him and ostracising him until he comes to his senses and returns to his Lord. This is the second stage of faith. When the whole society is corrupted and there is no longer a sector which enjoins what is good and forbids what is evil, Heaven must intervene by sending a new message with a new messenger aided by a miracle from Heaven to wake people up from this deep state of heedlessness, which has overcome both individuals and societies.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came and confronted his society in which disbelief had spread throughout individuals and communities, there would inevitably be a conflict between faith and the disbelieving society. This is why the Prophet was met with such vehement enmity. Also, this opposition to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only came from those who benefited from the existence of corruption on earth, namely the rulers who benefited from the abandonment of truth and the spread of falsehood, seizing the rights of others and enslaving the people by using them to bring benefit and success to themselves, while withholding this from the rest of Allah's servants.

Those who benefit from corruption hate any reformer who comes to re-establish the balance of life's motions, so they will inevitably try to stand in his way to protect their positions of power, their benefits and their wealth, which they gained through falsehood and oppression, along with enslaving people. At this point in time, the Arabian Peninsula was composed of several tribes, each tribe having its own laws which its leader decreed, in order to bring himself personal benefit from everything.

This means that there was no link which connected these tribes to one another, and no general law to govern them; every tribe had its own battles, disputes and wars. Every tribal member had to be a warrior, carrying his weapon and being in a constant state of readiness for war at any moment since he was always threatened with the possibility that another tribe would turn against it. This was true of every tribe except one: Quraysh. They were the leaders, and no tribe would transgress against them or raid their caravans. Furthermore, no tribe in the north or south was able to attack their trade, for all of these tribes would one day have to come to the pilgrimage at Allah's Inviolable House in Mecca, and during the pilgrimage, all of these tribes would need protection from the Quraysh. Therefore, all the Arab tribes tried their utmost to keep good relations with the Quraysh since the control of Allah's Inviolable House which Allah had assigned to the Quraysh was their source of their assured security. Allah *Glorified is He* had undertaken to protect the Inviolable House against any aggression; even when Abraha came with his elephants to destroy the *Ka'ba*, Allah made him and his army like a field of grain eaten down to stubble, as the True Lord *the Exalted* says: 'Are you not aware of how your Lord dealt with the Army of the Elephant? Did He not utterly confound their artful planning? Thus, He let loose upon them great swarms of flying creatures, which smote them with stone-hard blows of chastisement pre-ordained and caused them to become like a field of grain that has been eaten down to stubble.' (*al-Fil*: 1-5)

If you read the chapter which comes directly after the chapter of *al-Fil*, you find that it says: 'So, that the Quraysh might remain secure, secure in their winter and summer journeys, let them, therefore, worship the Lord of this House Who has given them food against hunger and made them safe from danger.' (*Quraysh*: 1-4) It is as though the protection of the *Ka'ba* from

destruction was also protection from Allah *the Almighty* for the ruling status of the Quraysh. Therefore, it was incumbent upon the Quraysh to receive the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with faith and gratitude, along with an understanding and appreciation of this favour, instead of taking a stubborn stance against Islam and waging this vicious war against it. Instead of this, the opposite was the case: the Quraysh incorrectly imagined that Islam had only come to take their power, so they waged war against it.

If this was the case, why was the call to Islam not made far away from this power? It was due to the True Lord *the Most High* wanting the call of truth to be made right in the face of the tyranny of falsehood, and for Islam from its earliest days to confront the tyranny of all the leaders of the Arabian Peninsula, so that Allah could test the hearts of the early Muslims, for they would be the ones who later on would bear the message of Islam to the world. Therefore, no hypocrite or weak-faith people entered Islam at that time; rather only those who had true faith in their hearts and who could withstand all the manifestations of oppression and torture with the strength of their faith.

The True Lord *the Exalted* willed that Islam begin in Mecca, yet He did not give it succour from Mecca; rather, He *the Exalted* willed that the succour for Islam came from Medina. Had the Quraysh given succour to the call made by one of their own, they would have tried to keep it for themselves to rule the world by means of it, and thereupon, it would have been said that they only supported one of their own in order to retain their temporal power, and their embrace of Islam would have been hypocritical, not real. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* gave Islam succour from Medina so that everyone would know that tribal allegiance to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not create the belief in his message of Muhammad. Rather, it was belief in the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which created allegiance to him. Therefore, Allah *the Most High* willed that there be a fierce confrontation between the bearers of faith and the leaders of disbelief, and this confrontation had several stages:

The first stage was the call to faith, the call to love and the call to equality, along with the refusal to meet torture and murder with any violent response. This beginning did not impress the leaders of the Quraysh; instead, it made

them belittle the believers and harm and torture them even more severely, thinking that they would exterminate them completely. Thus, when they found that the call was becoming stronger, despite all the forms of torture and oppression which were directed against it, they began to repress the believers even more. So, some of the believers emigrated to Abyssinia and began to look for someone to protect and give them asylum. The True Lord *the Exalted* willed all this so that Islam would only be embraced by those whose hearts were filled with love for it and those who thought nothing of all the difficulties, persecution, murder and torture; these were the ones who would prove worthy to be trusted with the role of bearing the message to others. After this, the state of disbelief remained as it was, whilst faith began to gradually draw more people to it, and the disbelievers tried to attract the believers using cunning tricks after their power, force and terrorism had failed, so they said, 'We shall worship your God for a while, and then you shall worship our gods for a while.' So Allah *the Exalted* sent down a chapter which contained what they would call today a 'suspension of relations'. Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Say: "O, you who deny the truth! 'I do not worship that which you worship, and neither do you worship that which I worship! [And I will not worship that which you have [ever] worshipped, and neither will you [ever] worship that which I worship. Unto you, your moral law, and unto me, mine!'" (*al-Kafirun*: 1-6)

This was an announcement of a second stage, which was characterised by a complete absence of any amity or intermixing between disbelief and faith, for had the believers agreed to worship the gods of disbelief, this would amount to an admission that these gods were real. Furthermore, had they agreed to worship One God and then associate Him with other gods, this would be a capitulation, and this could never happen. The negation in this noble verse referred to both the present and the future; in international politics this is called a 'suspension of (diplomatic) relations'. Indeed, the suspension of international relations might be done temporarily for a contingent reason, whilst the difference between the early Muslims and the idolaters was not a conflict between two human ideas, rather, it was a conflict between the Way of Guidance willed by Heaven for the inhabitants of the earth on one side, and those who benefited from the corruption on earth on the other. Therefore, the

separation had to be permanent, and there could be no amity or intermixing between disbelief and faith. Therefore, the plots of the disbelievers to dilute and undermine the religion failed, and their scheme came to nothing. Furthermore, faith continued to be strong and united in the face of the tyranny of disbelief after it had been threatened by it.

After this came the third stage: the stage when the forces of disbelief acknowledged the power of faith. The disbelievers had been meting out oppression and torment to the believers, and the believers had met this with patience and forbearance; this continued until Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* emigrated to Medina, and the first armed encounter between faith and disbelief took place at the battle of Badr. The believers were victorious and attained a reputation which protected them so that they were no longer the weak and oppressed minority; rather, they came to have a position of strength and potency.

Although they did not yet have ascendancy, they became powerful enough to confront the disbelievers, or became just as powerful as they were so that they could prevent their acts of aggression and meet their blows with blows of their own.

When the faithful came to have this power and potency to protect themselves and became equally matched with the disbelievers, this was the beginning of the stage which gave Islam breathing space to spread the call outside of the influence of Mecca, and the Muslims could spread their message safe from the aggression and oppression of the disbelievers after the treaty of Hudaibiyya was made. The very signing and ratifying of this treaty was an acknowledgement of the existence of the Islamic state which is something that our master Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* realised, whilst others at first thought that the treaty of Hudaibiyya was a violation of the rights of the believers, so much to the point that 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Why do we yield in such a lowly manner against the honour of our religion?'

This issue caused great debate which almost arrived to the point where the believers went against the commandment of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, when Umm Salama *Allah be pleased with her* saw that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* feared that the believers would not

obey what he had commanded them to do, and she saw the great sadness on his face. She said, ‘O, Messenger of Allah, grieve not. The people are but saddened, for they had hopes of circumambulating the Sacred House, and here they are, so near the House but denied the right to circumambulate therein. The best thing to do now is not to speak to any of them, but to do as your Lord has commanded you, for if you do so, they will know that the matter is a firm one which cannot be left undone.’ This is exactly what happened; the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* sacrificed his offering and ended his ritual state of consecration, and the Muslims did the same. Likewise, before the believers had returned to Medina, it was Allah's Will to show them the reason why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had accepted the treaty of Hudaibiyya even though it apparently seemed to be a loss for the Muslims, but in reality, it was not.

The treaty stipulated that if anyone fled from Quraysh and went to Medina, they would return him to Mecca, whilst if any Muslim apostatised and fled back to the disbelievers of Mecca, they would not have to bring him back. Some people thought that this was unfair and unequal, and the situation was very delicate. Also, when Suhayl ibn ‘Amr came to negotiate the truce, and ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* was writing, as the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* dictated to him, ‘This is what Muhammad, the Prophet, and Suhayl ibn ‘Amr have agreed...’. Suhayl objected and said, ‘If we believed you were the Prophet, we would not be fighting like this. Instead, write: "This is what Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah and Suhayl ibn ‘Amr have agreed.'" ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* objected to this and said, ‘No, I will write: "This is what Muhammad, the Prophet, and Suhayl ibn ‘Amr have agreed ...'" Suhayl refused to assent to this. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to put an end to this, so he said, ‘O, ‘Ali, write it, for you will experience the very same thing and assent to it, though you be wronged thereby.’ What this means is that the same thing will happen to you one day which you are now refusing, and you will accept it on that day. This was one of the signs of prophethood, for indeed ‘Ali *Allah be pleased with him* did experience the same thing when the treaty of Siffin was made, and he wanted to write, ‘This is what ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb, Commander of the Faithful, agrees...’ and they said to him, ‘If you were the Commander of the Faithful,

we would not be waging war against you. Write: "This is what 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb agrees.'" 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* then remembered that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had said, 'Write it, for you will experience the very same thing and assent to it, though you be wronged thereby.'

Since the True Lord *the Most High* did not want the Muslims to enter Medina without first their souls being purified, without their sensing it, from thinking that they had lost and the others had won. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* sent down His Words which took the bitterness from their souls and replaced it with peace and tranquillity: '[It was not for your enemies' sake that He stayed your hands from them, for] it was they who were bent on denying the truth, and who debarred you from the Inviolable House of Worship and prevented your offering from reaching its destination. And had it not been for the believing men and believing women [in Mecca], whom you might have unwittingly trampled underfoot, and on whose account you might have become guilty, without knowing it, of a grievous wrong – [had it not been for this, you would have been allowed to fight your way into the city, but you were forbidden to fight] so that [in time] Allah might admit to His grace whomever He wills. Had they [who deserve Our mercy and they whom We have condemned] been clearly discernible [to you], We would indeed have imposed grievous suffering [at your hands] on such of them as were bent on denying the truth.' (*al-Fath*: 25)

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* informed the believers the reason why He did not allow them to enter Mecca: there were many believers, men and women, therein who were concealing their faith, and there was no way of distinguishing them since they were intermixed with the idolaters, and they did not have a specific place where the believers could have recognised them and distinguished them from the others. Thus, they could not be allowed to be exposed to the fighting which would have taken place within Mecca. Had the fighting become severe, many believing men and women who resided in Mecca would have been killed by the believers themselves, and it is a terrible thing for a believer to slay a believer, whether man or woman.

Upon this, the Companions recognised the reason, which was to protect the lives of the believers. At the same time we find that the treaty of Hudaibiyya caused the call of Islam to spread throughout the whole Arabian

Peninsula, and some of the Companions considered it to be a true victory for the faith. From this came the famous saying: ‘There was never a victory for Islam greater than the victory of Hudaibiyya.’ However, not all of the people were able to understand the wisdom of what happened, and people are always too hasty, yet Allah does not speed up to meet the hasty ambitions of His servants, until the matter occurs as He wills it. Due to the call, Islam spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula, and the numbers of the Muslims increased greatly.

Therefore, the stages of faith began with the stage of torment and oppression, and then the stage where the idolaters tried to deceive the believers to bring an end to the religion, and then the third stage was that of treaties and pacts. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was faithful to his pact, but the Quraysh broke the pact by helping the tribe of Bakr, their allies, to attack the tribe of Khuza‘a, the allies of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, Bakr attacked the people of Khuza‘a and slew them as they prayed, and an envoy of Khuza‘a went to seek aid from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* therefore announced that the pact between him and the Quraysh was annulled because of how the Quraysh had violated it, and he assembled an army to conquer Mecca and cleanse the Sacred House of the idols. After Mecca was conquered in the eighth year after the Emigration, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to cleanse His House of the idolaters and announce that there would be no more intermixing of faith and disbelief.

Allah wanted to liberate the place, the land of the *Ka‘ba*, first, and then to liberate its inhabitants. So, the *Ka‘ba* had to be cleansed of all idols, and people had to be prevented from circumambulating naked in the Inviolable House, along with idolaters being prevented from living in the sacred heartland of Islam. In addition, before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made the pilgrimage, all relations were suspended, meaning that the pacts were annulled, but the tolerance of faith and Allah’s love for all His creation meant that He did not command His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to annul all the pacts immediately, or to instruct the believers to fight the idolaters and take them captives immediately; this was not the case. He gave them four months in which they might turn to Islam and repent to their Maker.

Allah *Glorified is He* made it clear to the disbelievers that this period would not aid them in their war against Islam since they can never evade Him on the earth. This means that their preparation, their plots or anything else they did in these four months would not outwit Allah. Once these four months were over, the disbelievers would be subject to requital either by death, besiegement, close monitoring or they would have to live their lives by wandering through the land, as long as they remained disbelievers; this was due to a verdict that had been issued from Allah stating that no idolaters can be allowed to reside on this sacred land.

In His mercy, the True Lord *the Exalted* wanted to leave the door open for the idolaters, so that they might return to His Way. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* said: 'And if any of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah seeks your protection, grant him protection, so that he might [be able to] hear the Word of Allah [from you], and thereupon convey him to a place where he can feel secure. This, because they [may be] people who [sin only because they] do not know [the truth].' (*at-Tawba*: 6).

If any of the idolaters were to seek protection from you after the four months were over, give it to them. Why does the Noble Quran do this? We reply that there is a refugee, and there is the action of seeking protection; is the refugee made known by his request, or is the request made known by him?

I say let us suppose one of the believers is sitting by the boundary near to an area where disbelievers reside and that he heard a voice saying, 'I seek the protection of Muhammad and the believers.' Later, a man who cried out for protection appeared before believers. Here, the request for protection was apparent before the one who made it. It was as though the ear was the first to be requested, and then the eye saw the body of the one making this request. Or the situation might be different, and the one seeking aid might appear first, and then cry out his plea for safety and protection. In this case the eye sees first, and then the ear hears the plea for protection second.

In these instances, the True Lord *the Most High* wants to alert us to the importance of determining whether the plea for protection is sincere or not, and this can only be done if the one who makes the plea first announces it,

and then shows himself. A believer must be cautious so that the one seeking aid does not turn against him or trick him by feigning a request for protection.

To seek protection means to request security and refuge, and therefore generally the one who makes such a request will be weak and unable to protect himself. When a person seeks protection from another in such conditions, the one asked must be prudent and discern the true intentions of the one who makes the request: is he only seeking protection in order to remain in disbelief as long as possible? Or does he mean to learn the foundations of faith as presented in the Book of Allah? Or does he want to hear Allah's verdict concerning disbelievers in chapter *at-Tawba*, to hear the Word of Allah so that faith will be cast into his heart, to hear something about which he is seeking evidence or to hear what Allah says about something of which he is doubtful?

A believer's prudence must be prepared to closely scrutinise the situation of the one who seeks his protection. Seeking protection or sanctuary was well known to Arabs, and if someone sought the protection of his enemy, he was bound to give him protection, and this showed his gallantry. Furthermore, if faith obligated Muslims to give protection to those who sought it, this showed the strength of faith, its greatness and tolerance. Perhaps, it would cause the natural disposition of faith to awaken in disbelievers, so that they would seek knowledge of the basics of Islam.

A ruler, or indeed any Muslim, must give protection to those who seek it, and why would not we listen and speak to him. Perhaps, he might come to have faith and enter the circle of Islam. In Islam, either a ruler or any other Muslim may give protection to others, for the blood of all Muslims is equal, and there is not one blood for the master and another for the slave, nor one for the noble and another for the peasant; if the lowliest of them gives protection, it counts for all of them. Therefore, if any Muslim grants protection to a non-Muslim or a disbeliever, it is as though all the Muslims give him protection, even the pre-pubescent child and the insane man; each of these may give protection as long as the ruler and the Muslims agree to this. Why is this? This is so because we criticise disbelievers for breaking pacts and ignoring conventions of chivalry, so we believers must adhere to our pacts. If any disbeliever were to seek our protection, we must be sure to keep our promise.

However, how could a child or insane person have the right to give protection? We say that a believing child has benefited from Islam since he has been raised in an environment of faith in accordance with the Way of Allah and has grown up in the light of the True Lord's Words: 'And say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] a child!"' (*al-Isra'*: 24) Indeed, Islam gives the upbringing of faith to a child even before he is conceived since it commands the father to choose a virtuous woman who will be a good mother, along with commanding the mother to choose a virtuous man who will be a good father. Islam serves a child before he is even born by requiring the father to choose a pious woman and the mother to choose a pious man, and it serves him after he is born by providing him with a sound Islamic upbringing. In this way, a child benefits from all of these Islamic values, and the one who conveyed unto us the way of Islam was Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Islamic education was given to all of us, and therefore, we must all pay homage to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who taught us that the blood of all Muslims is alike and that if the lowliest of them gives protection, it counts for them all. Thus, if a child gives protection to a disbeliever who has come to hear Allah's Word, this protection or security is accepted from him, for the child benefitted from an Islamic upbringing derived from the way of guidance which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and he benefitted from his mother, who patiently endured her pregnancy along with the pains of childbirth. Were it not for the fact that Islam protects the human being when it is present in the womb, the woman would have been able to abort the child when the pregnancy became too difficult for her, or to throw the child away, but Islam protects the baby in its mother's womb and protects it until the mother has finished breastfeeding it. The Muslim mother obeys all the rulings of Islam: 'Mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years.' (*al-Baqara*: 233)

Islam respects a baby and supports it and requires its mother and father to give it a good name and a good upbringing. As we said, even before this baby existed in its mother's womb, Islam protected it by commanding a man to choose a pious wife to be a good mother. Abu Hatim Al-Mazani narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If there comes to you

someone whose religion and character please you, then marry him (to your daughters); if you do not, there will be strife on earth and great corruption.’ They said, ‘O, Prophet Muhammad, even if he is so and so?’ (That is, even if he is deficient in some worldly way.) He said, ‘If there comes to you someone whose religion and character please you, then marry him (to your daughters).’ He repeated it three times.⁽¹⁾

Likewise, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said in another Hadith: ‘Be victorious by choosing a religious one. May your hand be sullied (if you do otherwise)!’ The full Hadith was related by Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* who narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘A woman is married for four reasons: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty and her religion. Be victorious by choosing the religious one. May your hand be sullied (if you do otherwise)!’⁽²⁾

Since Islam respects a child with all his rights, should not Muslims also respect him? It might be said that a child benefits from Islam, but an insane person has no reason and Allah *Glorified is He* and has even excused him from accountability. We say to consider an insane person in comparison to a sane person: the most a sane person can hope for is that his words are obeyed without anyone objecting him and that he might say what he wants without being held accountable. In contrast, an insane person always has this because no one will object to what he says and no one will account him for his actions – even Allah *Glorified is He* will not hold him to account on the Day of Resurrection.

An insane person has something which no sane person has, and his insanity is a means of protection and security for him: if he speaks the truth which might offend people of influence, he will not be punished for it, and the mere excuse of his insanity will be enough for him to be pardoned. Also, perhaps a single word of truth spoken by an insane person may be worth more to Allah *the Almighty* than those said by a sane people who spend his life being hypocritical, untruthful and doing things to incur Allah’s Wrath.

(1) Narrated by *At-Tirmidhi*

(2) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, An-Nisa’i and Ibn Majah*

There is a purpose in life which an insane person might fulfil, but which the sane person cannot, for some people think that if Allah takes something from someone, this makes him less special than the others. The truth is the opposite since Allah's justice will not let him go uncompensated. Therefore, one finds that if someone loses the use of his eyes, Allah *the Almighty* places the eyes of others at his service. People take his hand, lead him in the street and bring him food and drink and so on.

If a person is disabled, for example, one finds that someone helps this person, another gives him rides in his car and a taxi might stop for him and take him where he needs to go, whilst an able-bodied person spends hours looking for a taxi without finding one. Notably, if one were to look at a poor person, one might find that Allah *Glorified is He* has placed several wealthy people at his service: so-and-so ploughs and digs the earth and Allah gives him the finest crops to sell and donate his profit to the poor; another person manufactures, works and toils so that he can give part of his income to the poor, and indeed, he might toil even further in his search to find someone who is truly poor so that he can give him some of his wealth; the poor person truly deserves to take it, as long as he is not merely pretending to be poor.

As long as he has accepted Allah's destiny for him to be poor and powerless, his Lord clarifies to him: 'You have accepted that I have made you powerless, so take from the power of the wealthy that which will help you in your life, for the dominion of My universe has its proper order.' I say this so that we understand that wealth and poverty, health and sickness, and strength and weakness are all subject to fluctuate, and therefore, no one can be certain of his future. If any one of us is able to give to the poor, he must do so, since if one day we lose our wealth, we will find people to give to us. We must help the sick person so that if we fall ill, we will find someone to help us; we must serve people in their hour of dire need so that they will serve us in our hour of dire need. At the same time, when we see someone to whom Allah has denied sight, we must give thanks for how He has blessed us, and if we see a person who cannot walk, we must be conscious of Allah's blessing in granting us the power to walk. Thus, a person does not notice his own blessings until he sees someone who is deprived of them; the True Lord wants everyone who suffers

to be content and accept his suffering without bitter complaint, and therefore, He confers upon him all manners of goodness.

Everyone who embraces Islam benefits from Islam, even a child and an insane person. Therefore, we must pay homage to the one who passed on to us this Way of Guidance which had protected us, and we must study it and act in accordance with it.

If we look at the life of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, we find that he returned the favour of everyone who helped him: an example of this is Halima As-Sa'diyya who had the honour of breastfeeding him *peace and blessings be upon him* as an infant, and then after he became a prophet, the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was generous to her and her family.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to Ta'if to seek support in conveying the Message after the death of Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* and the death of his uncle Abu Taleb; yet no support was offered. He thought of returning to Mecca, and he sought someone to give him protection when he entered Mecca. One of the disbelievers named Mut'am ibn 'Udayy offered him protection. Therefore, if a disbeliever gave protection to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* whose Message had come to bring an end to disbelief, should we not give protection to a disbeliever, and thus return the favour with an even greater one?

If a disbeliever gave protection to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in Mecca, all believers must return the favour by giving protection to any disbeliever who seeks it from them. After the believers gave protection to the disbelievers who asked for it, hoping that they listen to the Word of Allah, there were two possibilities: either a disbeliever would embrace faith, in which case he would become one of the believers, or a disbeliever would remain in his disbelief and obstinacy, in which case it would be the duty of Muslims to convey him to a place he could feel secure by helping him to get to a safe place securing his life and his possessions. Once he had reached his place of security and heard the Word of Allah, Muslims should not let him go free as the previous commandment stated: '... convey him to a place where he can feel secure.' (*at-Tawba*: 5) Muslims should take him to a place he feels secure, and then apply to him Allah's verdict: keep him captive, besiege him

or execute him, according to Allah's Judgment on the matter. The reason for giving a disbeliever security is that he is from a people who do not know the truth, as Allah says: 'this, because they [may be] people who [sin only because they] do not know [the truth].' (*at-Tawba*: 6)

Faith is not only a matter of natural disposition, for knowledge has many forms: there is the knowledge of natural disposition and knowledge which is acquired. Sometimes the tool of knowledge is the ear, other times the eye and other times the mind. Knowledge is developed either from what an ear hears or an eye sees, and then after that the ideas settle in a soul. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* said: 'And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect that perhaps you would be grateful.' (*an-Nahl*: 78) The Noble Quran specified for us the means of attaining knowledge by hearing and sight, and then this information settles in the mind since this is where all mental and intellectual concepts are kept. If a man hears but does not understand what he hears, he does not know.

Therefore, the one who seeks protection comes to seek the means of knowledge and the proofs of faith, and his excuse is that he does not know. We must think positively and consider the one who seeks protection to be a true seeker of knowledge who wishes to learn the proofs of faith.

Allah returns to the issue of the covenant by saying:

كَيْفَ يَكُونُ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ عَهْدٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ رَسُولِهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ
عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ فَمَا اسْتَقْتُمُوا لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

How could there be a treaty with God and His Messenger for such idolaters? But as for those with whom you made a treaty at the Sacred Mosque, so long as they remain true to you, be true to them; God loves those who are mindful of Him [who fear Him] [7]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 7)

What this means is that you have tried to make covenants with idolaters, yet every time they make a covenant with you, they break it. They broke the covenant they made with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at

Hudaybiyya. Thus, Allah *the Exalted* wants to warn us not to place too much trust in the covenants of idolaters since they do not keep their covenants, rather, they break them. Therefore, the reason that a covenant has been annulled is that they have not kept it before, and for a covenant to be allowed to continue would be meaningless.

The word ‘how’ in this verse is a question about a state. Someone asks, ‘How are you?’ You reply, ‘Very well, thanks be to Allah!’ So, the word ‘how’ is used to enquire about a state. The state might be general (i.e. ‘how are you, your family, your children, your life, etc.’) or it might be specific, such as if you ask about a sick person by asking, ‘How is so-and-so?’ It is said, ‘He is better, thanks be to Allah.’ Or you might ask about someone going through hard times by asking, ‘How is he?’ It is said, ‘Allah eased his difficulties.’ Or you might ask about a son who ran away from home, and the answer is, ‘He came back, thanks be to Allah.’

Therefore, ‘how’ have a general and a specific meaning. Sometimes, however, it does not really indicate a question; rather, it is an expression of amazement or incredulity: amazement at something good or incredulity at something bad. For example, it might be asked, ‘How could he abuse his own father?’ This expresses incredulity at something bad since something vile has occurred which ought not to have happened. Furthermore, a person might make an important invention so that one asks, ‘How did you make such an invention?’ This expresses amazement at something good. Expressing incredulity at something bad implies condemnation, whilst to express amazement at something good implies praise; an example of this is if one were to ask, ‘How did you build this mosque?’ In this noble verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘How can there be for the polytheists a treaty?’ This expresses incredulity that the idolaters could have anything called a covenant since all they know is how to break covenants, along with them never keeping them or honouring them. Thus, it is appropriate to be incredulous at the notion that they could have a covenant since the fact is that they have no covenant whatsoever. This incredulity expresses condemnation and ridicule. For example, if someone were to threaten you and then you were to say to him, ‘Who are you to threaten me?’, this is meant to express ridicule and condemnation because you know who he is. You are also

ridiculing the notion that he has the power to carry out his threats on you. At other times, it is a genuine question such as if you were to ask someone, 'Who are you?' So he tells you his name. Sometimes the answer to 'how' will be given in words, whereas at other times words will not do, and the answer must be in the form of an action.

The True Lord *the Most High* says: 'And [mention] when Ibrahim (Abraham) said, "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead."' (*al-Baqara*: 260) This 'how' implies an expression of amazement since if you infuse life into something lifeless, this is amazing, and it demands praise. Allah *Glorified is He* did not answer Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* with words, and rather, He answered him with a practical example. A dialogue took place between the True Lord *the Most High* and His friend Ibrahim (Abraham). The Lord asked him: 'Have you not believed?' (*al-Baqara*: 260). Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* replied: 'Yes.' (*al-Baqara*: 260) This means that he is saying, 'I believe, Lord'; and the Noble Quran tells us that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* then added, 'but [I ask] only that my heart may be satisfied.' (*al-Baqara*: 260)

Faith means the assurance of the heart; so how could Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* say, 'I believe'? Is this not a contradiction? I say that Ibrahim (Abraham) was certain that Allah *Glorified is He* created the whole universe, but he wanted to know how resurrection happens and its mode. At this point, Allah *Glorified is He* did not give him a spoken answer, rather, He gave him a practical demonstration along with saying: 'Take four birds and commit them to yourself.' (*al-Baqara*: 260) This means that he must take four birds and bring them close to him and familiarise himself with their forms so that when they die and are resurrected, he will be certain that they are the same birds. 'Then [after slaughtering them] put on each hill a portion of them; then call them - they will come [flying] to you in haste. And know that Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.' (*al-Baqara*: 260)

In other words, he has to cut these birds into pieces himself and then place a piece of them on every hill. After this, he leaves them to come to him walking or running, so it could not be said that they are other birds that came from another place; rather, the very same birds will come running to him.

Also, if Allah *the Almighty* can give a created being the power to call the dead so that they return to life and come to him, then what does one think of the Omnipotent Power of Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*?

When the True Lord *the Most High* says, ‘How can there be for the polytheists a treaty in the sight of Allah and with His Messenger’, this question expresses condemnation and incredulity, for idolaters do not have any covenant, rather, it is always their habit to violate their covenants. Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘except for those with whom you made a treaty at Al-Masjid Al-Haram? So as long as they are upright toward you, be upright toward them. Indeed, Allah loves the righteous [who fear Him].’ (*at-Tawba*: 7) What this means is that whilst informing the believers that the idolaters are not bound by any covenant, Allah *the Exalted* does not ask the believers to respond to the idolaters in the same way. He *the Almighty* rather commands believers to keep to a covenant as long as idolaters keep to it; if idolaters begin to violate the covenant, Allah requires believers to respond to this in the same kind. This explains His words: ‘Indeed, Allah loves the righteous.’ (*at-Tawba*: 7)

A righteous person is the one who obeys Allah in all that He commands and forbids, thereby placing a barrier between himself and Allah’s attributes of Majesty. Therefore, the essence of righteousness is for a believer not to violate any covenant, whether with a believer or a disbeliever. The only one who should ever begin to violate a covenant is a disbeliever, whilst a believer must honour his covenants and promises.

Allah *Glorified is He* a then says:

كَيْفَ وَإِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْقُبُوا فِيكُمْ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً
يَرْضَوْنَكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتَأْبَىٰ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ ﴿٨﴾

[How,] when, if they were to get the upper hand over you, they would not respect any tie with you, of kinship or of treaty? They please you with their tongues, but their hearts are against you and most of them are lawbreakers [8] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 8)

We can observe in this verse that the True Lord *the Most High* did not say, ‘How could idolaters be granted a covenant?’ rather, He sufficed by saying,

‘How’ by itself. This is due to their treachery that had become well known. The first ‘How’ was a question about something in the past, whilst the question in this verse clarifies for us that they will always violate their covenants just as they did in the past, for the One Who tells us about the past also tells us about the future since He knows all that they will do.

Allah continues: ‘if they prevail against you’. Prevailing means to gain the upper hand, which if they do, they would not honour any tie or obligation to protect them. They will do as they please in all regards. This is a testimony from the True Lord *Glorified is He* of what lies in the souls of idolaters, and the rancour they feel towards believers. This means they would not pay heed to any covenant they would make with you, nor would any of them be prevented by any scruples from doing anything at all, however vile. For example, if a strong man raises his hand to strike a small child who could not withstand the blow, someone might take his hand and ask him to bear in mind that the child is young and cannot withstand the blow. Yet, if the child is one of his relatives or a neighbour, the strong man would not pay heed to any of this and would follow through with a blow down to the child.

The scholars have more than one opinion on this matter; each one of them offered their view about the phrase ‘tie of kinship’. Ibn ‘Abbas and Ad-Dahak *Allah be pleased with them* said that it means ‘relation’ since relation is a cause for compassion, and it is difficult for anyone to betray someone to whom he is related, as it requires no covenant. It is also said that it means ‘covenant’. Al-Hasan said that it means the relationship of neighbourhood and all that is obligated by it. Qatada said it means a vow and a pact. Abu ‘Umayra said that it means a promise and an oath.

All of these meanings evoke the idea of compassion such that a person is not governed by harshness and blind reaction and such that a person has someone to tell him, ‘Calm down. He is your neighbour (or a member of your tribe or those with whom you have family ties).’ The barrier which keeps a man from inclining to evil and delving into it when things become difficult for him is the awareness of his connections to others. This is how dialogue comes into play. There may be a family tie, an oath or a neighbourly relationship which prevent one from acting harshly and cruelly. In short, it is

whatever ordinarily prevents a cruel response to something which may have happened accidentally. It also means that he may have had no respect for any moral values: no respect for ties of family, neighbours, covenants or vows. If a strong man amongst them had the chance to harm a small child, he would not worry about any of these things.

The True Lord wants us to know that if idolaters were to gain the upper hand over believers, they would not worry about any family ties, covenant, neighbourly ties, oaths nor anything else. So, how could idolaters be granted any given covenant? If they were to gain the upper hand over believers, they would never be deterred by any ties, whatsoever.

Allah *Glorified is He* then adds: 'covenant in respect of you'. A 'covenant in respect of you' requires a trust which is not recorded or officially witnessed; if someone were to borrow money from someone else and make a written record of it, this record is the guarantee of repayment. Likewise, if witnesses were to attend the transaction, then their testimony guarantees the creditor his rights. However, if there were no written record or witnesses, the matter is in the hands of the honour of the debtor; if he wishes, he will acknowledge the debt or deny it. There is another layer of this concept which is between you and yourself. For example, you might promise yourself to give so-and-so a certain amount of money every month. For such a thing, there are no written records or witnesses, rather, it is up to your own conscience, either you will do it if you so wish or not do it if you so wish. It is something which will harm your reputation not to do. For example, if you agree (to yourself) that you will help a certain family, this is something totally subject to your own will; there is no covenant to compel you to do it, nor any tie of family or neighbourhood. It is only your conscience. Therefore, you are careful to honour what you have promised yourself in order to protect your reputation and your standing in the eyes of others. Likewise, when you incur a debt without any record or witnesses, you nevertheless make sure to pay it back since it is on your conscience.

'How can it be, if they prevail against you, they would not observe any tie of kinship or covenant in respect of you. They satisfy you with their mouths, but their hearts refuse [compliance], and most of them are defiantly disobedient.' (*at-Tawba*: 8)

Thus, we see that 'how' in this verse is meant to express incredulity at the idea that idolaters could be granted a covenant now or in the future since they habitually break covenants. Furthermore, if they were to gain the upper hand over believers, they would abuse them in the most despicable ways without any scruples. Someone might say, 'They are perfectly amiable with us, smiling at us and receiving us with kindness, and so on. Thus, how, if they were to gain the upper hand over us, could they turn into merciless beasts?' We say that Allah *the Exalted* knows all that is open and all that is hidden, and He knew what was in the minds of believers, so He replied to them so that these things would not remain concealed in their souls. Therefore, He *the Almighty* replied to this idea of theirs: 'They satisfy you with their mouths, but their hearts refuse [compliance], and most of them are defiantly disobedient.'

What this means is that Allah *Glorified is He* warns believers and encourages them not to trust the appearance of idolaters that they see before their eyes since it is not real, rather, it is a matter of deception and hypocrisy. They say nice things and greet you with smiling faces and soft words, but their hearts are filled with malice against you Muslims, such that if they were to gain the upper hand over you, their true feelings of violent hate and enmity would surface, and they would not respect any tie with you nor any obligation to protect you.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'They satisfy you with their mouths', believers must accept what the True Lord tells them and realise that the sweet words and kind greetings are nothing but deception from their enemies. By revealing this to us, He gives us immunity from being deceived by what we see on their faces. This is a matter of the future, not the past or the present, and when He *the Most High* speaks of a future matter, He does this to inform His believing servants. Therefore, we find that He *the Exalted* responds to these ideas in the same way. An example of this is found in His Words: 'O, you who have believed, indeed the polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach Inviolable Mosque after this, their [final] year.' (*at-Tawba*: 28) This is an announcement of the prohibition against idolaters entering the Inviolable Mosque or coming near it. It was natural that misgivings might occur to the minds of the believers who benefitted economically from idolaters during the

pilgrimage season since they lived off the trade which was conducted during the pilgrimage, e.g. when they sold their wares to the pilgrims to gain their earnings for an entire year's provisions. If idolaters were barred from the pilgrimage or from coming near the Inviolable Mosque, where would they get the provisions which they had previously earned through this trade? Believers must have wondered: 'How will we eat? We get our wares ready and wait all year until the pilgrimage season comes. Therefore, if the number of pilgrims decreases, who will buy our wares?'

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* answered these misgivings by saying: 'And if you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you from His bounty.' (*at-Tawba*: 28) This means not to fear poverty since Allah knows what will come to pass. He is Rich possessing the keys to everything, and will enrich you out of His bounty by opening to you the doors of provision so that you will be compensated and then given even more. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* answered the misgivings which entered believers' souls as the Quran was being revealed so that their hearts and souls would find rest. Allah said: 'but their hearts refuse [compliance], and most of them are defiantly disobedient.' (*at-Tawba*: 8). These words are an answer to the misgivings which had entered the souls of believers when they saw how idolaters had met them with kind words and cheery faces. The True Lord *the Most High* made it clear to them: Do not be deceived, for what their hearts conceal is not what their faces show. His words 'most of them are defiantly disobedient' make it clear that they were far from the right way, for indeed, there is no such things as obedience for the hypocrite and the disbeliever.

We say that if you were to look at these people, you will see that they are even living in contradiction to the way they have chosen for themselves. They do not even adhere to the false ways in which they claim to believe. Thus, they are disobedient even with respect to the religious way they profess. Given how they behaved in respect with the false way, how do you expect they would behave in respect to the right way?

The phrase 'most of them' implies that a minority of them are upright. This is a beautiful example of the Quran's inclusiveness. It also answers a probable question, suggesting that since these people are disbelievers – and

no sin is greater than disbelief– how can it be said that they are ‘disobedient’ when they are not even believers? We say that they have even strayed from the ways of disbelief that they have chosen for themselves, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies their position by saying:

أَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩﴾

**They have sold God's message for a trifling gain, and
barred others from His path. How evil their actions are! [9]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 9)**

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* shows us how their scales are imbalanced. What does it mean to ‘have purchased’? It means to get a commodity in return for a price. If you say, ‘I bought a clock’, as an example, then you are the buyer as long as you paid the price, and the seller is the one who takes the price. Yet in this verse, the True Lord *the Most High* says, ‘They have purchased with the signs of Allah for a small price’, whilst it should have been the case that they paid the price since the buyer is the one who pays the price. Nevertheless, in this verse the opposite is the case, for Allah *Glorified is He* states that the price is what they bought, even though a price is supposed to be paid. This situation is therefore a contradiction of the usual custom of buying and selling. We must also bear in mind that a price should be equal to the value of the commodity; you take the commodity and give the seller an equivalent price since the price of something must be in proportion to it. If you buy something trifling, you pay a trifling price for it; if you buy something valuable, you pay a high price for it.

This is widely observed, including at work. For example, someone who wants to pick a fight with others pays one of his followers ten pounds to verbally abuse them; if he wants his henchman to strike his adversary, he gives him fifty pounds; if he wants him to kill his adversary, he gives him thousands of pounds. Usually, those who are devoid of faith say, ‘Every man has his price.’ In other words, every scruple can be overcome with money. The only question is how much money is needed to make a man abandon his scruples? There are those who can be bought for a single piece of silver, others need twenty or thirty, while others need millions before they sell out their scruples.

The True Lord *the Most High* informs us in this verse that these disbelievers turned faith into a commodity which could be bought and sold. They sold their faith. However instead exchanging it for a price equally valuable to faith—which is more precious than all the treasures of the world – they sold their faith for a trifling gain. They did not even appreciate the value of faith by selling it cheaply. Thus, how could they sell their faith for a trifling gain?

We say that the one who takes bribes is the prime example of this by intending thereby to upset the scales of truth. If someone alters the scales of truth, people doubt his honesty, and if people doubt his honesty, he loses ground for their trust. This is due to everyone who is wronged wanting to take his case before courts so that they will give him justice, or he raises his case before the one who is responsible for such things so that he will give him his rights. When people feel that the truth has been abandoned because faith has become a commodity with a price, so that the balance would be upset if this price is paid, the entire society will be corrupted. It is as though they have allowed their society to be completely corrupted, just in order to make a trifling gain.

Allah *Glorified is He* also wants to draw our attention to the Reckoning of the Day of Resurrection and how believers will abide in Paradise and enjoy therein that which no eye has ever seen, nor ear heard, nor human heart imagined, whilst disbelievers will abide in Hell. Therefore, they will have sold their faith for a cheap price, no matter how much money they gain as a consequence for all the money in the world is not equal to a single day in Paradise as the life of this world is temporary, and its delights are limited and few. It is as though they have sold everlasting bliss for temporary pleasures which might last no longer than a few days or years. At this point, disbelievers will realise that what they gained was exceedingly trifling compared to what they lost. It would have been bad enough for them to merely make faith the price they paid to gain small delights in this worldly life;

yet, they went even further than this by barring others from Allah's Path. Barring occurs when a call has been made for which evidence has been presented, but one prevents people from hearing it since he knows that if they were to hear it, they will be convinced and follow it. For example, we find that when the Quran was revealed, along with Arabs being a people of

rhetoric and eloquence, disbelievers knew that if the people heard the Quran, they would be aware of its miraculous nature, its eloquence and its sweetness, and they would believe in it. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* said about them in the Quran: 'And those who disbelieve say, "Do not listen to this Quran and speak noisily during [the recitation of] it that perhaps you will overcome."' (*Fussilat*: 26) This is due to disbelievers knowing that if people were to listen to the Quran, they would believe in it; therefore, they prevented them from listening to it. If anyone recited the Quran, they would tell one another to talk frivolously about it and speak over it so that nothing would be understood. This was a testimony from the disbelievers themselves that if people were to hear the Quran, they will believe in it, and to talk frivolously about it was a way of barring the Path of Allah.

There was another way in which the Path of Allah was barred, which was preventing people from listening to the call of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knowing that the sweetness of the Messenger's Call would make those who listened to it believe in it. Therefore, they would bar people from hearing Allah's Words and from listening to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In addition, they said to visiting pilgrims, 'Do not believe the man who says he is a prophet.' This was a testimony on their part that if the ears of the people were to hear the Quran, their hearts would be drawn to faith; therefore, this was a testimony against them, and not for them, since they were certain that if the pilgrims were to hear the call of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it would take them away from disbelief. They feared that people would be affected by this religion, the true religion, and believe in it, and this made them seek to bar others from it.

The True Lord *the Most High* then says: 'Indeed, it was evil that they were doing.' 'Evil' means 'vile'. It is not only vile in the present moment but also now, and the punishment for it in the future will be severe. This shows us the precision of the Noble Quran. The evil they did was not only a single deed but many, in both words and actions. That is to say that they barred people with their words and also impeded them by using physical force on certain occasions. By using the words 'were doing', the True Lord draws our attention to the fact that their deeds were not only speech nor only action.

There exists both action and speech, both of which are included; speech is the deed of the tongue, whereas action is the deed of the limbs. Had Allah *the Exalted* said, 'Evil are all of their actions', we would have thought that they only acted and did not speak. Had He said, 'Evil is all that they say', we would have thought that they spoke and did not act. Allah *Glorified is He* clarified for us that speech and action are both kinds of action when He said: 'O, you who have believed, why do you say what you do not do?' (*as-Saff: 2*) This shows us that there is a difference between speech and action: speech is performed by the tongue, while action is performed by the rest of the limbs.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues:

لَا يَرْفُقُونَ فِي مَوَاقِفٍ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

Where believers are concerned, they respect no tie of kinship or treaty. They are the ones who are committing aggression [10] (The Quran, *at-Tawba: 10*)

Those who respect pacts of kinship or covenants of protection and then do injustice to others violate the rights of others. If there is a family tie, covenant or pact between two parties, and one does not honour this, he would thereby violate the rights which he owes the other. It would be bad enough if the violator restricted himself to only violating the rights of others, but he also transgresses against himself since he gives himself trifling pleasures in this worldly life but then he casts himself into hell in the Hereafter; he is thereby transgressing against himself. Therefore, the True Lord *the Most High* says: 'and those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression].' (*Al-Imran: 135*) Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And we did not wrong them [thereby], but they were wronging themselves.' (*an-Nahl: 118*)

Does the one who commits a shameful deed sin against himself? Indeed, he sins against his soul in the Hereafter after giving it pleasure in this world. He takes immediate gratification in exchange for deferred torment. However, the one who transgresses against himself the most severely and the most plainly is the one who sins without even gaining pleasure in this world, thereby gaining neither pleasure in this world nor in the Hereafter. An

example of this is the one who gives false testimony voluntarily. He will suffer torment in the Hereafter without taking any pleasure in this world.

Someone might say, 'this verse is a needless repetition since Allah has already said: "How can it be, if they prevail against you, they would not observe any tie of kinship or covenant in respect of you. They satisfy you with their mouths, but their hearts refuse [compliance], and most of them are defiantly disobedient.'" We say the context is different. In the eighth verse of the chapter of *at-Tawba*, the True Lord clarifies that were they to gain an upper hand over believers, they would not pay heed to family ties, neighbourly ties or oaths, even if they tried to make it seem otherwise. As for the verse under examination, they transgress against their own selves and barter their faith away for a trifling gain, and there is a difference between the one who wrongs others and the one who wrongs oneself.

When they barred others from the Path of Allah and showed enmity to believers, they gained no worldly benefit from this; rather, they waged war against faith and the religion, incurring sins and gaining nothing. It is as though they respected no tie or protective obligation even for their own selves. Therefore, the True Lord *the Most High* calls them transgressors since without being transgressed against, they wilfully waged war on Allah's religion, His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and on believers, and thereby waged war on their own selves.

Allah's Mercy followed this to show us how Allah is Merciful to His servants and His creation. Allah *the Exalted* tells us that no matter what they have done, if they repent, Allah will accept their repentance. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ
 فِي الدِّينِ وَنُفِصِلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

If they turn to God, keep up the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms, then they are your brothers in faith: We make the messages clear for people who are willing to learn [11] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 11)

This noble verse affirms that Islam erases all man's previous actions when he embraces it and that the door of repentance is always open for the idolaters

and disbelievers, no matter what sins they may have committed; this is the nature of Allah's Mercy. We can observe that the True Lord *the Most High* says here 'if they repent' not 'when they repent' since if He had said as such, this would mean that their repentance was certain to occur. However, His Words 'if they repent' imply probability because they had done so much against the faith, and our hopes in them were so slight. However, repentance necessitates that the one who makes it must then embark upon his faithful obligations, and therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But if they repent, establish prayer, and give *zakat*.' Therefore, once repentance has been made, the obligation of faith is nothing other than to testify: 'There is no deity worthy of worship but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' Naturally, one must also offer prayer since it embodies all the other Pillars of Islam and it is a daily action. It is not required from a person only once in his lifetime like the pilgrimage, or one month of the year like fasting. So in order for repentance to be affirmed, one must attend to offering the prayer every day in its proper times, for it is the daily action which cannot be postponed or brought forward out of its time.

The Noble Quran usually associates prayer with *zakat* since *zakat* is a sacrifice of money, and money is the fruit of work, with work requiring time, and prayer is a sacrifice of time. Therefore, as we said, it is as though the prayer incorporates *zakat*. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But if they repent, establish prayer, and give *zakat*, then they are your brothers in religion, and We detail the verses for a people who know.' (*at-Tawba*: 11) We must note in this verse the stages of faith which Allah *the Almighty* is showing us. The first stage was to bear oppression and be steadfastly patient. The second stage was that there can be no intermixing between faith and disbelief; this dashed the attempt of idolaters to dilute the faith by asking us to worship their gods for a while, and then offering to worship our god for a while; and this was completely unacceptable then, as is now, and will always be until the end of time. Then there came the stage of covenants, and then the covenants were annulled and the respite of the four sacred months was given to disbelievers. All of these things were based on canon law, yet the Arab nation had never known canon law before.

Thus, all of these legal pronouncements came from Heaven. The legislations of earthly communities require many processes, and no human law is ever

perfect and correct from the moment of its inception. Rather, each law is passed and then faults appear in its implementation, so it is amended; it evolves, expands and requires the attention of legal authorities who spend their whole lives making amendments and specifications. Therefore, how did this unlettered Arab nation, which had no knowledge of science or culture, produce all these laws? We say that they did not produce them; rather, they were produced by their Lord Who has knowledge of all things. Each of the stages through which the faith passed was guided by laws from Heaven which showed believers what they had to do.

Generally, we only recognise the brotherhood of heredity: This is my brother from my mother and father, or my brother on my father's side only, or on my mother's side only. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And the brothers of Yusuf (Joseph) came [seeking food].' (*Yusuf*: 58) This is the brotherhood of heredity, and we know that the word 'brother' sometimes refers to the brotherhood of heredity, whilst on other occasions it means the brotherhood of way of life and doctrine. The True Lord *the Most High* wanted to raise faith to the level of family, so He said: 'All believers are but brothers' (*al-Hujurat*: 10) to show us that as long as they have joined us in the circle of faith, we owe them the rights of true brotherhood along with the compassion and love it obligates, and the way it binds brothers together so that they always protect, love and honour one another, and all the related rights of true brotherhood.

However, note that in this verse Allah *the Almighty* says: 'your brothers in religion' (*at-Tawba*: 11). Why did He not simply say 'your brothers'?

We say that it is illogical that they could leave behind all the crimes they had committed before by repenting and at the same instant become the believers' brothers; rather, this would only happen once their faith had become deep-seated and when their repentance had been proved sincere. Only then would they become brothers.

Allah says: 'and We detail the verses for a people who know.' How such detail is given to those who already have knowledge? If they know, why is this explanation necessary? We say that the meaning in this verse is that Allah *Glorified is He* explains His signs to those who seek to obtain true knowledge which comes from Him since this knowledge has a great effect on the future

of faith. This is why non-Muslims who are seriously interested in studying the Islamic religion find true knowledge end up embracing Islam, for as long as they are people of knowledge, talent and ambition in their fields, and as long as they have been overcome by the curiosity to know, along with seeking to study the Islamic way objectively, you find that they embrace Islam since they find the true image of the religion which they are studying. Also, they take Islam from its faithful source which is the Noble Quran and Prophetic *Sunnah*. They do not take Islam from those who ascribe themselves to Islam (i.e. the Muslims) since Muslims might include sinners, thieves, people who take bribes, liars or hypocrites: if they were to take Islam from Muslims, they would say, 'What is this? Sin, stealing, lying, bribery and hypocrisy?'

I always advise those who never studied Islam from other countries not to consider those who name themselves Muslims, rather, I advise them to consider the essence of Islam, namely the Quran and the *Sunnah*. Does Islam forbid and ascribe punishments for bribery, stealing, lying and hypocrisy? Yes, it does. All these actions that exist amongst some Muslims and which most denounce have nothing to do with Islam. When those seek Islam from its intellectual sources and away from those ascribed to it, they shall believe in it at the end.

Therefore, if the Muslims who deviate from the Right Way knew how much harm they do to Islam, they would recognise that they were engaging in something very grave, for Islam is a practical way, not only a theoretical way. Islam is a practical way that should be exercised and implemented in life. The Noble Quran represents the foundations of the way, while the life story of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* represents the practical and applied way of Islam. Allah *Glorified is He* has made it clear that Prophet Muhammad is an excellent example for those whose hope is in Allah and the Hereafter: 'Verily, you have in the Prophet of Allah an excellent model, for him who hopes to meet Allah and the Last Day and who remembers Allah much.' (*al-Ahzab*: 21)

Actually when a Muslim implements the Way of Islam, he attracts non-Muslims and endears Islam to them. On the other side, when he does what is not in accord with Islam, he alienates them from it. Thus, Allah *the Exalted* addresses Muslims stating that it is disliked in His sight to do what contradicts sayings and

beliefs: '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)

This is so due to our behaviour contradicting Islam to which we call and in which we believe, it turns against Islam and the non-Muslim would say, 'I saw a Muslim cheating, stealing and taking unlawful things.' Thus, it is as if everyone who strays from Islam was carrying an axe with which he demolishes the religion, and he would be held accountable for not only his actions, but also the actions of those who followed his example.

We stated before that when we look at the diplomatic representation of the Islamic world, we find that there are seventy-two Islamic nations with embassies in most of the countries of the world. Having stated this, I wonder how many members of the staffs of these embassies adhere properly to the Islamic religion! Moreover, how many of the Muslim communities in the foreign countries adhere to the teachings of Islam? (It is) Very few! Were they all to adhere to the teachings of Islam, all nations of the world would know that this religion has a protective power and immunity. They would know that this immunity was the reason why the deviant materialistic civilisation had not affected Muslims. This would be a significant point of attraction for nations of the world to study the religion of Islam. Unfortunately, you find Muslim communities are getting mixed and rushing after the materialistic civilisation of the countries in which they live. This leads nations to say, 'If their religion was strong, they would have adhered to it and would not have rushed after our civilisation.'

When we study the history of Islam, we find that it has not spread by wars or sword. Rather, it has spread by showing a fine example. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But if they repent, establish prayer and give *zakat*, then they are your brothers in religion, and we detail the verses for a people who know.' (*at-Tawba*: 11) This means that Allah *the Almighty* details the signs for a people who know and are searching for the genuine knowledge that He shows in His Way of Guidance. Therefore, we find, for example, that when a nation comes to a new discovery, knowledgeable Muslims know that it is nothing new since Islam mentioned it a long time ago.

In Germany, for example, lawmakers have drafted an article, which they called 'Misuse of Rights' which means that one has rights, but he might use

them improperly. Therefore, Germany began to move towards legislating new laws to forbid misusing rights and producing commentaries on these laws, their implementation, and so on. A Muslim lawyer from Bani Suwayf who went to Germany to obtain his doctorate learned about this matter, while he was attending a lecture given by the one who came up with the theory of the law, Misuse of Rights. The Muslim lawyer stood up and asked the lecturer, 'Do you say that you are the inventor of this law?' The German lecturer answered, 'Yes.' The lawyer said, 'This theory existed fourteen centuries ago in the teachings of Islam.' The German lecturer was taken by surprise and called some orientalises to discuss the matter with this Muslim lawyer. They brought books of the Prophetic biography where the Muslim lawyer introduced a story of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon Him*. The story states that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sitting one day when one of his Companions came in complaining that another Companion had a date-palm tree in the sphere of his house. The house belonged to the one who was making the complaint, whilst the tree belonged to the other. The one who owned the date palm tree got used to coming to it often to pick from it, pollinate it and check on it. His family was disturbed by his frequent visits and thus the owner of the house went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to complain about that matter. The Prophet sent for the owner of the date-palm tree and told him that he should give the date palm tree away to the owner of the house, sell it to him or cut it down. ⁽¹⁾ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified for him that although the date-palm was his right, he misused this right by constantly going to see it for a reason or no reason, a matter that disturbed the privacy of the owner of the house. This action was a perfect example of misusing of rights. In the interest of preserving the honour of science, the German law professor had to be fair in his lecture and said that he thought he had invented something new, but Islam had actually preceded him fourteen centuries ago. The amendment was made, and German law acknowledged that Islam beat it to the law of Misuse of Rights fourteen centuries earlier.

(1) [Narrated by Ahmad, Al-Hakim and Al-Bazzar]

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and many of his followers were unlettered, which was a testimony of the heavenly celestial origins of their law. They did not gain their knowledge by exploring previous civilisations, rather, they gained it from Allah. The most that learned people could do is to take knowledge from one another, but the followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received their knowledge from Allah *the Exalted* and thus, they led the world for more than one thousand years.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأِنْ كَثُرُوا أَتَمَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوا
 أَيْمَةَ الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَا أَيْمَنَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

But if they break their oath after having made an agreement with you, if they revile your religion, then fight the leaders of disbelief – oaths mean nothing to them – so that they may stop [12]
(The Quran, at-Tawba: 12)

The meaning of breaking a pledge is to fail adhering to the stipulations of a covenant. In this verse, Allah *the Most High* explains why idolaters had to be fought. This is due to the fact that of all the wars they had waged against Islam, the way they broke their covenants and even exceeded this by reviling the religion. They abused the religion maliciously. When we say that someone reviled someone, this means that he went very far beyond mere insult. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to fight against them unless they embrace Islam. This is right since Muslims had advanced all manner of kindness, but the leaders of disbelief had rejected them all.

We notice that fighting mentioned in this verse must be launched against the leaders of disbelievers first. This is due to their encouraging their followers to war against Islam. Their followers are not the principals, rather, the leaders of disbelief are. They planned, executed and exhorted: 'And those who were deemed weak will say to those who were proud, "Nay, but it was your scheming night and day when you bade us to disbelieve in Allah and set up equals with Him." And they will conceal their remorse when they see the punishments, and We shall put chains round the necks of those who disbelieved. They will not be requited but for what they did.' (*Saba'*: 33)

In modern parlance, they are called war criminals, and the entire world knows that a war ends once war criminals are discarded because the reason for this is that they are the ones who plan, operate battles and lead men to battlefields. These war criminals are exactly as the leaders of disbelief who dared to corrupt the ways of the Noble Quran by preventing tribes who performed pilgrimage from listening to him *peace and blessings be upon him* and waging wars against Islam using all possible means of delusions, exhortations, threats and promises.

What is surprising is that some people justify killing war criminals and denounce the killing of the leaders of disbelief! Allah *the Almighty* has made it clear that they would break their pledges because they have no regard for their own pledges: 'And if they break their oaths after their agreement and [openly] revile your religion, then fight the leaders of unbelief; surely their oaths are nothing so that they may desist.' (*at-Tawba*: 12)

Orientalists, along with those whose hearts incline towards them, act outwardly as though they are with us; they say that there is a contradiction here. They say Allah *Glorified is He* affirms that they have pledges and then says they have no pledges. They wonder how He affirms that they have pledges and then deny as such since negation and affirmation cannot come together in the description of a single person. We say, indeed, those who have a superficial way of thinking or understand things literally see that they do not come together, but those who understand the true intent of words know that, when something is negated and affirmed in the Noble Quran regarding one thing, this means that the perspective differs in each case. Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* concerning the Battle of Badr by saying: 'and you did not smite when you smote [the enemy], but it was Allah *Glorified is He* Who smote.' (*al-Anfal*: 17) In this verse, there is both denial and affirmation of the same act. The deed and the doer are the same. This is called a different perspective. This means that each perspective gives a different meaning from the other. It is like saying that so-and-so lives above me. Although this is true, he at the same time lives beneath the person who lives above him. Therefore, he is up and down at the same time. He is above the one who is under him and beneath the one who is above him. To illustrate this point, we could mention another example. We say so-and-so is a person

who is both a father and a son, and this seemingly looks like a contradiction. In fact, he is a father to his son and a son to his father. Therefore, he is a father from his son's perspective and a son from his father's perspective, so there is no contradiction. This is what we call a difference of perspective. Therefore, there is not even a slight contradiction between the negation and affirmation of the act of smiting in regards to the Prophet. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* took a handful of pebbles and cast them towards the army of the idolaters. This is what the Prophet who is a human did, but the Omnipotent Power of Allah took these pebbles and caused them to reach every single soldier in the army of the idolaters.

Another verse that elaborates this point is when, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'but most people do not know. They know the outward of this world's life, but of the Hereafter they are absolutely heedless.' (*ar-Rum: 6-7*)

They said Allah denies and affirms knowledge to the very same people. We say that Allah *the Exalted* does not negate true knowledge and affirm superficial knowledge, whereas the two are completely different.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* affirms that they have pledges and then denies it at the latter part of the verse. We proclaim that the purpose of a pledge or a covenant is to keep it, and thus, those who do not keep it consequently have no pledges. because the reason for this is that their pledges are of no value since they are void of preservation. Similarly, when a liar makes an oath, we say this person has no oaths! Therefore, these people have not respected the sanctity of their pledges; it is as though they had no pledges. This is exactly as if you have a son whose examination is approaching, and you make him study and sit around watching over him. He flips through the pages of the book, yet he does not understand anything. Therefore, you say you studied, but you have not studied! Although this affirms and negates the action, there is no contradiction since the perspective is different.

The negation of the pledges at the latter part of the verse means that they do not honour it, and as long as they do not, their pledges are worthless.

Allah *Glorified is He* differentiates between fighting and killing. He commands to fight, not to kill. This means fight them, and thus, fighting might cause

them to desist from aggressing against Islam. When they find that some from amongst themselves have been killed and that they are too weak to fight back, the ferocity of their wars against Islam would abate causing them to desist from persecuting Islam.

Allah *Glorified is He* further says:

أَلَا تَقْتُلُونَ قَوْمًا نَّذَلْنَاهُمْ وَأَيْمَنَهُمْ وَهَكُمُوا بِإِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُولِ وَهُمْ
بَدَءُوكُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ مَرَّةً كَرَّتْ تَخْشَوْنَهُمْ فَأَلَّفَهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

**How could you not fight a people who have broken their oaths,
who tried to drive the Messenger out, who attacked you first?
Do you fear them? It is God you should fear if you are true
believers[13] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 13)**

In this noble verse, Allah *the Most High* exhorts resisting and fighting the leaders of disbelief, so that they do not get the opportunity to wage more wars against Islam, thus preventing people from embracing Islam and barring the Path of Allah. The Arabic particle (*Alla*) is called a particle of specification. It is as if you are saying, 'Will you not go and see so-and-so?' It exhorts doing something and is, therefore, a form of request. They have violated their covenants, initiated the enmity and attempted to expel the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* from Mecca. The word *Hamu* means that they firmly intended and aimed at the expulsion of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They initiated enmity to the believers and barred the way to Islam from the first moment the master of humankind, Prophet Muhammad, began to call to it. The verb *Bada'a* means to initiate, and *marra* means an action which is not repeated since if it is repeated, we say *Marataiyn* which means twice. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Divorce may be [pronounced] twice.' (*al-Baqara*: 229)

Therefore, they were the ones who began the enmity at the first place. Islam, as we know, faced two different powers at two different stages of the Islamic mission. Those were the power of the idolaters of the Quraysh and that of the Jews. As for the Quraysh, they wanted to expel the Prophet from Mecca. However, someone might say the believers were those who started

fighting at Badr. I say that Muslims did not intend to fight at Badr. Rather, they went to claim compensation from the caravan for all that they had lost in Mecca. The disbelievers, on the other hand, stated that they would not return home until they have annihilated Muhammad and all those who followed him, and they showed up with an army to fight at Badr. Despite the fact that the caravan was brought to safety thanks to a scheme of Abu Sufyan, the Quraysh wanted to fight, and amassed their soldiers and horses to do as such against the Muslims.

Jews did the same thing. They broke their covenants and attempted to expel Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from Medina, just as the Quraysh had attempted to expel him from Mecca. There was a treaty between the Prophet and the Jews. It was one of the first achievements of the Prophet in Medina. Yet, did the Jews keep this treaty? No, they did not. Although they swore not to aid any enemy against Prophet Muhammad, they broke their pledge and dishonoured their treaty by aiding the Quraysh against the Muslims.

The Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir did the same thing. They wanted to assassinate the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* by dropping a boulder onto him. Jews went even further at the battle of al-Ahzab by aiding the Quraysh. They agreed to letting the enemy pass into the city of Medina through their lands in order to take Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Muslim army by surprise.

Therefore, when Allah *Glorified is He* say that 'they attacked you first', it refers to more than one instance in addition to the way they broke their covenants and their initiated fighting. This all makes it necessary for you to fight them to secure yourselves from their evil: 'What! Will you not fight a people, who broke their oaths and aimed at the expulsion of the Messenger while they attacked you first? Do you fear them? But Allah is most deserving that you should fear Him, if you are believers.' (*at-Tawba*: 13) We notice that when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Will you not fight', He is encouraging them to fight. It means what keeps them from fighting the enemy, unless it be that they are in awe of them. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* exclaims about the possibility that they might be afraid of them and says that it is He Whom they should fear (*at-Tawba*: 13).

In this context Allah *the Exalted* alerts the attention of the believers to the fact that they have two choices, namely to fear men and their persecution or to fear Allah. However, it is more fitting to be in awe of the One Who is more Powerful, more Mighty, and whose requital is more permanent. This is due to the fact that if one were to compare the power of these people to the Power of Allah, He has infinitely more right to be feared. When one has two choices, he chooses the one that causes less harm. How could believers fear what disbelievers might inflict upon them and not fear that which Allah might inflict upon them?

Allah *the Almighty* clarified in another verse in this very chapter that believers must not fear disbelievers. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do you wait for us but one of two most excellent things? And we wait for you that Allah will afflict you with punishment from Himself or by our hands. So wait. We too will wait with you.' (*at-Tawba*: 52) Thus, Allah *the Most High* took fear away from the souls of believers. What could the army of disbelievers do to you? You will be martyred, be admitted to paradise or be victorious. The question is a rhetorical one that is meant to express censure. It means that you must never fear or hold them in awe, for if they were more powerful than you and they were to overcome you, then you would achieve martyrdom. Moreover, if they were weaker than you, and you were to overcome them, you would achieve victory. Thus, both eventualities are beloved and desirable for the souls of those who believe in Allah. It is, therefore, a means of strength for your heart and firmness for your feet at times of battle and combat.

Allah *the Almighty* gives His final verdict stating that it is He Whom Muslims should fear. It means to revise your faith, and if you are true believers in Allah, you would desire martyrdom. Likewise, if you are believers in Allah *the Almighty* the Powerful and the Invincible, you are aware of Him, His Power and Omnipotence which are incomparable in terms of the power of humans. Either you shall defeat them and enjoy the delight of victory, or you shall be martyred and enter paradise. Both results are good, while what awaits disbelievers is either infliction of suffering upon them by your hands or else infliction of His own torment upon them.

Thus, any battle between faith and disbelief, we find that the faithful are always on the winning side whether they are martyred or succoured. The losers are always the disbelievers. They will be tormented either by believers or by Allah in this life or the Hereafter. Thus, Allah has established a balance which removes fear from the souls of believers as they battle the disbelievers. So, as a rule, do not ever turn upon your heels in a battle since no matter how powerful the disbelievers might be materially, the Power of the Allah *Glorified is He* is greater. Allah *Glorified is He* states that many small hosts have overcome a great host by the Will of Allah: 'How many a small party has triumphed over a large party by Allah's command!' (*al-Baqara*: 249)

Therefore, the relative material strengths of the opponents do not count; it is a kind of fear that has no place in the hearts of believers since Allah is on the side of those who believe

Allah *Glorified is He* further emphasises His exhortation to fight. He says:

قَتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ وَيَنْصُرْكُمْ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَشْفِ صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُّؤْمِنِينَ

Fight them: God will punish them at your hands, He will disgrace them, He will help you to conquer them, He will heal the believers' feelings [14] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 14)

After Allah exhorted believers in the previous verse to fight, He then mentions fighting in this verse to further encourage and urge them to fight. It is a Divine Commandment to believers to fight disbelievers. Allah *Glorified is He* gives the wisdom behind the commandment of fighting by saying, 'Allah will punish them by your hands.' We might ask why Allah does not send forth a sign directly from Him to subject them to punishment if He wants to punish them. We say that had the Muslims been given victory by a natural disaster rather than by fighting, the disbelievers would say that it was only a natural disaster that aided them. Thus, Allah *the Exalted* wills that the disbelievers be defeated at the hands of the believers since the disbelievers are materialists and believe in nothing but the material world. If they believed in Allah, that would have been the end of it. Yet, Allah wanted to show the disbelievers the

might of the believers so that their hearts would be filled with dread and awe of them, that they would be exceedingly cautious and that they would never dare again to even think of attacking the faith or the religion of Islam nor belittling the believers.

Thus, a question might be raised: 'Why does Allah order fighting here, while in another verse, He states that He would not punish them while Muhammad is amongst them (*al-Anfal*: 33)?

So how could Allah both affirm this punishment and then negate it? We say that both of these verses were revealed concerning disbelievers. We note that He has not said that believers would punish them with their hands, rather, He will punish them. If it was said as such, the meaning would have been different. Therefore, one of the two verses affirms the punishment, while the other negates it. We observe that the perspective is different in each. When Allah says that He would not punish them while the Prophet is still amongst them, He means that He would not send upon them a punishment from Heaven, whilst Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were still amongst them. This becomes clear when we consider the verse in which disbelievers asked Allah to rain down upon them stones from the skies or to inflict [some other] grievous sufferings on them: 'O, Allah, if this be indeed the truth from You, then rain down upon us stones from Heaven or bring down upon us a grievous punishment.' (*al-Anfal*: 32)

Thus, we see that disbelievers had asked for punishment to befall upon them from the sky to prove that the Quran was true. Allah *the Most High* responded that He would not punish them as long as the Prophet was still amongst them because He sent him as a mercy to the worlds. The fact that no punishment was sent down upon them from Heaven since the Prophet was sent with his message does not mean that the punishment of disbelievers had ceased. Indeed, Allah has entrusted believers with triumph by guiding them to His Way of guidance and His religion along with aiding them, but still the punishment would be exacted by earthly means. Therefore, there is no contradiction here since a punishment from Heaven would likely mean the annihilation of all disbelievers, whether young and old. A flood would drown them, a calamity would wipe them out, a ferocious and devastating wind

would destroy them or an earthquake would bury them. There would have been no disbeliever left in any of these cases. While the act of fighting, carried out by human hands, does not wipe out all disbelievers, Islam forbids us from harming women and children, along with fighting those who do not fight us: 'Allah forbids you not respecting those who have not fought against you on account of your religion.' (*al-Mumtahana*: 8)

Therefore, we understand that the punishment that comes after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has been sent is not a punishment of annihilation and obliteration as had happened with the previous communities. We know that Allah *the Exalted* punished previous communities using these ways. The Messengers who were sent before Prophet Muhammad were ordered to convey their messages and when their people did not believe in their messages, Heaven intervened against them with all the previous forms of punishment. However, Allah *the Almighty* commanded Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his *Ummah*, or followers, after him to call to the religion of Allah and reprimand those who show enmity to the faith and to the believers. Some of those who should be fought might flee or be captured, whereas women and children should not be chastised in any way.

What is the difference between punishment and disgrace? Sometimes we might find a proud and thick-skinned person who could bear punishment without showing alarm, fear or weakness. His natural pride would prevent him from crying out. For such a person, there is another form of punishment, namely disgrace. Disgrace is harder on the soul than punishment because it means humiliation. For example, say that there is a person who is feared in his neighbourhood as the brawler of the area, and another young man, in front of everyone, comes up to him, fights him and throws him to the ground. This fall would not cause him physical pain, but it disgraces him and humiliates him in front of the people. He would never lift his head amongst them again. This kind of disgrace is more painful to the soul than physical torment. Thus, Allah does not only want to punish disbelievers by the hands of believers, but He also wants them to be humiliated so that they would not be able to lift their heads.

Allah *the Almighty* gives a third consequence for fighting, namely granting Muslims victory. In view of this, when believers fight disbelievers, the

disbelievers are afflicted with punishment, disgrace and defeat. Therefore, there is a stage of punishing, second there is a stage of disgracing, third there is a stage of being victorious, and then comes a stage of soothing the hearts of believers.

This means that a victory which believers would attain, with the aid of Allah, in their battle against disbelievers would soothe their hearts after having suffered abuse and oppression. It is as though victory would cure the illness which had filled the hearts of these believers, along with removing wrath from their hearts. In other words, it would remove wrath and curbed emotions in their hearts. It is as though fighting against disbelievers would not only bring punishment and disgrace to the disbelievers, but it would aid believers, along with curing believers' hearts, which had been filled with pain and wrath due to the aggression of disbelievers against them, their attempt to humiliate them and their usurping their rights. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَذْهَبُ غَيْظُ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾

And remove the rage from their hearts. God turns to whoever He will in His mercy; God is all knowing and wise [15] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 15)

Those who betray their covenants and aid one another against the allies of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* shall see how Allah requites them, and thus, the hearts of believers are soothed and their entire wrath fades away. We know that a cure follows a sickness, and medicine is essential for a cure. It is as if the punishment of Allah was a cure for the hearts of believers; it was a cure for what the disbelievers of the Quraysh had done to them by aiding the tribe of Bakr against Khuza'a that was an ally of our master Prophet Muhammad. So, Allah punishes them through believers' hands, making believers victorious over them and disgracing them at the same time.

We notice that although Allah *the Exalted* punishes them and severely censures them, He opens a door for repentance. This is something only Allah is able to do since everyone is His servant; whether a believer or a disbeliever, and He is his Creator Who is jealously protective of His creation. After punishing and disgracing them severely and thereby soothing the hearts of believers, He opens the door to repentance. Thus, He *the Almighty* gives

believers the power of faithful clemency. They must not be haughty with those who come forth in repentance and faith: 'and Allah turns [mercifully] to whom He pleases.' (*at-Tawba*: 13)

Allah sets and knows all requirements of rulings, and everything has wisdom behind it. In spite of that, He wants fighting to take place in order to smash their tyranny. There is wisdom behind repentance, namely preventing disbelievers from carrying on evil. The establishment of repentance was a Mercy from Allah *the Most High* to His creatures. Had Allah not established repentance, everyone who would commit a sin would seize whatever he could from this worldly life, go to extremes with evildoing, increase his corruption and drag others into corruption with him; all of this is due to his believing that there is no way of repenting and that he is doomed to go to hell. Furthermore, he sees that his fate is sealed and there is no repentance. Thus, the establishment of repentance stops evildoers from going to the extremes with evil, and thereby, Allah *the Exalted* protects society from their evil and places in their heart hope that He will accept their repentance along with a wish that Allah will forgive him. They, therefore, would seek to do good deeds that might expiate the sins they have committed. Then, it is a means of protection for people and a way of halting the spread of evil and corruption. Therefore, fighting, punishment, disgrace and repentance have wisdom in addition to Allah requiting; He requites with wisdom as well as when He accepts repentance, He accepts it with wisdom.

Allah *Glorified* is He continues:

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ
دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَا رَسُولِهِ وَلَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِجَهٍّ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

Do you think that you will be left untested without God identifying which of you will strive for His cause and take no supporters apart from God, His Messenger, and other believers? God is fully aware of all your actions [16]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 16)

The rhetorical question in this verse is meant to express negation, in other words, Allah would not leave you without manifesting His Knowledge in the

world and knowing who have strong enough faith amongst you, making you worthy of striving in Allah's cause. If you imagine that Allah would leave you without any trials, without testing and without purification, you have to rid yourselves of this false notion and accept the contrary (*al-'Ankabut*: 2-3/*al-Baqara*: 141).

Trials are essential for those chosen by Allah to carry the message and confront the evils of social dissolution and corruption. Allah, thereby, purifies the faithful so that each one of them will be completely loyal to Him and willing to sacrifice for the sake of His cause. When Allah *Glorified is He* says that He has not yet known, this does not mean that He does not know and that He will come to know. Undoubtedly, Allah knows everything pre-eternally, but His pre-eternal Knowledge is not an argument against man. I always give the following example, and Allah *the Almighty* is incomparable. A dean of a college could announce that an award for academic achievement will be given, and he wants to give it to the best student. A teacher, who knows the level of the students, tells him that so-and-so student is the top of the class and deserves the award. The dean says that he wants to arrange a test so that those who do not win will have some evidence. This is the practical, reality-based knowledge that the Allah *the Exalted* wants to reveal by means of trials. He knows everything from pre-eternity, but when this knowledge is manifested in the real world, it is an argument against those who disobey.

Allah *Glorified is He* questions us by asking if we think that we will be left alone without trial and purification. Allah uses the Arabic word *Lamma* (when) that indicates negation. It is as saying someone has not come yet, which means that he has not come until now. 'The word *Lamma* is different from *Lam* (not) as the word *Lam* does not imply any expectation that the action will be accomplished later, rather, it implies that it will never be accomplished. As for *Lamma*, it implies that the action is expected to be accomplished later. What this means is that the action has not been accomplished at the time of speaking, but might be accomplished later. When you say, 'Our orchard has not yielded fruit yet', this means that it has not borne any fruit, but it might easily bear fruit later. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The dwellers of the desert say, "We believe." Say, "You do not believe but say, 'We submit.'" Faith has not yet entered into your hearts, and if you obey

Allah and His Messenger, He will not diminish aught of your deeds. Surely, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.' (*al-Hujurat*: 14) This noble verse means that faith had not entered their hearts yet, but it would enter them later, which was a glad tiding for them. The Bedouin said, 'We have attained to faith', so Allah *Glorified is He* clarified to them that they have surrendered, but faith has not entered their hearts yet. Faith means the absolute conviction of the heart, whilst Islam is submission to the behaviours which the faith of the heart demands. Therefore, the meaning is that one has chosen to act in accordance with the way of Islam, but this is only superficial behaviour which does not come from the depths of the heart.

When Allah says that He has not yet known, this does not mean that His Knowledge is linked to the moment, for His Knowledge is pre-eternal, not subject to vicissitudes of time and change. The knowledge meant in this verse is the reality-based knowledge that would be an argument against a person. If Allah had not told us, we would say, 'Had You commanded us to fight, O, Lord, we would have fought, and had You commanded us to bear the war with steadfast patience, we would have done so, and we would have been the best of all those who struggled!'

Therefore, trials are a practical test. One of these trials is facing the enemy in battle. Those who flee prove themselves deficient in this duty, while those who cannot bear the trials patiently recognise the deficiency of their faiths; this is reality-based knowledge.

Therefore, Allah intends, by manifesting His Knowledge in this world, to distinguish between honouring the struggle and fleeing from it. He wants a defined conduct of faith that shows those people did not seek help from any but He and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The word *Walija* (help) is an active noun derived from the word *walijah* which means entrance. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah causes the night to enter into the day and causes the day to enter into the night.' (*al-Hajj*: 61) This means that He makes the night enter into day and makes the day enter into night. The meaning of *walija* is something which enters into something else that is not part of it. It is said in the same form in Arabic whether it refers to singular, dual or plural forms of masculine or feminine cases. It is the same whether it describes a

man, a woman, two men, two women or a group of men as just. The meaning of *waliya* in this verse is the evil advisor who mixes with weak believers and penetrates their souls to discover their secrets and pass them on to disbelievers. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* wants to clarify that He knows in the real world those who struggle hard without befriending any evil advisors from amongst disbelievers who interfere with their affairs and reveal their secrets

We can say that believers are not allowed to seek help from disbelievers since disbelievers would seek to learn their secrets and reveal them to their enemies, thus exposing believers to danger. Believers must take Allah, the Prophet and other believers as helpers. Muslims must allow them into their inner circle since they can be trusted with the secrets they know. As for the enemies and rivals amongst disbelievers, they cannot be trusted with any of the believers' secrets. Thus, Allah ends the verse, stating that He is aware of what we do.

This warns against thinking that believers can mix with disbelievers and give them the secrets of other believers without anyone knowing it. Believers should be aware that Allah hears and sees all. Allah is aware of everything, and nothing escapes His Knowledge. Therefore, believers should not deceive themselves by imagining that when they conceal something from people's eyes, they conceal it from Allah. Nothing escapes the eyes of the Creator, and if believers manage to escape the justice of the worldly life, they will never escape the justice of Heaven.

Allah *Glorified is He* then takes us to another issue. He says:

مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يَعْمُرُوا مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ شَاهِدِينَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ
بِالْكُفْرِ أُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

It is not right for the idolaters to tend God's places of worship while testifying to their own disbelief: the deeds of such people will come to nothing and they will abide in Hell [17] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 17)

This verse seems to be an explanation of the reason for the disavowal which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* appointed 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* to announce on the day of the greatest

pilgrimage. Disavowal means separation, and it meant that no idolater would be allowed to enter the Mosque or do circumambulation naked in the Sacred House. This disavowal of Allah and His Messenger acted as prevention for idolaters from entering the Sacred Mosque. A number of idolaters had turned the Sacred Mosque into a kind of social club for themselves sitting there to chat at night, conducting business and doing other things. They had also given pilgrims unfermented raisin juice to drink, they had taken care of the Mosque's veils and they had fed those who came to visit the House of Allah.

The disbelievers used to do all of this in Mecca, but it all ended with the disavowal which 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb announced on behalf of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was inspired by his Lord to do so. Therefore, idolaters no longer had the right to visit the mosques of Allah. The phrase that 'The idolaters have no right to visit the mosques of Allah' has two meanings. The first is to sit in the mosques in order to visit with others, and the second is to look after the mosque, its cleaning and maintenance. Allah *the Exalted* forbade idolaters from both of these activities. In this verse, we are referring to the Inviolable Mosque (*at-Tawba*: 17).

The Inviolable Mosque is a place where people from all over the world turn to when they pray. Every place where a Muslim prostrates may be called a mosque and due to the great number of those who prostrate, the Inviolable Mosque can be considered as being many houses of worship, not only one. Or it may be due to the directions of prayer being numerous in the Inviolable Mosque since some prostrate at the north side of the *Ka'ba*, others on the south side, others on the east side and others on the west side which are cardinal directions. There are also the derivative directions, meaning that some people face southeast, while others face southwest. The derivative directions from which people may face the *Ka'ba* are manifold, with every direction being a mosque in itself, and there are also those who cannot physically see the *Ka'ba*, yet they turn to face its direction.

We must note in this verse that the words 'it is not for' express negation. We understand that it is not rationally, logically or religiously acceptable that disbelievers come near the mosque nor tend to it. This is due to mosques being for worship, and worship needs an object, namely Allah, but idolaters

associate partners with Him. It is therefore logical that they are not to be allowed to enter mosques. Preventing them from entering, visiting and tending mosques is something logical, and their own disbelief bears witness to this. This is why they are prohibited from entering mosques of Allah.

Testimony is considered by either state or words. As for their spoken testimony, they used to ask Jews and Christians what their religion is. They used to respond with their religions, but if an idolater were asked, he would affirm his own idolatry. This was their spoken testimony, and as for the testimony of their state, they prostrated before idols and worshipped them instead of Allah.

So how could we not say to an idolater that he has no place in the mosque and that he should keep away from it? Islam is far above the need for any idolater to build a mosque for it or for a disbeliever to tend to any of Allah's places of worship. Allah *the Most High* is far above the need for anyone to visit Him in His house, while he does not believe in Him. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says that they bear witness against themselves when they deny the truth. They had forgotten the very first testimony of the truth, which they made when Allah called them to bear witness against themselves. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes! We bear witness." Lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Surely, we were heedless of this."' (*al-An'am*: 172-173)

Therefore, they bore witness to the Oneness of Allah at the first moment of creation and swore to Him, but then they repudiated this testimony, associated partners with Him, placed idols in Allah's Inviolable House, and then falsely claimed that they only worshipped them to bring them nearer to Him: 'And those who take as protectors others beside Him say, "We serve them only that they may bring us near to Allah in station." Surely, Allah will judge between them concerning that wherein they differ. Surely, Allah guides not him who is an ungrateful liar.' (*az-Zumar*: 3) This is the very essence of idolatry, and thus, they bore witness against themselves to their disbelief.

We know that a mosque is a place where we prostrate. For Muslims, every place on this earth is suitable for prostration and may, therefore, be

considered as a mosque. This is something by which Allah has solely honoured Muslims. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I have been given five things which no (prophet) before me was ever given. I have been given victory by dread over (the lands covered by) a month's journey, and the earth has been made for me a purified place of worship, so that any man of my community to whom comes the time of prayer may pray (where he is). Battle-spoils are lawful for me, whilst they were lawful to none before me. I have been given the right of intercession, and a prophet used to be sent to his people alone, whilst I was sent to all mankind.'⁽¹⁾ This Hadith makes it clear that one of the things with which Allah honoured solely the followers of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is that He made every place on the earth suitable for the performance of prayer and made the entire earth pure. It is enough for a believer to perform dry ablution with earth and then to pray on it. However, there is a difference between a place which is suitable for prayer, a place which is also the area for your daily life and a place which is expressly reserved for worship. You may pray in the field where you cultivate. You may pray in the factory where you produce, and you may pray at school as well as learn there. These places are all mosques in the general sense in that there are places of prostration to Allah. However, when the word 'mosque' is used, one ordinarily thinks of the enclosed place in which none of life's daily activities takes place, a place that is dedicated solely for prayer and prostration. When you corner an area even with only a white line of chalk or a piece of string and call it a mosque, then you should perform no activities therein except prayer. This is the meaning of mosque in the technical vocabulary of the Sacred Law. Every house you build for the Sake of Allah is called a mosque. The prayer-direction of all the mosques throughout the world is the Inviolable Mosque. Therefore, mosques are places that are singled out to be mosques or places of worship, so they are for prayer and no other actions of life. The devotion of this space is a human choice, and the direction it faces is the Inviolable Mosque, the Greatest Mosque which was chosen by Allah *the Almighty* and the first to be built: 'Surely, the first House founded for all mankind is that at Becca, abounding in blessings and a guidance for all the worlds.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 96)

(1) [Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

In addition, since the Sacred House was chosen and set up by Allah for mankind, we might ask whether mankind were those who set it up. No, they were not. Someone other than mankind set it up since the meaning of mankind is Adam *peace be upon Him* and his progeny. Therefore, it must have been set up before the time of Adam. The Quran's logic suggests that the House existed before Adam, and if we go a little deeper, we find that this Inviolable House is 'abounding in blessings and a guidance for all the worlds' and the angels are part of the worlds.

Thus, we see that the idea some people have that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon Him* was the one who specified the location and the foundations of the House is incorrect. It is due to the House being the place and not the things within the place, and furthermore, the House is not the stone or the building which we call the *Ka'ba*. The *Ka'ba* is what inhabits the place. The House, however, is the place wherein the *Ka'ba* is built. For if a great rain were to come and sweep the *Ka'ba* away and a flat area of land left in its place, where would we pray? We would pray towards the place, as rain might remove the objects within the place, but the place remains.

When our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* came along, the traces of the House were nowhere to be seen. Allah commanded him to raise the House. Allah *Glorified is He* did not ask him to identify the place, rather, He commanded him to build the third dimension (height) as every area has two dimensions, length and width. Plus, if it is circular it has a circumference, and if it is triangular, it is composed of three sides, However, raising the height gives the object volume, and our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* raised the foundations of the House after Allah had specified its place and shown it to him:

'And remember the time when Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) raised the foundations of the house by praying, "Our Lord, accept this from us, for You are the All-Hearing, the All Knowing" (*al-Baqara*: 127).

It is as though the House was already dedicated before they raised it. This is supported by the fact that when Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the coming of Hajar and her baby son, Ismail (Ishmael) and about how Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon them*, sent them to live in this place, He said: 'O, our

Lord! Surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Your Sacred House.' (*Ibrahim*: 37)

Ibrahim (Abraham) raised the foundations with the help of his son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them*, after he had grown up and become strong, for he had sent him and his mother to live by the House when he was still a baby. Therefore, the place was already designated as a House, but Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* built the structure, which would occupy the site by giving it its third dimension, namely height.

Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'And when We assigned to Ibrahim (Abraham) the place of the House.' (*al-Hajj*: 26) This means that Allah showed and designated to him the site, which was where Ibrahim (Abraham) would build upon with stones to give the House discernible form. Thus, the House was already there.

We can observe that all the mosques spread throughout the world must face a single point, for One God. Allah *the Almighty* specified this point by the prayer-direction, which faces the *Ka'ba*. Some free thinkers want to change the meaning of the verse that says that wherever you turn, there is Allah's countenance (face): 'To Allah belongs the East and the West, so wherever you turn, there will be the Face of Allah. Surely, Allah is Bountiful, All Knowing.' (*al-Baqara*: 115)

They claim that whatever place they face while praying, they will find Allah's countenance there. We say that the correct understanding of this is that the countenance of Allah is in all places, but beware of thinking that the *Ka'ba* is specified as our prayer direction since it is Allah's Countenance! No, rather, we are merely commanded to face it when we pray. If you were to look at Muslims all over the world, you would find that each one of them faces the *Ka'ba* when he prays. The *Ka'ba* is the focal point, and we all face it. You find that some face it from the east, others from the west, others from the north and others from the south. Thus, it is true that wherever we turn, there is Allah's countenance.

Since we know that mosques are specified and dedicated for worship, it is not right that an idolater should come to them. We should not accept or tolerate an idolater aiding in their reparations or cleaning because Allah is in

no need of this. We should also refrain from discussing worldly matters in the mosque. The Prophet of Allah said, 'A time will come when the people will gather in circles at their mosques having no concern but this worldly life: Allah has no need of them, so do not sit with them.'⁽¹⁾

It is as though it is not enough for them to love this worldly life outside the mosque, but they want to retain it even during those minutes they set aside for prayer. They drag the life of this world into the mosque with them. I want to ask them why they do not set aside the affairs of this world during these minutes. Each one of them spends all his life in this world immersed in Allah's favours. So let him then devote some of his time to Allah, the One Who gave him all these favours.

We must therefore know that as long as we have devoted a place to the worship of Allah, we must accompany this devotion of place with a devotion to the purpose for which a man enters the mosque. We should turn to Allah *the Almighty* therein because the mosque is devoted to the worship of Him. Even though the whole earth is suitable to be prayed on, when we go to the mosque, our attitude must be centred on worship and all our actions, feelings and emotions must be directed to Allah. Therefore, the best thing we can do when we enter the mosque is to intend to make a spiritual retreat. We must keep ourselves away from those who want to engage us in conversations about worldly matters.

Traditions narrate that it is forbidden to engage in a conversation in a mosque because doing so nullifies works and erases good deeds. We might do many good deeds outside the mosque, but we must only enter it with the proper etiquette of the mosque. Standing before Allah in His House has its proper etiquette and decorum. We must not step in front of people as they pray, and this should not even require any arrangement since there should be no empty spaces at the front, whilst the back is full. This will ensure that we can sit where we want to pray without steeping in front of others. We should sit in the mosque in the order in which we arrive; and this will ensure that the proper etiquette and decorum of the mosque is observed.

(1) [Narrated by *Al-Hakim*]

We know as well that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed for loss to be incurred by all those who conduct business deals in the mosque, and he prayed that those who seek worldly things in the mosque may not be given success by Allah. He also prayed that anyone who searches for a lost item in the mosque that Allah does not grant it to him. Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If you see someone buying or selling in the mosque, say, "May Allah not make your bargain profitable!" When you see someone announcing in it that they lost something, say, "May Allah not restore it to you."' He also narrated that the Prophet of Allah said, 'If anyone hears a man inquiring in the mosque about something he has lost, he should say, "*La raddaha Allahu 'alaika* (May Allah not restore it to you)" for mosques are not built for this purpose.'

Therefore, let us devote the time we spend in the mosque to the One Who gives us all these favours. That is Allah *the Most High*. When outside the mosque and at any other times, we live in the midst of the favours which Allah has extended to us.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says that He had established the House as a means of guidance for all the worlds: 'Surely, the first House founded for all mankind is that at Becca, abounding in blessings and guidance for all the worlds.' (*Al-Imran*: 96), this means it is for all people, not only for those who sit within it. It is as though the illuminations and revelations of the Allah *Glorified is He* are the most magnificent things in His House first of all, then these illuminations and revelations spread out to all the other houses of Allah and to those who attend them and offer worship in them. The houses of Allah are the places in which mercies descend from Allah *the Almighty* and this fact is quite clear when He spoke about His light in the chapter of *an-Nur* when He says: 'In houses which Allah has permitted to be exalted and that His name may be remembered in them.' (*an-Nur*: 36) This means that those who observe this light which descends on them are the attendants of the mosques.

In the same chapter, Allah *the Exalted* says that He is the light of the heavens and the earth. This means that His light engulfs them. When Allah wants to introduce a similitude for something that is intangible, He precedes it with something tangible that men know so that people can recognise the

intangible or invisible thing. Metaphysics and the unseen are difficult to realise in regards to humans. This is why Allah simplifies it by coining a similitude out of tangible things since we all see them. By this approach, Allah *the Most High* gathers the metaphysics which is unknown and tangible, which is known together to draw the similitude closer to our minds and make it clear to us. Therefore, Allah wanted to combine between what is unfamiliar to people to what is familiar to them. That is, visitors of Mosques are the ones who attain benefit from being exposed to this Divine Light. In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *an-Nur*: ‘Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). This clearly means that His Light fills the heavens and the earth. When Allah *the Almighty* gives parables to illustrate spiritual matters for people to understand them properly, He presents tangible examples which everyone understands; and in this way He *Glorified is He* makes these spiritual or metaphysical matters easier for people’s minds to grasp. In other words, due to the fact that spiritual and metaphysical matters are difficult for people to understand, He *the Almighty* makes these things easier by presenting them in the form of parables drawn from tangible, physical matters which are clearly perceived by people. As a result, people will have a clearer image about this topic which they know nothing about.

In this regard, we, human beings, find that ‘day’ and ‘night’ occur as a result of the movement of the earth around the sun, which is why we find that one particular half of the earth has day while the other has night. We know for certain that ‘the day’ is used to refer to that particular period which is naturally light, whilst ‘the night’ refers to that particular period which is dark. This indicates that the term ‘light’ is defined as the brightness which comes from the sun, fire, etc. and from electrical devices, and which allows things to be seen. It goes without saying that when man clearly sees items and objects around her/him, s/he will never collide with any of them.

But, if there is no light at all, man will certainly collide with these objects and items around him/her; a matter which will consequently lead to one of the following two results: either colliding with something which is weaker than him/her, or vice versa. As a result, both of the two parties involved in the collision will suffer damage, but of course, in accordance with the level of the collision, which is why we firmly believe that ‘light’ is the most important

and crucial factor whereby one avoids collisions and, in this way, is protected from destroying other things or him/herself being destroyed.

Clearly, it is by virtue of 'light' that one can perceive items and objects around him/her well and in this way avoid collision with them. As a matter of fact, this is the due role to be performed by visible light, i.e. the light of the sun from which all creatures, with no exception at all, derive benefit. Hence, we stress that 'light' is a Divine Blessing granted by the Lord *Glorified is He* to all His Creatures in this worldly life—those who believe in Him and those who do not believe alike.⁽¹⁾

That is why when the sun is absent; we resort to making use of different items and objects by means of which we can produce light. With regards to this, we should be aware that the light generated by all these objects is of limited strength and for this reason is able to lighten only a limited area of the place. For example, one may light a candle, while another might use a small gas-lamp; still a third might use an electric neon light. Furthermore, we might have a fourth who uses several electric lamps to fill the space with light, that is, each will try his/her best to get light according to his/her feasible means. Yet, when the sun rises, everyone turns off the lamps because their light becomes useless in the presence of the greater light of the sun—this is actually the true meaning of visible light. As such, we can fully realise the great difference between the Divinely created light and that made by man for the following reason: the first, which is the Divinely created light, is greater than all other forms of light, which is why they all are useless in its existence.

Moreover, we have the spiritual light (guidance) by means of which one is guided to attain a perfect moral character and not degraded into having a vile moral character. That is to say that all that guides to the Divine Way of guidance is called 'light'; a point which is proved by the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...Indeed, there has come to you light and a clear Book from Allah...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 15).

(1) 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah Almighty shared out your character between you as He divided your provision between you. Allah Almighty bestows wealth on those He loves and those He does not love. He only gives faith to those He loves' (*Narrated by Ahmad*)

The 'light' in this particular aforementioned verse of the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* refers basically to the Divine Way of Guidance by means of which one is able to attain a higher spiritual rank and a perfect moral character, and therefore none will harbour grudges against his/her fellow man, nor will we envy one another, nor will we take bribes from one another, but rather, we will all respect the rights of one another.

Here, we should be fully aware of the undeniable fact that as long as experiment proves that the light of the sun, a created being, is brighter than all other forms of light to the extent that all these other forms of light are deemed useless in the existence of the light of the sun, the light of the Divine Way of Guidance in the same way is stronger than all other man-made ideologies and thus cannot exist with any of them in the same heart. That is to say that capitalism, communism, existentialism and all similar ideas are useless and meaningless in the presence of the Divine Way of Guidance. This is based on the fact that all of these ideologies were invented out of man's personal caprice. In addition, they all work for achieving the personal interests of those who adopt them; a point which is totally different when it comes to the Divine Way of Guidance which is primarily meant to achieve the interests of all mankind. Hence, no one should lay down ideologies or hold onto values which are against the Way of Guidance set by Allah *Glorified is He* because He *the Almighty* through His Way of Guidance, has arranged everything clearly for His Creatures.

At that point, we ask all those who adopt such deviant ideologies which contradict the Divine Way of Guidance, 'Why do you not use material matters as a key to understanding spiritual ones? You are fully aware of the fact that all different forms of light are useless in the existence of the light of the sun created by Allah *the Almighty* so why do you not get rid of all man-made ideologies and cling to the Divine Way of Guidance instead—especially if we take into account that the Divine Way of Guidance is eligible for all times and places?'

Here, I should drive your attention to the fact that even though we, through experience, unanimously agree on the fact that the visible light of the sun created by Allah is brighter than all other forms of light, we refuse to admit that the Divine Way of Guidance is more fully qualified to attain the interest of all mankind than all other forms of man-made ideologies. In other

words, despite the fact that Allah *the Almighty* has given us this light, i.e. the Divine Way of Guidance to show us the way to the right path, we refuse but to hold onto these deviant ideologies and values resulting from the work of the human mind which is of limited knowledge and experience. As a result, the entire world today suffers corruption and misery. Ironically, although we are fully aware of the main reason behind this deterioration and decadency which is keeping away from the Divine Way of Guidance, we do not return to it, but rather, we hold onto our own values and ideologies instead.

Once again, Allah *the Almighty* gives us a striking example of a tangible matter, i.e. the visible light, for us to be able to properly understand the true meaning of 'The Light of Allah'; He *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth ...' (*an-Nur*: 35); that is to say that His Light fills all the corners of the heavens and the earth, leaving no part of them whatsoever in darkness. He *Glorified is He* then says: '...a likeness of His light is as a niche ...' (*an-Nur*: 35). The Arabic word *Mishkah* (niche) is an alcove or a hollow in a wall in which people of the countryside used to use to place lamps to light up the room. As a matter of fact, today we have replaced these niches with small shelves upon which lamps are placed. Because the light of the lamp is heavily concentrated in this alcove, it is fully filled with light which is then scattered to fill the rest of the room. The light of the lamp, in this case, first fully lightens the niche and then the rest of the room.

As such, we reach the conclusion that the Light of Allah *the Almighty* leaves no place in the heavens and the earth without reaching it, which is why we find no (permanent) darkness in our world, exactly like the small circle through which the entire light of the lamp shines so that there is not a single millimetre of darkness in it. By the way, we call this particular device which emits light *Misbah* ('lamp', from the root 's-b-h') because it gives us something akin to the light of *As-Sabah* ('the morning' from the same root).

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: '...a likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp is in a glass ...' (*an-Nur*: 35). As a matter of fact, if we want to make the light of something brighter, we place it inside a glass in order to protect it from the wind that might negatively affect it in such a way that makes it scatter here and there in vain. We should remember that the

glass surrounding the lamp works as a reflexive surface for the light, which clearly gives the true meaning of the concentration of light within the niche.

He *the Almighty* then continues, indicating that the glass surrounding the niche is not an ordinary one, but rather, it itself produces light, and therefore this Divine Light is brighter than any other form of light; He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...(and) the glass is as it were a brightly shining star ...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). But from this arises the following question, ‘What is that particular source that supplies this lamp with fuel to produce such a strong light?’ In fact, Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who gives us the answer, saying: ‘...lit from (the oil of) a blessed olive tree, neither of the East nor of the West ...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). That is, the blessed tree, the olive tree, has two additional characteristics, which are that it is neither of the East nor of the West. As such, its light has not been affected by the heat or cold, but rather, it is a pure light which has been produced in a moderate environment. The term ‘pure light’ has been used in this context to refer to the highest and most unadulterated form of light. Let us enumerate these stages for us to fully realise how we reach this purest form of light: the first stage begins with a narrow niche in which there is an extraordinary lamp; then, the lamp is enclosed in an extraordinary glass which amplifies the light for it to shine out like a radiant star; and finally the oil with which the lamp is fuelled comes from a blessed olive tree which is as pure as pure can be.

Allah *Glorified is He* then continues, describing the oil of this olive tree by saying: ‘...whose oil almost gives off light even if no fire touches it ...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). That is, everything therein shines of its own accord and in this way amplifies the power of the light emitted by this particular lamp placed in this narrow niche. In other words, the small circle shines and its light is amplified by the glass surrounding the lamp; the glass itself shines and gives more light; the oil is blessed and unadulterated, resulting in the light it produces being brilliant and above all else; and the oil itself produces its own light without being touched by fire. It is as though there is light upon light, and as a result there is not a single part of this circle which is left in darkness. As a matter of fact, this is how Allah *Glorified is He* lights up the entire universe so that not a single part of it is left in darkness, but rather, it is all covered with Divine Light.

However, we should be wary of relying on the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...Allah is Light ...' to say that He *Glorified is He* resembles—Allah forbid—His creation; rather, we should be fully aware of the fact that this particular saying of Allah tells us how He *the Almighty* lights up His entire universe including the heavens and the earth and what is between them.

Concerning this, we can quote the following story of the famous poet Abu Tammam in which it is said that he wanted to praise caliph Ahmed ibnul Mu'tasim and thus described him as having:

'Amr's bravery with Hatim's largess,
And Ahnaf's patience with Iyas' cunning

These poetic verses indicate plainly that Abu Tammam had praised the caliph by saying that he acquired all of these good, moral characteristics: the bravery of 'Amr ibn Ma'ad Yakrib (a brave Yemini knight), the tolerance and generosity of Hatim At-Ta'i, the forbearance of Al-Ahnaf ibn Qays and the intelligence of Iyas, characteristics which none before him acquired together.

But, one of the caliph's retinue said, 'How could you praise the Caliph with such characteristics which his subjects possess? The Caliph is above all of those whom you have mentioned! He is braver than 'Amr, more generous than Hatim, more forbearing than Ahnaf, and cleverer than Iyas!'

When replying to this, Allah *the Almighty* guided Abu Tammam to give a suitable answer straight away as the poet said:

Censure me not for comparing him to his lessers,
Such aberrant examples of valour and bounty;
For Allah used a lesser thing to symbolise His Light:
A niche, wherein a lamp is shining

That is, the poet had only given this example by way of allegory, not intending to draw a similarity between Allah and His creatures.

Back to the verse of the chapter of *an-Nur*, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...whose oil almost gives off light even if no fire touches it—Light upon light-...' (*an-Nur*: 35). This part of the verse obviously indicates that everything that

produces its own light makes the original light brighter and stronger. And just as one needs visible light to show him/her the way in this worldly life, a person also needs the spiritual light by means of which his/her moral character is perfected, which is why we all should firmly adhere to the Divine Way of Guidance which is not in any way comparable to any of these deviant ideologies and values.

Let us offer another example to fully clarify this point; Allah *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *al-Anfal*: ‘O you who believe! Answer (the Call of) Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] when he calls you to that which gives you life...’ (*al-Anfal*: 24). It goes without saying that Allah *the Almighty* addresses people who are alive, so what is the wisdom behind using this particular phrase: ‘to that which gives you life’ in this context? Actually, we should be fully aware of the fact that this particular verse of the chapter of *al-Anfal* tells us clearly that we have two kinds of life, each one of which is different from the other; the first is the worldly life in which we move and exert efforts to obtain our needs and which has a limited period of time; it is permanently subject to change, that is, its blessings will never last forever, but rather, man will certainly be deprived of them at some time for one reason or another. As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* does not want people to firmly cling to this life because if man does this, s/he will do anything, lawful or unlawful, to get what s/he wants. Concerning this, we should take into account that Allah *the Almighty* wants His slaves to follow the Divine Way of Guidance which will undoubtedly cause them benefit in both this worldly life and the Hereafter in which people will, due to the Omnipotence of Allah, have eternal blessings.

It is now clear that the saying of Allah: ‘O you who believe! Answer (the Call of) Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] when he calls you to that which gives you life ...’ (*al-Anfal*: 24) clearly means that there are two lives: one life in which man moves and exerts efforts to obtain what s/he wants. In fact, man’s affairs in this particular life will run properly if s/he adheres to the Divine Way of Guidance which, in turn, leads man to be prosperous in the other eternal life, i.e. the Hereafter.

As such, we can reach the conclusion that Allah *the Almighty* wants us not to consider this worldly life as our ultimate objective, but rather, we should

make use of this limited life to be successful in the life to come. In other words, He *Glorified is He* does not want us to give precedence to this worldly life over the everlasting one in the Hereafter. We should take into account the fact that Allah *the Almighty* describing this worldly life, says: 'When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit, then fall down making obeisance to him' (*Sad*: 72). Allah *the Almighty* in this verse of the chapter of *Sad* describes this worldly life which He does not want us to take as our ultimate objective; rather, He *Glorified is He* wants use to view it as a means leading to an everlasting life whose blessings are eternal and select in every way and according to the full meaning of the words. There is a very important point that we should notice in this verse which is that just as Allah *the Almighty* called this particular thing which He breathed into Adam *Ruh* (Spirit), He *Glorified is He* in the same way called His Way of Guidance *Ruh*; a point which is proved by the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in which He says: 'And thus did We reveal to you [Prophet Muhammad] an inspired Book (*Ruhan*) by Our Command. You did not know what the Book was, nor [what] the faith [was], but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants; and most surely you show the way to the right path' (*ash-Shura*: 52).

As a matter of fact, this verse of the chapter of *ash-Shu'ara* refers to the Divine Way of Guidance which benefits us in the Hereafter. That is to say that if we adhere to and follow this Divine Way of Guidance, we will attain a higher rank of spirituality. In addition, we will for sure have a perfect moral character. Clearly, Allah *the Almighty* grants you both these two kinds of light, i.e. the visible light of the sun and the light obtained from His Way of Guidance, for you to be prosperous in both this worldly life and the Hereafter.

Back to the verse of the chapter of *an-Nur*; He *Glorified is He* then says: 'Light upon light ...' (*an-Nur*: 35). Concerning this verse, we can see the absolute accuracy of the style of the Quran; Allah *the Almighty* does not say, 'Light with light' because man is not held legally responsible before Allah until s/he reaches adulthood.⁽¹⁾ That is, man derives benefit from the visible

(1) 'Ali Allah be pleased with him narrated that he heard Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'The pen has been lifted from three: From the sleeper until=

light in the period before adulthood, then after adulthood s/he is supposed to derive benefit from the Divine Way of Guidance which is the light represented in the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Once again the light of the sun is clearly a Divine Blessing from which all mankind, believers and disbelievers alike, obtain benefit. Similarly, He *the Almighty* sent down His Way of Guidance but left people, due to the free will He created in them to choose whether to follow it or not, and for this reason it is crystal clear that there is a difference between this visible light and that one pertaining to the Divine Way of Guidance. Finally, we should not forget that Allah *the Almighty* sets such parables for people for them to be able to understand matters, a point which is clear in the conclusion of the verse in which Allah says: ‘...and Allah sets forth parables for men, and Allah is All Knowing of all things’ (*an-Nur*: 35). And the next verse tells us clearly where people can receive this Divine Light; He *Glorified is He* says: ‘In houses which Allah has ordered to be raised, in them His Name is glorified ...’ (*an-Nur*: 36).

The verse starts with a prepositional clause which means we should search for the word that determines it, that is, what is that particular thing which exists in the Houses of Allah?! Indeed, we can only find the answer in the saying of Allah: ‘... Light upon Light ...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). That is, mosques, Houses of Allah, are the places in which spiritual light is received from Him *Glorified is He*. And it is by virtue of this Divine Light that one attains a higher spiritual rank which will certainly benefit him/her in the Hereafter. Let us offer the following example to illustrate this point; when a machine breaks down or does not work properly, the one who is able to repair it best is the one who made it in the first place. That is, because of the undeniable fact that Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who created man, He *the Almighty* Alone, is the One Who is fully Able to set the way of guidance by means of which people’s affairs will run smoothly and perfectly. Similarly, as long as our Lord *Glorified is He* is the Only One Who creates, supplies with provisions, gives life and causes

= he wakes up, from the minor until he grows up, and from the insane until he comes back to his senses or recovers’ (*Narrated by Ahmad*).

death, how is it conceivable for a mere human being to claim that he laid down a way of life for mankind; in fact, man only knows and inclines to what causes corruption in the earth. We say to all those who make this claim, 'As long as you hurry with your broken down television to the one who makes it to repair it for you, why do you not similarly turn to Allah, the One Who created you, to know how to perfect your moral character?!'

In truth, Muslims' frequent attendance in mosques to be permanently in the Presence of their Lord is a way of perfecting and cultivating the moral character of their souls; for when Muslims stand before Allah to offer their prayers, they are filled with contentment and a peace of mind because one may not know which of his/her mental faculties has been actually affected by uneasiness.

This is why whenever Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was distressed by anything, he used to offer prayers.⁽¹⁾ But what does the Arabic statement '*adhabahu amr*' (anything distressed him) mean? It refers to when he *peace and blessings be upon him* was afflicted with something which was beyond his capacity or which he *peace and blessings be upon him* was unable to tackle. As such, why do we not all follow the good example of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*?! Truly, if we do this and follow his example, we, at times of distress, will certainly head for the mosques to tell Allah *the Almighty* about what distresses us and causes us hardships. Hence, it is crystal clear that when we suffer any distress, we must turn to Allah *the Almighty* to remove it from us. And we should know fully well that mosques are the best places in which one is able to supplicate Allah *Glorified is He* and tell Him about one's problems. This is why we find him *peace and blessings be upon him* resorting to the mosque when there was a fierce wind during the night in order for it to abate. In addition, he *peace and blessings be upon him* according to the Hadith narrated by Al-Haythami used to do the same when there was a lunar or solar eclipse.

With regards to this, the adversaries of Islam might say, 'But what did Allah do for that person who was afflicted with something beyond his/her

(1) *Hudhayfa Allah be pleased with him is narrated to have said, 'When anything distressed Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him he prayed' (Narrated by Ahmad).*

capacity?! After all, s/he leaves the mosque in the same condition as s/he entered it!’ We say to those people, ‘This is how the matter appears on the surface, but you do not know what has happened to his/her inner being. You are speaking materially since you know nothing about spiritual treatment. You do not know that Allah *Glorified is He* spiritually treats the inner soul without your being aware of it. This is because mosques are the places where the Divine Light descends—this Light by means of which man’s affairs in this worldly life are set in order and which also gives assurance to man’s soul. Furthermore, it makes it feel secure and content’.

This means that those mosques play the same role of clinics in which doctors⁽¹⁾ treat patients from their physical diseases, but there is only one major difference which is that Allah *the Almighty* Himself is the One Who spiritually treats people in mosques from the diseases of their souls and hearts. In mosques, we are in the Presence of Allah *the Almighty* which is why we are in direct contact with that (incorporeal) Divine Light by means of which all man’s spiritual diseases are successfully treated. Yet, we should consider our hygiene when we want to offer prayers in mosques. In addition, we must wear our best clothes while in the mosques; for although Allah *Glorified is He* does not look to our cleanliness or smartness in themselves, He *the Almighty* wants fellow Muslims who pray next to us not to feel uncomfortable on our account. If someone who works at a factory goes to the mosque in his/her work clothes, it might not be suitable for him/her to go there without bathing first; it is taken for granted that man’s working clothes are an honour for him/her, but the person should change them before going to the mosque.⁽²⁾ Similarly, one should pay attention to the fact that s/he might be covered in perspiration because of her/his work and as a result might give off an offensive odour which harms her/his fellow Muslims in the mosques. It is mainly for this

(1) *Abi Rimthah said, ‘My father said to him (Prophet Muhammad), “Show me what is on your back, for I am a physician”. He (Prophet Muhammad) said, “You are only a soother. Its physician is He Who has created it”’ (Narrated by Abu Dawud).*

(2) *‘Aisha Allah be pleased with her said, ‘The people used to work (for their livelihood) and whenever they went for the Jumu’a (Friday) Prayer, they used to go to the mosque in the same state they had been in work. Consequently, they were asked to take a bath on Friday’ (Narrated by Al-Bukhari).*

reason, i.e. not to harm Muslims, that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prevented those who had eaten garlic and onion from attending the Prayer in mosques. In this regard, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad said, 'Whoever has eaten garlic or onion should keep away from us (or should keep away from our mosque)'.⁽¹⁾

In another narration narrated by Imam Muslim in his *Sahih*, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is narrated to have said, 'He who has eaten onion, garlic or leek should not approach our mosque because the angels are offended (by the strong smells) just as the children of Adam are offended.'⁽²⁾

Therefore, the Muslim should do his/her best to keep the ambience of the mosque agreeable, so that people's hearts will open wide for the Divine Light to descend therein. In addition, we must not breach the etiquettes of attending mosques. There is a very important point that I would like to drive your attention to concerning this; some people, knowing fully well that Allah *the Almighty* showers those who attend prayer in the first rows with His Infinite Mercy, attempt to prevent other Muslims from sitting in these rows by putting something like a rug or something like it in a place in the first rows until s/he comes to occupy it.⁽³⁾ In the same vein, some people, upon the beginning of the prayer, try to cut through the rows to reach the first ones, which is also prohibited. We heavily stress that the front row can in no way be reserved for anyone; every person should take her/his place as s/he arrives at the mosque, that is, s/he shall sit in the empty space s/he finds. It goes without saying that Allah *the Almighty* knows very well those people who came first to the mosque and those who came late. That is why I say to those who reserve places for their relatives or friends who come late, 'You are free to do this in your own house, but those who come to Allah's House first shall sit down first'. I say to those who find a place that has been reserved with a prayer-mat or the like, 'You should move it out of the way and pray there'.

(1) *(Narrated by Al-Bukhari)*

(2) *(Narrated by Muslim)*

(3) *Abu Umamah narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him is narrated to have said, 'Allah and the angels send blessings upon the first row' (Narrated by Ibn Majah).*

As a matter of fact, when one comes to the mosque, s/he is viewed as the guest of Allah *the Almighty*. Furthermore, we should remember a very important point which is that when someone comes to visit us at our house without arranging a meeting, we offer him/her warm and generous hospitality; yet if s/he comes after having an appointment, the hospitality shown and extended to her/him will certainly be warmer and more generous. So what about the Generosity and Hospitality of Him Who created us all when we visit Him at His Houses?!

In truth, Allah *the Almighty* out of His Overwhelming Generosity rewards you as soon as you intend to visit Him at His House, i.e. the mosque; that is, He *Glorified is He* out of His Infinite Mercy, deems you to be in a state of Prayer from the moment you make ablution in your house before you set out to offer the Prayer in the mosque. This is because He *Glorified is He* wants to extend for you the blessing of being in His Presence.

Moreover, we should take into account that when Allah *the Almighty* calls us through the *Adhan* (call to prayer) to attend prayers in mosques, He does so because He will punish those who do not answer this call.⁽¹⁾ But this does not mean that Allah *Glorified is He* has not also kept His Houses, i.e. mosques, open to you to visit at any time you like. As a matter of fact, the call to prayer shows how Allah *the Almighty* is keen to meet with His slaves for Him to confer His Grace and Bounty upon them. You should know that if you want to sit in the mosque before the prayer or even after it, then do so; come at any time and pray as much as you like, and when you say, 'Allah is Great', you should fully realise that you have become in the presence of Allah *the Almighty*. As for those who, for one reason or another, are unable to offer the recommended Prayers, they are only obliged to perform the five prescribed Daily Prayers since these prayers are viewed as the essential minimum one needs to preserve to protect his/her faith. This is because one, while in prayer, is in the Presence of Allah *the Almighty* to Whom s/he declares her/his loyalty and allegiance.

Prayer, then, is a benefit which Allah wants for us in order for us not to be overwhelmed by the problems of daily life. That is to say that He *Glorified is He*

(1) *Ibn 'Abbas* Allah be pleased with him narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Whoever hears the call and does not come, there is no Prayer for him, except for those who have an excuse' (Narrated by Ibn Majah).

wants, through prayer, to drive our attention to His Way of Guidance by means of which our course of life will run smoothly. In other words, He *the Almighty* wants us not to give precedence to the adornment of this worldly life over the Divine Way of Guidance whereby one becomes prosperous in both this life and the Hereafter. Consequently, when you hear the muezzin (one who says the call to prayer) calling out to announce the MIDDAY Prayer, for example, you must leave aside all worldly matters in your hand and go to stand before Allah *Glorified is He*. After performing the MIDDAY Prayer, you go back to your work until you hear the call for the Afternoon Prayer, and so on. All of this is actually meant to remind you of Allah *the Almighty* the Creator so that this worldly life does not distract you and make you forget that your redemption is in the Hand of your Creator *Glorified is He*. In fact, we should be aware that the longest period between the Prayers is that between the Early Night Prayer and the Dawn Prayer, during which people are asleep and thus cannot be taken by the delights and adornments of this worldly life.

Clearly, Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to show loyalty to Him all the time. If you are proud of being a slave to Allah, you will constantly pledge your allegiance to Him *Glorified is He* by offering prayers regularly. When you humbly prostrate yourself before Allah *the Almighty* He increases your honour,⁽¹⁾ supports you all the time and protects you from being humiliated by any other creature in this worldly life.

We previously said that if man wants to meet with an important person, s/he has to make an appointment. This important person might agree to meet with him/her or might not; and if the important person does agree, s/he specifies the date, the time, the place and the duration of the meeting; if you, for any reason, want to extend the meeting, s/he stands up to indicate that it is over.

But Allah *the Almighty* out of His Absolute Generosity, does not treat His creatures in this way; rather, the doors of His Houses are always open, that is,

(1) *Thawban, the slave of Prophet Muhammad, narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Perform prayer more often; for every prostration that you perform before Allah will raise your position one degree and will remit one of your sins' (Narrated by Muslim).*

one can meet with Him *Glorified is He* in the times fixed for performing the obligatory Prayers and also at any other time s/he likes. Actually, we should take into account that you can remain in His Presence for as long as you want; no one, while in His Presence, will say to you, 'The meeting is over'. We can quote the following poetic verses concerning this:

It is enough honour for me that I am a slave

Whose Lord meets with him without an appointment;

Despite His Holy Sanctity,

I can meet Him wherever and whenever I like.

Back to the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *at-Tawba*: 'It is not right for idolaters to tend Allah's Places of Worship ...' (*at-Tawba*: 17); Allah *Glorified is He* laid down this ruling because mosques are dedicated for the worship of Allah *the Almighty* and therefore it is illogical that they be built or attended by an idolater or disbeliever.

As for Allah's saying: 'It is not right for idolaters ...', it means that they, i.e. idolaters, are in no way allowed to carry out that act of tending Allah's places of worship; as for Allah's saying: '...while testifying to their own disbelief ...', it clearly indicates that they themselves are the ones who testify that they are disbelievers; that is, their reality indicates their disbelief and also their sayings. On the other hand, we, the followers of Prophet Muhammad, bear witness that we are believers when we say during the (major or minor) pilgrimage, 'I am at Your service, O Allah, I am at Your service. You have no partner. I am at your service'. This actually means that we testify that Allah *the Almighty* has no partners in worship.

He *the Almighty* then says: 'The deeds of such people will come to nothing...'. The saying of Allah *Glorified is He* '*U'la'ika*' (here translated as 'such people') refers to the idolaters who bore witness against themselves as to their own disbelief; those whom Allah prevented from tending His Mosques. As for Allah's saying: 'The deeds of such people will come to nothing', it means that they, i.e. these deeds of theirs, fell from a high level to a low one. That is to say that the deeds of those idolaters apparently seem to be good while, in essence, they are valueless and null and void; a fact which is proved by the saying of

Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *al-Kahf*: 'Say, "Shall we tell you who are the greatest losers in whatever they may do? [It is] they whose labour has gone astray in [the pursuit of no more than] this worldly life, and who none the less think that they are doing good works' (*al-Kahf*: 103-104).

You find that one of such people, i.e. the greatest losers, keeps on working hard, thinking that s/he will be provided with great rewards for this work, yet her/his work, because of the fact it lacks a good intention, is judged null and void, although this work might be beneficial for other people. In fact, we should remember that the Quran frequently states that the deeds of the deniers of the Truth shall come to nothing. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But as for those who are bent on denying the Truth, their [good] deeds are like a mirage in the desert which the thirsty supposes to be water—until, when he approaches it, he finds that it was nothing. Instead he finds [that] Allah [has always been present] with him, and [that] He will pay him his account in full...' (*an-Nur*: 39).

A 'mirage' is an image produced by very hot air of something which seems to be far away from the person, but in reality it does not exist, which is why when you reach it you find nothing there. As a matter of fact, the one who is not thirsty might not even notice this, but the thirsty person, because s/he is in dire need for water, painstakingly and meticulously searches for water in every place, here and there, to the extent that if s/he sees anything glimmering, s/he deems it to be water; yet when s/he comes to it, s/he finds nothing there at all. It is bad enough if this were the end of it, but such a person also finds that Allah *the Almighty* is there to hold him/her accountable for his/her deeds. Because people like this were all the time heedless of Allah *the Almighty* He *Glorified is He* will certainly not provide them with any reward. That is because man seeks reward from the one whom he intended the work for, and this man did not, in fact, intend the deed for Allah.

Concerning this, we should take into account a very important point which is one must sincerely seek the pleasure of Allah with her/his deeds if s/he wants to be rewarded for this; but if s/he does a good deed to attain a worldly benefit for her/himself or to become famous, then s/he will receive no reward from Allah. That is why the believer must perform all his/her actions

seeking only the pleasure of Allah *the Almighty*, the Creator Who gives him/her many blessings. For example, if you feed a poor person, you should do this only for the sake of Allah; we should be careful not to do chivalrous things simply in order to be called ‘chivalrous’. Once again, those who do good deeds must endeavour to make sure that they seek only the pleasure of Allah by doing such deeds, that is, they should not do them to become famous among the people. In other words, these good deeds of theirs must not be revealed to anyone under any circumstances.

For example, consider the plaques we find on mosques with the names of those people who established them. It is taken for granted that the One for whom the mosque should be built is Allah *the Almighty* Who knows full well all things, including the name of the one who built the mosque. To conclude, we should avoid naming mosques after the names of people, instead we should name them after those who have nothing to do with them for us not to fall under the category of those described in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad, ‘You did it so that such-and-such will be said; and indeed it was said’. Even the warrior who fights in the cause of Allah must devote his intention solely to Allah *Glorified is He* that is, he must not fight for him to be labelled as brave; for if he does, his action will come to nought and he will be among the losers because his action as such is not done for the sake of Allah.

This aforementioned point is crystal clear in the Hadith which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is narrated to have said, ‘The first of the people for whom judgment will be passed on the Day of Resurrection are three. A man who was martyred; he will be brought and Allah will remind him of His Blessings and he will acknowledge them. He *the Almighty* will say, “What did you do with them?” The man will say, “I fought for Your sake until I was martyred”. Allah will say, “You are lying. You fought for it to be said that so-and-so is brave, and it was said”. Then He will order that the man be dragged on his face and thrown into the fire. And (the second will be) a man who acquired knowledge and taught others, and read Quran. He will be brought, and Allah will remind him of His Blessings, and he will acknowledge them. Allah will say, “What did you do with them?” The man will say, “I acquired knowledge and taught others, and read the Quran for

Your sake". Allah will say, "You are lying. You acquired knowledge for it to be said that you were a scholar; and you read Quran so that it would be said that you were a reciter, and it was said". Then He will order that the man be dragged on his face and thrown into the fire. And (the third will be) a man whom Allah made rich and gave him all kinds of wealth. He will be brought and Allah will remind him of His Blessings, and he will acknowledge them. Allah will say, "What did you do with them?" The man will say, "I did not leave any way that You like wealth to be spent but I spent in it". Allah will say, "You are lying. You spent for it to be said that he was generous, and it was said". Then He will order that the man be dragged on his face and thrown into the Fire'.⁽¹⁾ Because of this, if man does not seek the pleasure of Allah by her/his deeds, s/he will find that Allah will render all the deeds null and void.

In another place in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The parable of those who deny their Lord is that all their works are as ashes which the wind blows about fiercely on a stormy day; [in the life to come] they cannot achieve any benefit whatever from all that they may have earned' (*Ibrahim*: 18). You can imagine what a storm wind does to ashes?! It leaves absolutely nothing behind. The idolater who used to enter the Sacred Mosque and give people unfermented grape juice to drink, and who used to tend to the Mosque before Allah prohibited him from entering it—this idolater would not have been rewarded for his deeds because he committed a grave treachery by associating partners with Allah in worship; yet the believer will indeed be rewarded because s/he enters the mosque and tends to it while believing in Allah and associating nothing with Him.

Allah *Glorified is He* then concludes the verse with His saying: 'The deeds of such people will come to nothing and they will abide in Hell' (*at-Tawba*: 17). As a matter of fact, the idolaters will abide in the Hell because they did not seek the Pleasure of Allah with their deeds.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

(1) (*Narrated by An-Nasa'i*)

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنِ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَى
الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَن يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

The only ones who should tend God's places of worship are those who believe in God and the Last Day, who keep up the prayer, who pay the prescribed alms, and who fear no one but God: such people may hope to be among the rightly guided [18] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 18)

The word *Iman* (Belief) means to believe in Allah, His angels, His Scriptures, His Messengers, the Last Day and fate—the good and bad thereof. By the way, the peak of Belief is to testify that ‘There is no deity but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’. With regards to this, we should take into account that the people of Quraysh, due to their arrogance, rejected to believe in Prophet Muhammad to the extent that some of them wondered how the Quran was sent down upon his heart in particular; a point which is mentioned in the Quran in which Allah says: ‘And they say, “Why was this Quran not revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31). This shows that they had no problem at all with the Quran, but rather, they strenuously objected to the character of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Yet Allah *Glorified is He* responds to this objection and says: ‘Will they distribute the Mercy of your Lord? We distribute among them their livelihood in the life of this world ...?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) That is, none has any right to interfere in distributing the Mercy of Allah *the Almighty*; He, due to His Unchallenged Will, distributes it as He wills, just as He *Glorified is He* apportions to them their worldly possessions and material provisions. From this fact arises a good question which is ‘As long as Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who apportioned their provisions for them in this worldly life, how could they hope to have control over distributing what is of a higher rank than this worldly provision?’ Allah *the Almighty* in the Quran tells us of what they said. In the chapter of *al-Anfal*, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And when they said, “O Allah! If this is the Truth from You, then rain upon us stones from heaven or inflict on us a painful punishment”’ (*al-Anfal*: 321). It would have been more logical for them to say, ‘O Lord, if this indeed be the Truth from you, then guide us to it!’ But they, due to their foolishness, asked

for death instead of guidance. Consequently, we reach the conclusion that their prejudice was directed against the person of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this regard, we stress heavily that belief in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a Messenger sent by Allah is inseparable from belief in Allah *Glorified is He*.

In fact, when Allah *the Almighty* says: 'The only ones who should tend Allah's places of Worship are those who believe in Allah and the last Day, who establish regular prayer ...' (*at-Tawba*: 18), we should know that this statement implicitly includes belief in Prophet Muhammad because Allah says: '... who establish regular prayer ...'.

We should fully realise that their Prayers could only be sound if they believed in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since he is the one who taught us that there are five Daily Prayers,⁽¹⁾ and he is the one who taught us how to perform them and what to say in them. Furthermore, we testify to his prophethood as we pray when we announce the beginning of the Prayer and when we say the testimony of faith during the prayer; so, in order to soundly establish the Prayer, we must believe in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is therefore clear that the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '... establish regular prayer ...' indicates the necessity of believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as the Messenger of Allah. In this noble verse, Allah *the Almighty* lays down some conditions for those who are eligible to tend to His Mosques. These are as follows: believing in Allah and in the Last Day, establishing the prayer and finally paying the prescribed alms. At the end of the verse, He *Glorified is He* orders us not to have awe (fear) for anyone but Him. Instructing Prophet Muhammad how to act when he has reason to fear treachery from people, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And if you fear treachery on the part of a people, then throw back [their covenant] to them [so as to be] on equal terms' (*al-Anfal*: 58).

(1) *Anas Allah be pleased with him narrated that a man came to Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and said, 'O Prophet Muhammad, tell me of what Allah has enjoined upon me of Prayer', whereupon the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him replied, 'The five Daily Prayers, unless you do any more voluntarily' (Narrated by Ahmad).*

Clearly, one may feel fear from different things. We should know that ‘fear’ in the verse under discussion refers to feeling fear of Allah *Glorified is He* but this does not mean that one might not feel fear from the treachery of his enemy, which is why he should take precautions.

In truth, this verse in question clearly indicates the absolute accuracy and precision of the Noble Quran, for Allah *the Almighty* has mentioned all the pillars of Belief including belief in Allah and the Last Day, establishing the Prayer and the payment of the prescribed alms, but He *Glorified is He* does not mention the obligation of belief in Prophet Muhammad. This is because the belief in Prophet Muhammad is implied in the pillars of Islam. And those who have these beliefs will certainly fall under the category of those described in Allah’s saying: ‘Such people may possibly be among the rightly guided’ (*at-Tawba*: 18).

A good point can be noted about this; someone might ask, ‘Those people have already acquired the pillars of Belief, so why does Allah use the word ‘may possibly’ in this context, and if this is the case with the believer, what about the disbelievers?’

The answer to this question is clear in the fact that the two Arabic particles ‘may possibly’ and ‘perhaps’ are linguistically used to express hope, that is, you hope that what you say next will be achieved and fulfilled. But we should be fully aware of the fact that we have different stages and grades of hope, as follows: the levels of hope with respect to oneself are different from those with respect to others, and they both are different from the levels of hope with respect to Allah *the Almighty*. For example, if you say, ‘I will ask so-and-so, perhaps he will give you (such-and-such)’, this is one level of hope; and if you say, ‘Perhaps I will give you (such-and-such)’, this is more likely to come to fruition than hoping that someone else will give you (such-and-such).

That is to say, the second sentence indicates that the action is more likely to happen. Yet, when we say, ‘Perhaps Allah will give you (such-and-such)’, this is actually a third and higher level of hope because you place your hope in Allah, the All Generous, and not a human being. However, if Allah *the Almighty* Himself says, ‘Perhaps I will give you (such-and-such)’, this implies absolute certainty that you will be given what He promised you.

Consequently, we can reach the conclusion that the levels of hope are as follows: hoping that a person will do something for another one; hoping that someone will do something for you; hoping that Allah will do something for a particular person and finally Allah *the Almighty* Himself, is the One Who hopes to do something. Hence, when Allah *the Almighty* says: 'It may be possible that your Lord will have mercy on you ...' (*al-Isra*: 8), this clearly means that this Divine Hope and Possibility will certainly be fulfilled and achieved, because He *the Almighty* is All-Generous and loves to show us mercy, and nothing can prevent Him from doing this.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Such people may possibly be among the rightly guided' (*at-Tawba*: 18), it tells us that guidance is of two kinds: either guiding someone to the Divine Way of Guidance which, if followed, will lead to Paradise; a point which is yet proved by Allah's saying concerning the disbelievers: '...nor will He guide them onto any road, but the road that leads to Hell...' (*an-Nisa*: 168-169); or showing someone the way leading to a particular destination.

In this verse under discussion: 'The only one who should tend Allah's Places of Worship are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, who establish regular Prayer, who pay the prescribed alms, and who fear no one but Allah ...' (*at-Tawba*: 18), Allah *the Almighty* mentions those people who have already followed the Divine Way of Guidance and as a result will, by the Permission of Allah, be admitted into the Paradise. He *the Almighty* subsequently says:

أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

**Do you consider giving water to pilgrims and tending the
Sacred Mosque to be equal to the deeds of those who believe
in God and the Last Day and who strive in God's path?
They are not equal in God's eyes. God does not guide such
benighted people [19] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 19)**

This verse in question was revealed to refute the allegation of the disbelievers of Mecca who were captured at the battle of Badr, amongst whom was Al-'Abbas Allah be pleased with him the uncle of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be

upon him. It is narrated that some of the Companions spoke to him and invited him to embrace Islam and to strive in the Cause of Allah, but he denied their call, saying, 'We give water to the pilgrims, tend the (Sacred) House, free prisoners and look after the Sacred Mosque'. As a matter of fact, this statement of Al-'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* was a summation of the view of the polytheists of Quraysh who had carried out these things instead of having faith in Allah and striving in His Cause, which is why Allah *the Almighty* refutes their allegation, asking them: 'Do you consider giving water to pilgrims?' (*at-Tawba*: 19)

As for the Arabic word '*Siqaya*' (giving of water), it has three meanings: it can be used to refer to a public place in which there is water for people to drink which we call a 'public fountain'; it can also be used to give the meaning of the vessel from which we drink water directly, such as a cup, a glass or a goblet; a point which is proved by the Quran in which Allah, speaking about the story of Prophet Joseph *peace be upon him* says: 'And [later] when he had provided them with their provisions, he placed the [King's] drinking-cup in his brother's camel-pack' (*Yusuf*: 70). As for the third meaning of this word in question, i.e. *Siqaya*, it refers to the craftsmanship itself, in the same way the words '*Khiata*' (sewing) and '*Hidada*' (blacksmithing) do. The meaning of this word in the verse under discussion refers to giving water to the people.

In this verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Do you consider giving water to pilgrims and tending the Sacred Mosque to be equal to the deeds of those who believe in Allah and the Last Day ...?' (*at-Tawba*: 19). That is, if you, O polytheists of Mecca, are proud of watering the pilgrims and tending to the Sacred Mosque, believing that these acts might substitute your embracing Islam, you are utterly mistaken; that is, no comparison can be drawn at all between the two parties. In addition, Allah *the Almighty* due to His Unchallenged Will, is the Only One Who has the Absolute Right to decide on the matter in question. In other words, He *the Almighty* has the right to accept the deeds of some people and reject those of others. As for the believer who strives in the Cause of Allah, he does so seeking the reward only from Allah, whilst those polytheists who gave water to the pilgrims and tended the House of Allah did not believe in His Oneness and thus sought reward from those

people for whom they acted. That is why Allah, because of the fact that He is the One Who gives rewards and imposes punishments, clarifies to us that these two actions are not equal in His sight, i.e. they do not merit the same reward.

Concerning the cause of revelation of this particular verse in question, Ibn Kathir narrated that Imam 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* once passed by Talha ibn Shayba and Al-'Abbas and found them both boasting in an attempt to prove who of them was better than the other. We should remember that Arabs used to boast even of matters in which they had no role and which had been given to them by Allah *the Almighty*. For example, they used to boast of their appearance and lineage, although none of them had anything to do with these two matters which are defined by Allah *the Almighty*.

For example, the Arabs used to sit in front of a pool of water and boast about which one of them could hold his head under the water for the longest, i.e. which of them could hold his breath the longest even though this is solely a matter of how the body was formed and created by Allah, the Creator, and no one has any part to play in it; there are those to whom Allah gives stronger lungs than others, and are therefore able to keep their heads under water longer. But, this is the kind of thing the Arabs would boast about in the pre-Islamic period.

Back to the story of Talha and Al-'Abbas, Imam 'Ali heard Talha saying, 'The key to the *Ka'ba* is in my keeping, and I could sleep there if I wished'; to which Al-'Abbas replied, 'I am the one who gives the pilgrims water, and if I wanted to withhold water from them, I could'. Replying to this, Imam 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said to both of them, 'I know not what you are saying; for I prayed six months before the people did, and I participated in striving in the Cause of Allah', whereupon the following verse: 'Do you consider giving water to pilgrims and tending the Sacred Mosque to be equal to the deeds of those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and who strive in Allah's Path? They are not equal in Allah's sight ...' was revealed.

No sooner had Al-'Abbas heard this verse than he said, 'We are satisfied, we are satisfied!' He said this because Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who had passed this verdict. In addition, this verse indicates clearly that the act of boasting which had happened between Al-'Abbas and Talha had not been appropriate.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...in Allah’s sight...’, it indicates that Allah’s Standards of Judgement are different from man’s; for man’s standards usually differ even between people themselves: you have your own standards and other people have theirs. In the same vein, you, out of caprice, might give precedence to yourself, and the same is the case for other people; they might give precedence to themselves and be hard on you. That is, every human standard of judgement may involve caprice because every person wants to put him/herself first and to take everything for him/herself. This is totally different with the Divine Standards of Judgement in which there is no caprice at all; rather, these Divine Standards are based on pure justice, which is why we find that they give everything its proper due—that is, they are above reproach.

Allah *Glorified is He* then concludes the verse with His saying: ‘Allah does not guide those who do wrong’ (*at-Tawba*: 19). Truly, this particular part of the verse produces the solution to the many problems raised by some people about the nature of guidance and whether or not it is from Allah or from His slave. In the Quran, Allah talks about guidance in different positions. For example, in the chapter of *al-Qasas*, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases ...’ (*al-Qasas*: 56).

We explain this verse of *Al-Qasas*, saying, ‘It is true that the will to guide is from Allah, but He *the Almighty* has made it clear to us who exactly it is that He does not include in His Will to guide, saying: ‘Allah does not guide people who refuse to acknowledge the Truth’ (*al-Baqara*: 264); ‘Allah does not guide people who [deliberately] do wrong’ (*al-Baqara*: 258); and ‘Allah does not bestow His guidance upon iniquitous folk’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 108).

He *the Almighty* has already mentioned these facts in many places in the Noble Quran. Some people might yet say, ‘Guidance is from Allah, and had He *the Almighty* guided me, I will not have committed murder, or stolen, or cheated’. We reply by saying, ‘This is a misunderstanding of the verse of the Quran; for Allah says: ‘Allah does not guide...’, meaning that He negates gracing guidance to those who do evil, are iniquitous or who disbelieve. That is to say that the disbelievers, evildoers and iniquitous persons are the ones who prevented themselves from being guided. Were a person to choose faith, s/he would thereby attain Allah’s Guidance. Clearly, when a person is denied the Guidance

of Allah, it is because of his/her own action and his/her own choice, for a person might choose the way of error and avoid the way of guidance, and therefore Allah will not guide him/her. To sum up, we stress that Allah *the Almighty* only guides those who believe in Him. Consequently, if a person chooses the way of guidance, He *the Almighty* gives her/him further guidance because s/he believed in Him *the Almighty* and freely chose the path of guidance. This is actually the true understanding of Allah's Saying: 'For, verily, Allah leaves to go astray who He wills, just as He guides who He wills..' (*Fatir*: 8).

Hence, Allah *the Almighty* guides those who faithfully listen to the Quran and who have firm belief in Allah. We have previously detailed this topic while speaking on the topic of fate; we said that those who read the Quran in order to understand the topic of guidance must consider every single verse which is concerned with this matter. He *the Almighty* made it clear that He does not guide the disbeliever which means that He does guide the believer. In addition, He *Glorified is He* made it clear that He does not guide the unjust, which means that He does guide the just. Furthermore, He made it clear that He does not guide the iniquitous which means that He does guide the obedient. Consequently, no one can say, 'Allah did not wish to guide me', because this is a misunderstanding of the meaning of the essence of the Guidance of Allah. Allah *the Almighty* made it clear to us whom He wishes to guide and whom He wishes to send astray; He guides those who seek the means to obtain guidance and surrender themselves to faith. In this respect, He *the Almighty* says: 'And Allah increases in guidance those who go aright; and ever-abiding good works are best as a reward with your Lord and best in yielding fruit' (*Maryam*: 76); and 'And [as for] those who follow the right direction, He increases them in guidance and gives them their [ability to] guard [against evil]' (*Muhammad*: 17).

Now it is crystal clear that Allah *the Almighty* has already informed us of who deserves His Guidance and who does not. You choose the path you follow: if you choose to believe, you will be guided; and if you choose the path of disbelief and sin—Allah forbid—you will not be guided. Therefore, if someone comes to argue with you about the saying of Allah: 'In this way Allah leaves to go astray who He wills, and guides aright who He wills' (*al-Muddaththir*: 31),

you can say to him/her, ‘Allah *Glorified is He* has made perfectly clear whom He wills to guide and whom He wills to send astray’. We previously gave an example to fully illustrate this point; guidance is given with two different meanings in the Noble Quran: the first meaning is directing people to the right path, which is a general guidance,⁽¹⁾ for Allah guides the believer and the disbeliever to the path of faith by means of His Messengers and His Scriptures; that is, He made clear to them what makes them earn His pleasure and what incurs His Wrath, and what causes them to be showered with His Mercy and what incurs His Curse. The first kind of guidance is directed to all mankind. Then, there is a second kind of guidance which is given only to the believers and about which Allah says: ‘and [as for] those who follow the right direction, He increases them in guidance and gives them their [ability to] guard [against evil]’ (*Muhammad*: 17).

That is, He helps them to follow His Way of Guidance which means He makes obedience easy for them and disobedience difficult for them. If a believer adheres to the Way of Allah and obeys Him, Allah *Glorified is He* consequently fills the believer’s heart with faith and makes obedience beloved to him/her, resulting in such a believer becoming yet more obedient; and if a believer is about to commit sins, Allah *the Almighty* makes them hateful to him/her with the result that such a believer will keep away from them.

In illustrating this point, we previously gave the example of a man who is driving his car to go to a certain place, and when he comes to a crossroad, he finds a traffic policeman who shows him which way to go—this is the meaning of general guidance. When the man thanks the traffic policeman, he gives him further directions by saying, ‘Do not take such-and-such a road because there is heavy traffic there, but rather take such-and-such road and you will get there quickly and easily’; this is more detailed guidance. But if the driver says, ‘This traffic policeman does not know anything’ and declines to thank him, the traffic policeman will leave the driver to do what he wants.

(1) *This kind of guidance is referred to in the Hadith when Prophet Muhammad said to ‘Ali Allah be pleased with him: ‘By Allah, if a single person is guided by Allah through you, it will be better for you than a herd of red camels’ (Narrated by Al-Bukhari).*

Consequently, Allah *the Almighty* guides both believers and disbelievers to the path of faith; if one chooses the path of faith, Allah will certainly help him/her to follow it; yet if a person chooses the path of disbelief—Allah forbid—Allah will leave him/her to go astray and suffer the consequences. Therefore, we must always remember that there are two kinds of guidance: the guidance of direction which is given to all mankind, and the guidance of assistance which is given only to the believers. Concerning the universal guidance, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘and [We have] shown him the two highways’ (*al-Balad*: 10).

Regarding the guidance of assistance, Allah says: ‘But to those who are rightly guided, He increases their guidance and bestows on them their righteousness and restraint [from evil]’ (*Muhammad*: 17).

What proves to us that guidance of direction is universal is that when Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the People of Thamud, to whom He sent the Prophet Saleh (Shelah) *peace be upon Him* He mentioned that He has guided them. If the meaning of guidance here meant that they became guided people and followed the right way, Allah will not have said that they chose error above guidance. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And as for Thamud, We showed them guidance, but they chose error instead of guidance; so there overtook them the scourge of an abasing chastisement for what they had earned’ (*Fussilat*: 17).

Therefore, guidance here means that Allah *Glorified is He* guided them to the right way, but they chose the path of blindness and disbelief. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ
وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ أَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ

Those who believe, who migrated and strove hard in God’s way with their possessions and their persons, are in God’s eyes much higher in rank; it is they who will triumph [20] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 20)

In the chapter of *al-Anfal*, there is another description of the believers: ‘those who have believed and fled [their homes] and have striven hard in Allah’s Way, as well as those who give [them] asylum and aid; they are in

truth believers. For them is forgiveness [of sins] and a provision most generous' (*al-Anfal*: 74). In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the description of the believers straight after the Emigration. Moreover, after the Emigration had finished and everyone had become equal, a concise description of the believers was given in the verse of the chapter of *at-Tawba*.

Allah *Glorified is He* clarified that these actions are not accepted from the idolaters; but if the believers carry them out, Allah will grant them a high rank. In the verse of the chapter of *at-Tawba*, Allah *Glorified is He* describes them as having a higher rank. The word '*a'zam*' (higher) is a comparative form in Arabic which is used to imply an increased level of the adjective. When we say, 'So-and-so is more knowledgeable (*a'lam*) than so-and-so', this means that the former person is the more knowledgeable of the two; the latter is also knowledgeable, but the former is even more knowledgeable. This is exactly when we say, 'Such-and-such a person is more generous (*akram*) than such-and-such a person'; this means that the latter person is generous, but the former is even more generous.

Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to show us what triumph means in His sight. That is, those believers, immigrants and those who strive hard in the Way of Allah with their property and their souls will have a much higher rank with Allah than other believers will. To be triumphant means to attain what your soul loves. Allah *Glorified is He* explains what they will win: 'Those who have believed and fled [their homes] and have striven hard in Allah's Way with their property and their souls are much higher in rank with Allah; they are the people who will achieve [success]' (*at-Tawba*: 20).

Triumph is of two kinds. Those who work for worldly matters might enjoy triumph by attaining a measure of delight therein. Their delight, however, is commensurate with their abilities and it is a temporal delight. It will either fade away by coming to an end or they will leave it due to death; it is an imperfect delight.

As for those who believe, forsake the domain of evil, strive and prepare for the Hereafter, they will enjoy triumph by attaining a delight which is not commensurate with their abilities; rather, it is commensurate with those of Allah, and there is no comparison between the abilities of Allah and that of

His creatures. Moreover, it is an eternal delight, which will never leave them by being taken away from them, nor will they ever leave it. They are in Eternal Paradise where no death exists.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَجَنَّاتٍ لَّهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

And their Lord gives them the good news of His mercy and pleasure, Gardens where they will have lasting bliss [21] And where they will remain for ever: truly, there is a tremendous reward with God [22] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 21-22)

This is the pinnacle of triumph for those whom Allah *Glorified is He* gives glad tidings of His Grace and His Lasting Goodly Acceptance. Glad tidings, as we know, refer to information about something that will happen in the future. When you give a glad tiding to someone, you are informing him of something pleasing that will happen. The point of a glad tiding is to encourage somebody to act in a way that helps attain it. When I give you glad tidings of success if you work hard, study and listen to your teachers, my words encourage you to strive in order to bring these tidings to fruition. It is as if glad tidings make you utilise the means to reach them.

In fact, we say that means and consequences, causes and effects, as well as conditions and results must be defined in different ways. We have been taught that a condition is the cause of its result, as we say, 'If you study, you will succeed'. Studying is the condition and success is the result. But we say, 'No, this is not right'. The result is the cause of the condition, as you only study because of the idea of success and all the joy it brings. The existence of a condition causes the existence of a result in the first place; but a result provides the motivation for fulfilling a condition. This means that your motivation to study is the idea of success, either morally and/or materially. Everyone wants to succeed, but success cannot be attained by only praying; rather, through studying success is actually attained. You only study because you have the notion of the success, gifts, distinctions and position it brings. You know that

your family will be happy for you and you will be satisfied with yourself as well. Hence, we say that the real cause is what comes first to one's mind. To provide another example, suppose that you want to travel to Ta'if and thus Ta'if is the goal. You plan the means with that goal in your mind. Consequently, the result motivates you, and the condition is what is actually performed.

Allah *Glorified is He* informs those described above of the happy end which they will reach to make them bear the difficulties of the moral responsibilities that the Way of Allah enjoins upon them. Disagreeable things surround paradise; the Divine Law restricts man's free will, and a believer is confined to the Commandments of Allah which entail 'dos' and 'don'ts'. A disbeliever merely follows his caprice in all that he does. He does whatever he wants and obeys his passions. Regarding a believer, his freedom is restricted to those things, which have not been mentioned in Allah's Legislation. However, concerning matters that fall under the Legislation of Allah, he is obliged to do what Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed for him. It seems that faith is meant to restrict, but when we compare the two rewards, we find that he who follows his passions in this worldly life only gains a passing pleasure and his life in this world is limited. Such is the loser. By contrast, he who restricts his actions to the Way of Allah receives tranquillity in this worldly life and a lasting bliss in the Hereafter that does not vanish or end. I always give the example of a student who does not attend school or does not study. He rather spends his time playing and enjoying himself. He, thereby, satisfies himself with what he wants, but the pleasure he gains is limited and he will live in misery for the rest of his life. On the other hand, for a student who puts himself under the restraint of studying and curbs his desire of amusement and delight, the result is that he realizes a comfortable and secure future for himself for the rest of his life.

Both students, in this way, gain a kind of pleasure for themselves. However, one of them gains a very short-lived pleasure and then becomes one of the failures of life. while the other who restrains himself for a few years enjoys a successful future.

The case of you in this worldly life is the same. When you restrict yourself to the commandments of Allah of 'dos' and 'don'ts', it seems on the

surface that you are sacrificing your freedom, but the reality is that if you do this willingly, Allah will give you ease, tranquillity and pleasure in your soul. We find that the prayers which a Muslim performs at least five times a day seemingly take up a certain amount of our time every day. However, it gives peace of mind and an unimaginable contentment to the person who performs it humbly and properly. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say to Bilal *Allah be pleased with him* 'Give us comfort by it [the prayer] O Bilal'. It is also narrated by Anas ibn Malik that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'My comfort has been provided in prayer'. This is because fulfilling religious obligations transforms one from just experiencing the pleasure of observing it to attaining tranquillity. The person who observes it is given a deep understanding and Graces from his Lord, and consequently his soul finds peace and calm. When you consider the glad tidings mentioned in this verse, you find it coming from the Lord and the Creator Who owns everything, arranges all of your affairs and looks after you.

Allah says: 'Their Lord gives them good tidings of Mercy from Himself and [His] Good Pleasure' (*at-Tawba*: 21). These are two of the Essential Attributes of Allah, and these result in men receiving Allah's Bounty that He bestows to whomever He wills.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues enumerating His Blessings in this verse. We find that there are different ranks and levels of Blessings. Allah *Glorified is He* first gives them tidings of Mercy, which is an Essential Attribute of His, and then a constant blessing in this life. We should note that there is a difference between a blessing and the giver of the blessing. To give an example of the different ranks of blessings, although Allah *Glorified is He* is beyond comparison, suppose that someone invites you to his house for a meal. He brings out a plate of apples and there must be enough apples for all those present for each to take an apple. When the host takes an apple and gives it to one of those present, this is a kind of special attention from the host and a distinction for this particular guest out of all the others. This represents a higher level of generosity and concern. It thereby represents the Mercy of Allah and His Good Pleasure, while the apple itself is the blessing and represents the Gardens of Paradise.

Thus, we see that there are different levels of honours. When the level of faith of a believer rises, he always lives with the blessing along with the One Who gives it to Him. When food is presented they say, *Bismillah* (In the Name of Allah) and after they finish they say, *Alhamdulillah* (Praise be to Allah). However, when he rises to a higher level of faith s/he lives being only concerned about the Giver of the blessings. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* boasts about His slaves to the angels. He boasts about their worship and their obedience, which they adhere to no matter what their condition may be, even if the hardest of trials were to befall them and all their blessings were to be taken from them. Such people are among those who occupy the highest ranks. That is why those who undergo the hardest trials are the Prophets, the righteous and then those who are most like them and so on; this is for Allah *Glorified is He* to see who loves Him for His sake alone, even if their blessings are taken away from them. This is a high rank. A person who worships Allah in order to enter Paradise, Allah will give it to him, while a person who worships Him because Allah deserves to be worshipped will rise to a rank of Paradise wherein he may see Allah at all times, unlike others who will only have glimpses of Him. To conclude, the slave will be rewarded in the Hereafter according to the depth of his faith. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And whoever hopes to meet his Lord, let him do good deeds and not join anyone in the service of his Lord' (*al-Kahf*: 110). One of the righteous said, 'I shall not associate anything in the worship of you, even Paradise itself; for Paradise is a thing'.

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* says that He gives them glad tidings of His Mercy followed by His Good Pleasure. That is because you might be given Mercy without attaining *Ridwan* (Pleasure) which is more than bliss. After attaining *Ridwan*, Allah *Glorified is He* gives them Gardens wherein lasting blessings shall be theirs.

Someone might wonder whether there is a Garden with no blessings. He might ask why blessings are mentioned here, since a basic aim of paradise is to give blessings to man.

In response to such a question, we say, 'Look closely and pay attention to the meaning. It is Allah *Glorified is He* Who is speaking here. A person might

enjoy many blessings yet have many discomforts as well that prevent him from enjoying these blessings, such as an illness which causes him pain, a wicked son who makes his life miserable or a wife who fills his life with bitterness and gloom. This all might happen and prevent a person from enjoying the blessings which Allah *Glorified is He* has given him. Discomforts have surrounded him. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* alerts us to the fact that the Paradise of the Hereafter does not have the discomforts of this worldly life. It is filled with purity and delight. Allah *Glorified is He* gives His slave therein whatever his/her soul desires and keeps all discomforts away from him/her. A person might fear that such blessings may not last; therefore Allah *Glorified is He* reassures the believing slave that it is a lasting bliss. Someone might think that staying there permanently is doubtful as it could last for a very long time but then end. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* willed to reassure the believers with a true promise. He promised the believers that they would abide therein forever, saying: 'They will dwell there forever. Indeed, with Allah is a magnificent reward' (*at-Tawba*: 22).

Reassurance is emphasised throughout these verses using the word 'theirs', which implies the notion of possession of this bliss. The possessions of a person, no matter how much he owns in this world, are not more than the state of sitting and his slaves carrying out his orders; pleasure is either in your own hand or is brought to you while you are relaxing. For example, when you want to eat, either you make the meal by yourself or someone else makes it for you. And no matter how much someone possesses, he cannot achieve everything he wants by himself. It is inevitable that he needs to seek the aid of others. However, a believer in paradise gets whatever he wishes as soon as the notion comes into his head. This is different from how it is in this world. When you want something in our world, you must either get it by yourself or rely on someone else to get it for you, even if it is only a cup of coffee. You must tell the one who makes it how you like it, such as how much sugar you like in it, for every one of us, in this world, depends in his life on the means Allah makes available for us. While in paradise, the believers will depend directly on the Creator of all means, Who is Allah *the Almighty and All-Powerful*.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says that He gives them glad news of Gardens, we may observe that there are two plurals here that are related to each other. As we mentioned before, this implies that one group of items is divided between each individual of the other group resulting in each individual having only one item. When a teacher instructs his pupils to take their pens out of their bags, each pupil does not take out several pens, but rather each one takes out his own pen. Similarly when we say, get into your cars, this does not mean that every person will get into every car, but rather, every person will get into his own car. In the same way, the meaning here regarding the Gardens does not mean that every believer will enter every Garden. It means that each one of them will enter his own Garden, according to the deeds he acquired and the rank he reached.⁽¹⁾

It is important to know that those who reach the middle ranks of Paradise will not be jealous of those who reach the high ranks of paradise, and the ones who reach the lower ranks of paradise will not be jealous of those who are above them. Likewise, those who are in the higher ranks will not be haughty to those who are lower than them. Each of them will be happy for the other believers' rank. This even occurs sometimes in this worldly life. When a person gains a high mark in his studies, we might find someone who got a lower mark than him rejoices because of him as his soul is pure, and likewise the more successful people do not necessarily act haughtily to the less successful. If this happens even in this world, so what do you think will happen in the Hereafter? Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And We shall remove from their hearts any rancour, [they will be] as brethren, on raised couches, facing each other' (*al-Hijr*: 47). This means that all the people of paradise will rejoice because of their ranks as well as the ranks of those who are higher than them. That is because they will benefit from the overflowing graces which those of higher ranks enjoy when they go to visit them. For this reason, scholars have commented on the verse: 'But for those who fear the time when

(1) 'Abdullah bin 'Amr narrated that the Prophet said, 'It shall be said to the one who memorized the Quran, "Recite and rise up. Recite (melodiously) as you recited in the world. For indeed your rank shall be at the last verse you recited"' (*Narrated by Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud*).

they will stand before their Lord, there will be two Gardens' (*ar-Rahman*: 46) by saying that those who have high ranks in paradise will have two Gardens. One Garden is especially for them and another Garden to host those who are of a lower rank than them, as though it is a guesthouse for those whom they love. For this reason, in the Hereafter, people of Paradise will rejoice for those who have higher ranks because they will receive goodness from them.

In this worldly life, if a man wants to benefit from the blessings of all humans, he must rejoice over the blessings given to others. This is because when he feels happy for a blessing bestowed to others, this blessing comes to him and benefits him. We should be certain that a blessing loves its owner more than he loves it, as it knows that Allah *the Almighty* sent it to him. Allah, speaking about a tree, says: 'It yields its fruit at all times, by the permission of its Lord' (*Ibrahim*: 25).

When you plant the seed of a tree, it gives you fruit. The tree gives you its fruit; you are not the one who takes it from the tree. In fact, we always say that a provision knows very well where you are, but you never know where the provision is. You might search for a provision in every place but not find it. However, what Allah has apportioned to you rushes to you and finds you right away.

People of paradise know no jealousy, rancour or hatred. One day the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to his Companions as they were sitting together that a man will presently come to them; a man who will be among the people of paradise. A man who the Companions knew entered. They wanted to know what this Companion had done that earned him the glad tidings of paradise from the Prophet. They asked him what he used to do in order to be with him (in paradise). The man said that he prayed as they all prayed, fasted as they all fasted and he gave the poor-due as they all gave. All of them were the same, but when he went to bed, his heart bore no rancour to anyone. They went to Prophet Muhammad and told him what the man had said, and the Prophet replied that Paradise was better than this world due to this very reason. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And We shall remove from their hearts any rancour' (*al-Hijr*: 47).

Allah *Glorified is He* continues by saying:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا ءَابَاءَكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا
 الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنكُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

**Believers, do not take your fathers and brothers as allies if
 they prefer disbelief to faith: those of you who do so are
 doing wrong [23] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 23)**

The Arabic word *wali* (ally) is someone who follows you closely and gives you what you love. The one to whom you always resort and seek his advice. The one who is able to give you refuge if you seek it from him, who is always ready to extend aid to you and who is your close friend that always listens to you, gives you aid and support when you seek it, and who is always by your side. That is, if we should compare the requests of created beings with the requests of the Creator... And Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies for us here that if you want to make the implementation of Islam strong and free of flaws, do not at all, have any allegiance except that of faith. Allegiance of faith is above all allegiances of blood, lineage and so on. So if we compare the requests of created beings and the requests of the Creator, we find that what the Creator asks you to do should take precedence over what His creatures ask you to do. If you anger creatures to please the Creator, you win and Allah *Glorified is He* will cast pleasure into the hearts of those around you. They will be pleased with you and will say that you have manners and principles, and do not anger Allah for the sake of a mortal pleasure. On the other hand, if you anger Allah to please a mortal, whoever he might be, you will find that Allah *the Almighty* will make him hate and revile you.⁽¹⁾ If you give false testimony in favour of someone, the one whom you testified wrongly against will know that you are a liar, and will not trust you, and if you ever find yourself having to testify before him, he will not accept your testimony and will despise your words. For this reason, a wise man once said that a bearer of false testimonies might raise your head above your rival with his testimony, but he tramples his own honour beneath your feet as he has lost your respect.

(1) 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her narrated that the Prophet Muhammad said, 'Whoever seeks Allah's Pleasure despite the people's wrath, Allah will suffice him against the people. And who ever seeks the people's pleasure despite Allah's Wrath, Allah will leave him to the patronage of the people.' (Narrated by Ibn Hibban and At-Tirmidhi).

Clearly, Allegiance should be given to Allah. If a relative of yours comes to you and asks you to do something which will anger Allah, do not obey him but do not be harsh with him as well, especially with your parents. Allah *Glorified is He* says about parents: 'But if they strive to make you associate in worship with Me things which you have no knowledge about, do not obey; but keep company with both of them in this life with justice' (*Luqman*: 15). In the verse of the chapter of *at-Tawba*, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who believe! Do not take your fathers or your brothers as allies if they love disbelief more than belief' (*at-Tawba*: 23).

Clearly, faith, or disbelief, is the link which connects everything. The Companions of the Prophet gave us the enduring example. Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr was the most pampered boy in Mecca, where his life before embracing Islam was of the highest form of opulence. He would enjoy parading around in his fine clothes. But when he emigrated to Medina, he lived in absolute penury to the extent that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw him on the street with nothing on but a sheepskin to cover his private parts. The Prophet alerted the attention of his Companions to the state of Mus'ab *Allah be pleased with him* and showed them how faith altered him after he had chosen it above all the delights of this worldly life. Mus'ab *Allah be pleased with him* found that the honour of allegiance to Islam was greater than fine clothes and an opulent life. He, in this way, falls under the category mentioned in the words of Allah: 'Those who have believe and fled [their homes] and have striven hard in Allah's Way with their property and their souls are much higher in rank with Allah; they are the people who will achieve [success]. Their Lord gives them good tidings of Mercy from Himself and [His] Good Pleasure, and of Gardens wherein lasting blessings will be theirs. They will dwell there forever. Indeed, with Allah is a magnificent reward' (*at-Tawba*: 20- 22).

Mus'ab *Allah be pleased with him* and others presented to us a great example of the allegiance of faith and of how to struggle in the cause of Allah. They taught us how we should subject our choices to the Way of Allah; the Way which restricts man's freedom of choice, for man is compelled in certain aspects and free to choose in others.

We know that the sphere of moral responsibility does not involve those things men are compelled to do. It is present in those things in which we have

free will. Consequently, we have to consider choices in the light of the Way of Guidance of Allah, and not stray out of this light. Early Muslims used to sacrifice their homes, possessions and children and set out to struggle in the cause of Allah. They accepted all these difficult sacrifices with faithful hearts, steadfast patience and forbearance due to their trust in the glad tidings of Allah *Glorified is He* that they will be given Paradise, [His] Good Pleasure and a lasting bliss which will never leave them nor will they leave it, and wherein they will abide forever. Thereby, the religion of Islam was established on earth.

After Allah *Glorified is He* showed us the foundations of religious allegiance and the reward for this allegiance, He warns us against straying from it in order to please a father, a brother or relatives. Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to know that nothing ever takes precedence over allegiance to Allah. When we deviate from the Truth in order to please relatives or keep hold of wealth or positions, we wrong ourselves. This is because the reward and bliss of allying to what is right is greater than this. For this reason, none of us should help falsehood or manipulate his faith to serve those who do not believe in Allah. This image is made clear in this verse: ‘...if they love (*istahabba*) disbelief more than belief’ (*at-Tawba*: 23). The Arabic word *istahabba* literally means (to seek love), just as *istakhraja* means to seek an exit. When we say *istajaba*, this means to respond. And the word *istahabba* means *ahabba* (to love), but it has a connotation of seeking, unlike *ahabba* which entails no idea of seeking love.

This implies that disbelief is against the human natural disposition of faith. Humans, by natural disposition, are believers and love faith, and thus if anyone tries to love other than faith, this will mean that s/he has to exert effort and force his feelings. This is because such a feeling is unnatural to his/her instinct. As such, Allah says in the Noble Quran: 'How do you deny Allah, seeing that you were dead and He gave you the life?' (*al-Baqara*: 28) This rhetorical question and expression of wonderment explains to us that those who use reason, logic and intelligence find it difficult to deny Allah. That is because the universe existed first, then man came into existence. Thus, we must ask who brought this universe of which no part was made by us into existence. It is natural for the mind to search for its maker, especially since the universe contains things which man could never make, such as the sun, the earth,

water, air, plants and animals. These all comprise the essential constituents of your life. It is natural that we look for a creator. We always ask about the inventors of the simplest things, such as the electric lamp. We study their lives and how they made their discoveries simply because they added inventions that benefited our lives, so how about the One Who created this universe? Allah *the Merciful* saved us from wandering in confusion and sent us a Messenger [Muhammad] to awaken us and tell us that Allah, Who is *the Almighty and All-Powerful*, has created this universe. Why do we not believe this Messenger [Muhammad] and follow the way of guidance which was sent down to us?

We gave an example before to clarify this point, although Allah is beyond any comparison; a man survived after his plane had crashed in the middle of the desert, but he had neither water nor food. He then fell asleep for a while and after waking up he found food, drink and all that he needs around him. Will he not think about who brought them before starting to eat? And you, O human, have come into this great universe which has been perfectly prepared for your life. It has been organised beyond the capacity of man. It is natural that you think about who brought this universe into existence.

Clearly, faith is a natural and intellectual necessity. Deviation from faith is forced and requires effort because you deviate from nature and a sound intellect to attain the desire of your soul, Following caprice and submission to desires is a kind of forced love which upsets the balance of faculties and causes confusion in the mind. The love of disbelief is not emotional or natural and it is not in harmony with a sound mind; rather, it is a forced love. He, who does what is lawful, lives a life in which all his faculties are in harmony, and the one who does what is unlawful, lives a life in which all his faculties are in conflict.⁽¹⁾ For example, when a man looks at his wife, he looks at what is lawful for him to see and he feels that his faculties are in harmony, unlike the case of looking at another woman as then he feels that his faculties are in conflict. The behaviour, which is in line with faith, is balanced, whilst the

(1) Nawwas bin Sam'an Allah be pleased with him narrated, 'I asked the Messenger of Allah [Prophet Muhammad] peace and blessings be upon him about virtue and sin, and he said, "Virtue is noble behaviour, and sin is that which creates doubt and you do not like people to know about it"' (Narrated by Muslim, At-Tirmidhi and Ahmad).

behaviour, which goes against the way of faith, is forced and requires effort, and this forced behaviour is in conflict with the normal nature of man. The upright ways of faith require no forced behaviour. A believer is upright. He does not cheat or steal. He does not let himself slip into the ways of caprice or whims. He, thereby, lives a good life. While opening his chest of drawers and taking something out of it, he takes what he wants calmly and contentedly. The corrupt person, on the other hand, enters another's room to take something from the chest of drawers there, even if it is from the chest of drawers of his own sleeping father. That is why he walks on his tiptoes to open it. As such, righteousness is not forced and does not require effort—unlike deviation, that is why Allah used the verb *istahabba*, rather than simply *ahabba*, for love is something natural but love of disbelief is not natural. Man loves his son naturally and emotionally, for natural and emotional love has no rules that can be followed. You cannot say that you will love so-and-so and hate such-and-such a person. Emotions do not happen this way. Thus, you emotionally love your son, even if he fails in his studies. However, you like your enemy's son by your mind if he excels in his studies. Consequently, love that is based on the use of one's mental faculties (logical love) is what is governed by rules. Likewise, you hate bitter medicine due to your emotions, but you like it with your mind, since it makes you better. You, therefore, search for it and spend your money to obtain it, and make sure that you take it.

Prophet Muhammad said, 'None of you is a believer till I am dearer to him than his child, his father and the whole of mankind'.⁽¹⁾ 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab responded to this, saying, 'O Messenger of Allah, I love you more than my possessions and my child, but how can I love you more than I love my own self?' To this, Prophet Muhammad repeated what he had just said, three times. Consequently, 'Umar realised that this was a moral responsibility that could be obtained by using one's mind, which is governed by rules. A believer's love for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* may rise to the level of both logical and emotional love. However, logical love is the one which is a moral responsibility, unlike emotional love. Allah *Glorified is He* did not legalise emotional reactions because He does not prevent emotions

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari and Ahmad*.

from reacting in their natural way. You love the one who does you a favour. You might love someone without knowing why and hate another without them showing enmity to or harming you.⁽¹⁾ This is all up to you. However, Allah *Glorified is He* forbids letting this lead to showing enmity to others unjustly. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably' (*al-Ma'ida*: 8). This tells Muslims not to let their hatred of a people make them leave the way of Truth and wrong others; if you hate them, still be just to them.

Clearly, Allah *Glorified is He* did not forbid love or hate. He rather forbade us from wronging those whom we hate or showing bias in favour of those whom we love at the expense of Truth and justice.

The Companion 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab gives us a living image of this. Abu Maryam Al-Hanafi killed Zayd, the brother of 'Umar, during the battle of Yamama, but he later embraced Islam. Every time he passed by 'Umar, 'Umar said to him, 'Turn your face away from me, for I do not love you'. Abu Maryam Al-Hanafi replied to him, 'And will your lack of love for me take away any of my rights?' 'Umar said, 'No, it does not'. Abu Maryam replied, 'Only women cry out of love'

Allah, using the verb from *istahabba*, wants to alert us to the fact that they went against their natural disposition and intellect. Consequently, we must never give them our allegiance, but rather give allegiance to Allah. Allegiance to Allah comes before every other right, even if it was the right of fatherhood. It is true that your father was the means for your existence, but Allah *Glorified is He* created your first father, i.e. Adam *peace be upon Him* out of nothing. Thus, do not allow the secondary creation violate the rights of the primary creation. For this reason, Allah ends this noble verse by declaring: 'And whoever of you takes them as allies, these are the people who are the unjust' (*at-Tawba*: 23). That is because they take the right they owe to Allah *Glorified is He* and give it

(1) *Abu Hurayra narrated that Prophet Muhammad said, 'Souls are troops collected together, and those who were familiar with each other (in the heaven from where they come) will have affinity with one another (in the world), and those among them who were distant and indifferent (in the Heaven) will also be disinterested in each other (in the world)' (Narrated by Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Dawud).*

to men, and they wrong themselves by forbidding themselves from the reward of the Hereafter simply in order to gain instant benefit in this worldly life. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘They wronged only themselves’ (*al-Baqara*: 57) because no one can wrong Allah *Glorified is He*.

Rejecting faith after being invited to it and not believing and disobeying after being commanded to obey is a rebellion against faith. Yet, if you were one of those who rebel against faith and then Allah smites you with an illness, will you be able to ward off the illness and become healthy? If Allah *the Almighty* decreed that you die, will you be able to rebel against death, ward it off and live? Clearly, there are decrees of fate against which we cannot rebel. You only rebel against those things for which you have free will.

Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to address the believers directly. He *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا
وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ آلِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ
فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرٍ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Say [Prophet], ‘If your fathers, sons, brothers, wives, tribes, the wealth you have acquired, the trade which you fear will decline, and the dwellings you love are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and the struggle in His cause, then wait until God brings about His punishment.’ God does not guide those who break away [24] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 24)

This address was given to the Prophet to pass it on to the believers. Allah *Glorified is He* mentions in this noble verse the various levels of relationship. He first mentions the family ties of fathers, sons and brothers. He then mentions marriage, which is the means of procreation, kin and clan, wealth which we actually possess, wealth which we hope to earn and the dwellings which we are content with. He mentions trade through which we hope to earn and increase our wealth. He, thereby, differentiates between the wealth we possess and the trade we undertake. That is because trade might bring us more wealth, and a man can only buy somewhere to live if he has some excess

wealth. Allah *Glorified is He* proclaims to us that if any of these aforementioned things are more beloved to us than He, His Prophet Muhammad and the struggle in Allah's Cause, then we should wait until Allah brings about His Command. We will, at this time, come to realise the true value of this worldly life and the true value of the Goodly Acceptance and Lasting Bliss of Allah. All those things mentioned at the beginning of the verse are enjoyments of this worldly life.

The reason of the revelation of this verse is that when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was commanded to emigrate from Mecca to Medina, he commanded the Muslims to emigrate. They left behind the wealth they had in Mecca, their commerce, homes and their fathers, sons, brothers and wives. They left behind all these things and their clans which could protect them, and immigrated to a new land.

However, some Muslims were attached to this worldly life and stayed with their wealth and their idolatress wives and children. Those idolatresses used to cling to the foot of their Muslim husbands who intended to emigrate in order for the husbands not to leave them. Their hearts, thereby, inclined to them. Others feared that their wealth will be lost and the trade they shared with the idolaters will decline. Because of all these points, this verse was revealed.

Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to clarify the value of faithful allegiance and make the believers accustomed to it. That is because the faith of the Muslim became perfect through emigration and leaving behind his family and relatives. This was difficult for them to do. They said to Prophet Muhammad that if they broke away from those who have a different religion from them, they will, thereby, cut their ties with their fathers, sons, wives and families. They told him that they feared losing their wealth and trade. They feared that their houses will be wrecked and they will become homeless. Allah *Glorified is He* revealed this verse telling them that gaining faith is better than any other gain.

When this noble verse was revealed, the Companions took it very seriously and emigrated. They also cut their ties with their fathers and sons, and they reached the level that they might not talk to their fathers or sons in the streets or let them enter their houses. They refused to invite them to their homes whenever they meet them and refused to provide for them until the following

verse was revealed: ' But if they strive to make you associate in worship with Me things which you have no knowledge about, do not obey them; but keep company with both of them in this life with justice' (*Luqman*: 15) This means that kindness with them should go no further than keeping their company and providing for them, while obeying them concerning something that would incur the Wrath of Allah is forbidden. Some orientalisers, attempting to find a fault in the Quran, said that there is a contradiction between the verses of the Quran; as the former verse tells a believer to cut himself off from his father and son who prefer disbelief to faith, while the latter verse tells him to treat them kindly and not to cut them off. And a third verse states: 'One will not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day loving those who oppose Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad], even though they were their [own] fathers, their sons, their brothers, or their kinsfolk' (*al-Mujadala*: 22).

They fail to understand that there is a difference between love and kindness. Love is an action of the heart. One loves and feels affection with his heart, unlike kindness. One might be kind to a person whom he does not even know, and might be kind to an enemy in a dilemma without giving him love or affection.

To conclude, what is forbidden is to feel love and affection for those who contend against Allah and His Prophet. Kindness, on the other hand, is not forbidden. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* wants the faithful soul to acknowledge the favour of fatherhood. A believer should be kind to his father and help him during difficult times. But by contrast, he must not obey him in anything that will incur the Wrath of Allah. He wants to help the soul of the faithful develop respect for those s/he is indebted to. Mothers and fathers are among the secondary causes of life, and therefore we are commanded to treat them with kindness in this worldly life as long as we do not accept their calls to disbelief if they are disbelievers. A believer's faith in Allah must be stronger. In fact, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Whoever possesses three qualities will taste the sweetness of *Iman* (Belief): To love Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] more than anyone else; to love a slave (of Allah) only for (the Sake of) Allah; and to hate returning to disbelief after Allah has saved him from it, just as he hates to be thrown into the fire (of Hell)'.⁽¹⁾

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

The reason behind this is for the believer not to make love of lineage or family relationships the standard, but rather, the closeness to Allah should be the cause of love and the distance from Allah should be the cause of hatred. Faith takes precedence over love. During the battle of Badr, the Companion Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* was fighting on the side of Prophet Muhammad while his son, who was not a Muslim yet, was fighting on the side of the idolaters. Later, when his son embraced Islam and found faith, he said to his father that He had seen him in the battle and had turned his face away from him in order not to kill him. Abu Bakr As-Siddiq replied that if he had seen him (his son), he would have killed him. This is logical in terms of faith. The son of Abu Bakr had to choose between his father and an idol, which he worshipped, and the scale of his father was heavier. On the other hand, when Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* saw his son, he had to choose between his Lord and his son, and the scale of his Lord was heavier.

If this is the case with relationships, and this is how feelings are overcome by faith, how about wealth? Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about wealth that is earned through hard work. The Arabic word '*iqtarafa*' (acquire) is derived from the word '*qarf*' which means a shell. If you want to remove a shell or a husk from a seed, you might need to exert some effort to do this because the husk clings tightly to the seed. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'And the property which you have acquired (*iqtaraftumuha*)' that is you earned it due to effort and hard work. It does not refer to the wealth which is inherited without working for it but is merely inherited from someone else. This is easy and trivial money for its owner. As for wealth that is earned through hard work and toil, its owner is more eager to keep hold of it than the inherited one. It is said that so-and-so a person *iqtarafa* something which means that he exerts effort to achieve it. The verb *iqtarafa* could come with an act of lying and stealing, it takes effort to do it.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Then wait till Allah brings about His Command: for Allah does not guide the rebellious' (*at-Tawba*: 24). He *Glorified is He* tells us to wait for the Command of Allah to be manifested because He does not guide an iniquitous person who has abandoned faith. He does not guide those whose love for worldly relationships is stronger than

their love for Allah, and thereby prevent themselves from receiving Allah's guidance for Allah does not guide the evildoers or the disbelievers because they were the ones who adopted evil, disbelief and iniquity first. This caused Allah *the Almighty* to exclude them from His Will to give them the guidance of assistance, but He had earlier given them the guidance of direction.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to instil faithful assurance into the souls of the believers. Consequently, He explains to them that if they want to gain strength from their fathers, brothers, families, clans and wealth, the strength of a believer comes from his Lord. That is, do not look for an ally other than Allah, as the support of any human is subject to change and alteration. The allegiance given by humans keeps fluctuating and is subject to the vicissitudes of life. A rich man might become poor, a healthy might become sick, a strong might become weak. The permanent support, however, comes only from one who is all-powerful and all-overpowering, and who is not subject to change. If your ally is Allah, He is always All-Powerful and All-Overpowering. He is always Invincible, always Present and He is the Constant Supporter. If allegiance is from one man to another, the vicissitudes of the world could turn a friend into an enemy and turn a patron into a weakling who possesses nothing. It also brings death to the living. As such, one must make Allah *Glorified is He* his ally since He never changes. Allah *Glorified is He* teaches His believing slave to be always aware, vigilant and alert; He orders His slave to entrust the One Who is Ever-Living. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And rely on the Ever-living Who does not die' (*al-Furqan*: 58). This tells us not to rely on one who might die tomorrow, but rather rely on the One Who is Ever-Living *the Almighty* Who cannot be defeated, the Strong Who cannot be overcome. Allah *Glorified is He* notes that when believers are afraid of His Command to leave the society of disbelief due to the false solace from fathers, sons, brothers, relatives and wealth, they should know that it is Allah *the Almighty* Who gives help. He is their ally. The disbelievers have no helping ally because they choose as their allies beings that are subject to change, and yet beings that are subject to change cannot be trusted. For this reason, it is said that when a person reaches any peak, this is the beginning of the end of this perfect state. That is because as long as he has reached the top in a world where everything changes, he himself is also bound to change. A poet composed a very true line, stating:

If anything reaches completion, it begins to decline.

Expect ruin and decay on hearing the expression 'It is complete!'

That is, because everything is subject to change, everything must ruin and decay. Allah *Glorified is He* thus clarifies to the believers that when He requires them to move away from the society of disbelief, thereby causing them to lose strength and support, they will be compensated with an even greater power because they will have Allah on their side and He is the Giver of Support. This is not only theoretical speech; it is backed up by real events which you have witnessed. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرٍ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثَرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ
عَنكُمْ شَيْئًا وَضَافَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُمْ مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

God has helped you [believers] on many battlefields, even on the day of the Battle of Hunayn. You were well pleased with your large numbers, but they were of no use to you: the earth seemed to close in on you despite its spaciousness, and you turned tail and fled [25] (The Quran, at-Tawba: 25)

Allah *Glorified is He* draws our attention to the fact that support comes from Him alone. The proof that support comes from Allah is that He supported His Prophet Muhammad and those who followed him on many battlefields. The word *mawatin* (battlefields) is the plural of *mawtin* which literally means settlement. All humankind are settled on earth and every group specifies a certain area of land to be its homeland. A homeland is a specific place in which we live on the common homeland which is earth itself. The earth is the homeland of all humankind, but people are dispersed all over it. Every group amongst them is living in an area in which they move freely back and forth and in which they are settled.

Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the victory given to the Muslims. Since victory is the theme of the discourse, the meaning here is that Allah *Glorified is He* gave you victory in the arenas of war, i.e. the locations in which the fight was. Those are like the events of Badr, Al-Hudaybiyya, Banu An-Nadir, the Confederates, and the Liberation of Mecca. All of these were events during

which Allah helped the Muslims; however, this verse singles out a single day after speaking about many places. After speaking generally about many battles, Allah refers to the Day of Hunayn in particular. This is because the great number of the Muslims on this day was a special event. Their number on other occasions such as the Battle of Badr was small. In spite of the fact that their number on the day of the Liberation of Mecca was great, the Muslims did not boast about it and felt no self-importance. However, on the Day of Hunayn, their great numbers were combined with pride on their part. Therefore, the Battle of Hunayn was distinct from all others. It was a special event which was mentioned after the general statement.

This pride refers solely to this day, itself. As such, the words: 'on the Day of Hunayn' are not related to 'many battlefields'. It is an independent sentence. The great number and the pride taken at this time were not features of any other battles. This linguistic difference requires further investigation. The word 'battlefields' refers to places while the Day of Hunayn refers to a time; but how can an adverbial expression of time be stated with an adverbial expression of place? This is what the Arabs call *ihtibak* (interweaving). This is because every action, such as eating, drinking, hitting or studying, must have a place and a time. When you say that you ate, we will ask. 'When did you eat? Was it in the morning, afternoon, evening or night? Where did you eat? Was it at home, a hotel, a restaurant, or in the street?'

Every action needs to be contextualised by a time and place, and if you keep asking you will understand the full context, i.e. both the place in which the action occurred and the time it occurred. When you say that you ate at three o'clock, but I do not ask you where, or when you say that you ate at home, but I do not ask you when it was, whether in the morning, afternoon or night, the full context of the action is still incomplete. It is known that time and place are both adverbs, but they are different. Place is immobile and static, while time constantly changes. There is morning, midday, afternoon, evening and night. Time revolves as well. There is past, present and future. Therefore, time and place are both adverbs, but time changes, while place is static.

The verse mentions both. It gives the time and place of a great event. The verse gives the place when it says; 'on many battlefields' and mentions time

when it says: 'on the Day of Hunayn'. If it is said that time and place are not both mentioned, we say, 'No, they are'. Place is mentioned in one part and time is mentioned in the other. This is what is called interweaving. What is left out of the first part is alluded to in the second, and what is left out of the second part is alluded to in the first. The meaning is that Allah *Glorified is He* gave you victory on the battlefields on different days. When you mention the Day of Hunayn with these days, the meaning will be 'and on the battlefield on the Day of Hunayn as well'. That is, both contexts are mentioned here, but Allah *Glorified is He* willed that there not be any repetition so He mentioned one of them here and the other there. This is clearly exhibited when He says: 'Indeed, there was a sign for you in the two armies [which] met together [in combat]; one party fighting in the Way of Allah and the other disbelieving' (*Al- 'Imran*: 13).

As long as the other party are disbelievers, the first have to be believers. The description 'believing' is omitted because the other description, which is disbelieving, implies it. This is to avoid repetition. We see that a believer who listens to the Words of Allah must have a deep understanding. He should listen eagerly and carefully to them for him to be able to recognise that what is omitted in the first clause is implied in the second. As such, the expression of time is included in one part, and the expression of place is included in the other. They allude to one another. An example of this is that after the battle, and when the Muslims had returned to Medina in a state of exhaustion, Prophet Muhammad ordered them before they removed their battle apparel, to let none offer the Afternoon prayer until he was in Banu Quraizha.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, the Muslims set out before resting to the land of Banu Quraizha, who were a Jewish tribe who lived in Medina and who had violated the covenant of Prophet Muhammad. They had allied with the disbelievers against the Muslims. When the Companions were on their way to Banu Quraizha, the sun was close to setting. Hence, some of them said that they had to pray as the sun was about to set, and they prayed the Afternoon prayer. The second group of Companions said that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had told them not to pray the Afternoon prayer until they reached Banu Quraizha, and they did not pray until they arrived there.

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

We say that both groups used logic. Prayers require both a time and a place. Those who considered the time observed that the sun was about to set and prayed, while those who considered the place which Prophet Muhammad had specified did not pray. Later, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* approved the actions of both groups and respected their reasoning concerning the aspect of time and place. Nafi' narrated that Ibn 'Umar *Allah be pleased with them* said that when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* returned from the battle of al-Ahzab (The confederates), he said to them, 'None should offer the 'Asr [Afternoon] Prayer but at Bani Quraizha'. The Afternoon Prayer became due on their way there. Some of them decided to offer the Afternoon Prayer only at Bani Quraizha, while others decided to offer the Afternoon Prayer where they were and said that the intention of Prophet Muhammad was not what the former party had understood. And when that was told to the Prophet, he did not blame anyone of them.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And [even] on the Day of Hunayn, when your great number pleased you but it did not avail you at all' (*at-Tawba*: 25). The word 'to avail' means to suffice so that nothing else is needed. Hunayn is a place in a valley between Mecca and Taif where the disbelievers who were offended by the Liberation of Mecca had gathered. They intended to launch a counter attack to undermine this victory. The tribes of Hawazin and Thaqif gathered and chose Malik ibn 'Awf to lead them into battle. Malik was able to muster four thousand warriors, joined by some of the Bedouins of the area. Malik based his plan on the idea that the army will set out with all the wealth of the army of the idolaters they possessed, including cows and camels, and women and children, for every soldier to fight for his honour and his wealth, and as a result no one will flee the battle. Thereby, they will continue to fight bravely and fiercely to protect their women, wealth and children. This included all the factors that assure victory to any army. On the other hand, the believers fought to defend Allah and His Path.

The disbelievers gathered and camped in a place called 'Awtas Valley'. Among them was an old blind man named Durayd ibn As-Simmah who was the leader of the Jashm tribe⁽¹⁾. When he arrived at the battlefield, he asked,

(1) An ancient Tribe in the Arabian peninsula

‘What land are we in?’ They replied, ‘We are in Awtas Valley’. He smiled and said, ‘Neither miserably rocky nor soft and slippery’. That is, the land was appropriate, being neither full of jagged rocks which are difficult to walk on nor too soft which causes the feet to sink into the earth while walking. As such, the terrain was neither rough and tiring nor too soft, sandy and flat for the foot to sink into the earth

When the old man heard the children crying and the sheep bleating, he said, ‘I hear the cries of children and the lowing of cattle’. They said to him, ‘Malik ibn ‘Awf has brought with him his offspring and all his wealth’. He replied, ‘The wealth is not a problem, but as for women and children, this is sheer recklessness of one inexperienced (in battle). Bring him to me’. They brought Malik to him, and he said, ‘O Malik, what made you do such a thing?’ Malik said, ‘What will you have me do?’ He said, ‘Send back your female relatives and children to the farthest (safe) part of your town. If you win, those you left behind will come and join you; and if you lose, your women and children will be safe from disgrace’. Malik said to him, ‘You have grown old, and your knowledge and mind have forsaken you!’ And he insisted on his opinion. He then began to position his troops in crevices and behind trees for the Muslims not to see them when they arrived and thereby proceed without fearing any danger, and consequently be ambushed from all sides.

When the Muslim army arrived, they did not notice the disbelievers, who were hidden from their eyes. Malik ibn ‘Awf then gave the signal to attack and the disbelievers sprang out from all around. The Muslims were surprised by the fierce attack, as recounted by a witness afterwards, ‘By Allah, the Muslims lasted no longer than it takes to milk a goat!’ Due to the fierceness and severity of the attack and the strength of the surprise, the Muslims army was defeated in the first hours of the battle. Some of those who fled the battlefield returned to Mecca. There only remained nine men with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on the battlefield. These included Al-‘Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* the uncle of Prophet Muhammad, who was holding on to the mule upon which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was riding, ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* who was carrying the banner, Al-Fadl *Allah be pleased with him* who was standing on the

right of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and Abu Sufyan ibn Al-Harith *Allah be pleased with him* the cousin of the Messenger, who was standing on his left; and there was also Ayman ibn Umm Ayman, and several other Companions.⁽¹⁾

Here, we might ask why the Muslims were routed at the beginning of the battle in this way. It was because when they went out to the battle, they said, 'Our numbers are so great that we shall not be defeated due to the smallness of numbers'. They occupied themselves with the means and instruments (of victory), forgetting the Creator of such means and instruments. Allah, therefore, wanted to punish them in a way that disgraced them while elevating the status of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* saw what had happened, he ordered Al-'Abbas, who had a sonorous voice, saying, 'Call to the people!' Hence, Al-'Abbas shouted loudly, 'O Ansar⁽²⁾! O Companions! O you who swore allegiance under the tree!' On hearing the voice of Al-'Abbas calling them back, the people replied, '[We are] Here at your service, here at you service!' Anyone who said this could be heard by those behind him, who repeated the same words, until a large number of Muslims returned to the battle. The fighting became ferocious and the battle flared up. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* smiled and said, 'Now the fight has become fierce!' Then he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I am the Prophet, [this is] no lie! I am the son of 'Abd Al-Muttalib!'

These last words of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* were narrated in the two authentic books of Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Al-Bara' ibn 'Azib *Allah be pleased with him* who narrated that a man asked him, 'O Abu 'Umarah, did you flee and leave the Messenger of Allah [Muhammad] on the Day of Hunayn?' He replied, 'But the Messenger of Allah did not flee. The tribe of Hawazin were skilled archers. However, when we met them and charged at them, they retreated. Then when the people went after the booty, they met us with arrow shots, and as a result the people fled. (At that time) I saw the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with Abu Sufyan ibn Al-Harith, clutching the reins of his

(1) For details, see *Zad Al-Ma'ad* (ii.185-187)

(2) *The Prophet's supporters from Medina*

white mule while the Messenger was saying, "I am the Prophet, [this is] no lie! I am the son of 'Abd Al-Muttalib!'"⁽¹⁾ That is, he (Prophet Muhammad) is truly the Messenger of Allah, and Allah will not forsake him or abandon him. None of the tribes of Hawazin or Thaqif withstood in the face of the believers, and the battle ended with the capture of six thousand women. The Muslims also gained booty beyond count, and a large number of camels, cattle, sheep and donkeys. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent for Budayl ibn Warqa' and said to him, 'You are in charge of this booty; go, and I shall go after those who fled'.

The Muslim army went to At-Ta'if in pursuit of the enemy who had fled. The enemy's leader, Malik ibn 'Awf went into hiding. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then returned and divided the booty among the Muslims, but the division almost caused discord among the Muslims. This was because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* distributed them among those whose hearts he wanted to win over to the Truth and to the rest of the Arabs, but not to the *Ansar* (the Supporters from Medina). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted in this way to contrast two issues. The first was the battle gains, which were worldly items that could be given to those whose hearts were to be won over. The second was the love of Allah and His Messenger Muhammad, which the *Ansar* had as their share. The *Ansar* who supported the opinions and judgements of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by the strength of their love for Messenger Muhammad and their faith in Allah, willingly gave away or dispensed with such worldly trinkets. But despite this, some of the *Ansar* felt a little bitter and were affected by the distribution of the booty.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave the booty to Quraysh and the other Arab tribes and the *Ansar* received nothing, a clan of the *Ansar* felt discontent and began to murmur excessively on this account, and one of them even said that Prophet Muhammad had met his people to give them booty. Then Sa'd ibn 'Ubada went to him and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, some people from among the *Ansar* feel dissatisfied because of the

(1) Narrated in *Al-Bukhari* (no. 4317) and *Muslim* (no. 1776), on the authority of *Al-Barra ibn 'Azib*

way you have distributed the booty you gained. You distributed it among your people and gave great shares to some members of the Arabs while the people of the Ansar did not receive anything'. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'and where do you stand in this regard, O Sa'd?' He said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I am but a man from my people, that is all'. He said, 'So bid your people gather with me in this plot'. Sa'd went and gathered the people. Then some of the *Muhajirun* (Emigrants) came to attend, and he allowed some of them to enter but sent back others who came later. Once they had gathered, Sa'd went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'This clan of the *Ansar* have gathered to meet you'. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went out to them, thanked and praised Allah, and then said, 'O people of the *Ansar*, a word has reached me that you feel grief in your souls. Did I not find you astray and Allah guided you through me? Were you not dependent and Allah gave you self-sufficiency and independence through me? Were you not enemies and Allah brought your hearts together?' They said, 'Yes indeed, Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] are the most bountiful and gracious'. He said, 'Why do you not reply to me, O people of the *Ansar*?' They said, 'How should we reply to you, O Messenger of Allah, when indeed all the favours are from Allah and His Messenger?' Prophet Muhammad said, 'By Allah, if you wish you could say, and you will be telling the truth and you will be believed: You came to us being accused of lying and we believed you, being forsaken and we supported you, being a fugitive and we gave you shelter, in poverty and we enriched you'.⁽¹⁾ That is, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* mentioned to them three blessings that came to them because of Islam, namely delivering them from error to guidance, from dependence to self-sufficiency, and from enmity to brotherhood and love.

In stating the virtues of the *Ansar*, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* mentioned four favours they had done for him—namely, that when the Meccans tried to kill him and he emigrated to Medina, the Ansar graciously took him in; and when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be*

(1) Narrated by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* (vol. 3, p. 76) from Ibn Ishaq on the authority of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri, and by Ibn Hisham in his *Sira* (vol. 4, p. 146)

upon him and the believers came to Medina with nothing in their possession, the *Ansar* shared their possessions with them and some even offered to divorce their wives for the Emigrants; and when the disbelievers tried to kill Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the *Ansar* protected him; and lastly, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been rejected and forsaken by his own people of Quraysh, but the *Ansar* espoused him. The *Ansar* (the Helpers from Medina), on hearing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* recounting their merits, said, 'Rather, the favour is all from Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad]'. They meant that they, as the *Ansar*, can never say this, because the sweetness of Faith and its reward were greater than all that Prophet Muhammad had said about them. From this perspective, they were not the ones who gave, but rather, it was Faith that gave to them; for the benefits of Faith are eternal. Allah *Blessed and Glorified is He* says: 'Say, "Do not consider your Islam a favour to me; it is Allah who has conferred a favour upon you by guiding you to the Faith, if you are indeed true [in your claim that you are believers]"' (*al-Hujurat*: 17).

When the *Ansar* said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Rather, the favour is all from Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad]', Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'O people of the *Ansar*, are you aggrieved over a trifle of this world that I used to reconcile some people's hearts for them to embrace Islam, and I have entrusted you to your faith in Islam? Are you not content, O company of the *Ansar*, that the people leave with their sheep and camels, while you return home with the Messenger of Allah [Muhammad]? By He in Whose Hand is Muhammad's soul, if the people went one direction and the *Ansar* went another, I will go in the direction of the *Ansar*. O Allah have mercy on the *Ansar*, and on the children of the *Ansar*, and on the grandchildren of the *Ansar*'. On hearing this from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they wept until their beards were wet with tears, and then they said, 'We are well content with Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] as our portion and our lot'; and there was no problem about the booty after that.

We thus can see that when we consider two types of possessions, we should take pride in the permanent and lasting possessions that we have acquired. As for perishable possessions, people who lack them live just like

those who have them. These are the transient worldly belongings, and life can be lived with or without them. But no one can dispense with Faith. We can do without worldly pleasures and possessions, but we cannot dispense with Faith, Allah or His Messenger Muhammad. Following the distribution of booty, a delegation of Hawazin came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while he was at Ji'ranah, after they had embraced Islam. They said, 'O Messenger of Allah, we are of noble origin and we are kinsfolk. The calamity which has befallen us is not hidden from you. Please be bounteous to us, may Allah be bounteous to you'. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Which is dearer to you, your wealth or your wives and children?' They replied, 'O Messenger of Allah, you have given us the choice between our honourable lineage and our wealth; return to us our wives and children, for they are dearer to us'. He said to them, 'As for what belongs to me and to the children of `Abdul-Muttalib, you may consider them, from now on, as yours. When I have finished leading the congregation in the Noon Prayer, stand up and say, "We ask the Messenger of Allah [Muhammad] to intercede for us with the Muslims, and we ask the Muslims to intercede for us with the Messenger of Allah regarding our children and our women', and I shall give them back to you and request (the Muslims) on your behalf'. Once Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had finished leading the people in the Noon Prayer, the delegation stood up and said what he had told them to say. Upon that, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'As for what belongs to me and to the children of `Abdul Muttalib, you may consider them, from now on, yours'. Upon hearing that, the *Muhajirun* (Emigrants) said, 'What belongs to us belongs, from now on, to the Messenger of Allah [Muhammad]'. The *Ansar* (the Helpers from Medina) also said, 'What belongs to us belongs, from now on, to the Messenger of Allah'. But Al-Aqra' ibn Habis said, 'We will grant none of what belongs to me and to Banu Tamim'. `Uyayna ibn Hisn ibn Hudhyfa ibn Badr said, 'As for me and Banu Fazarah, we say no'. `Abbas ibn Mirdas also refused and said no for Banu Sulaym and himself. But the members of Banu Sulaym said, 'No, whatever is ours belongs from now on to the Messenger of Allah [Muhammad]'. `Abbas replied, 'O Banu Sulaym, you have undermined my position!' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Those of

you who have their share of these captives shall be given as a recompense for every captive six times as much from the first booty Allah gives us'. After this, they returned the wives and children of the tribe of Hawazin to them.⁽¹⁾

That was the incident referred to in the Lord's Words: 'Truly, Allah has given you victory on many battlefields, and on the Day of Hunain⁽²⁾ when you rejoiced at your great number but it did not avail you at all, and the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for you; then you turned back in flight' (*at-Tawba*: 25).

That is, you began the battle without taking Allah into account, but rather, you relied on your great numbers; yet they did not avail you or gain you victory. As a result, you fled in fear of defeat and the earth before you seemed narrow. As such, you looked here and there for a place to hide, but you could not find any. Despite the earth's vastness, it became narrow in your eyes as you fled the battle. Yet the Lord *Glorified is He* did not want the battle to end this way. He only wanted to remove from the Muslims' hearts the boastfulness they had felt about their great numbers, and the assumption that their reliance on means assures victory for them. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted them to fully understand that they will only gain victory through Him *the Most High* and that their great numbers will not do them any good if they did not rely on Him.

Allah says:

ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ جُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

Then God sent His calm down to His Messenger and the believers, and He sent down invisible forces. He punished the disbelievers – this is what the disbelievers deserve [26] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 26)

That is, Allah *Glorified is He* first sent inner peace down upon His Messenger Muhammad and the believers who remained with him, and then He sent it

(1) Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (vol. 2, p. 218) and *An-Nisa'i* in his *Sunan* (vol. 6, p. 262) from Muhammad ibn Ishaq on the authority of `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn Al-`As. It was also narrated by Ibn Hisham in his book of *Sira* (vol. 4, p. 135). See also the exegesis of *Al-Qurtubi*

(2) Refers to a Battle that early Muslims fought during the early days of Islam and after the Liberation of Mecca

down upon the believers who returned after fleeing from the battle. And His Saying: ‘...and sent down soldiers (angels) whom you did not see, and punished those who disbelieved. And that is the recompense of the disbelievers’ (*at-Tawba*: 26) means, as the Quran has narrated to us, that the angels descended and strengthened the believers and cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers and also brought torment to them. This was testified to by the believers who witnessed this, as they later mentioned how they saw beings on piebald⁽¹⁾ horses the like of which they had never possessed.

When the Noble Quran tells us that the angels came down, and there were people who saw them,⁽²⁾ we should all take the position of a true believer and trust in the One Who said this, for He is truthful. We should believe in what He says without searching for the ‘how’ of it. If some of you find this hard to accept, they should not deny that it occurred but rather admit their ignorance of how it occurred. For the existence of something and our knowledge of how it exists are two completely different issues.

There are many things in the universe that exist and perform their function, but we do not know how they came into existence. Our lack of knowledge of them does not mean that they do not exist. All the discoveries that modern science has made already existed in nature, but in the past we knew nothing about the manner of their existence. Gravity existed, but we did not know that it existed or how it worked. Likewise, electricity has existed in the universe since the beginning of creation, but we did not know about it until Allah revealed it to us and we became able to use it. Microbes existed and performed their function, without our knowing it, until Allah revealed

(1) Black horses with white patches

(2) *In his exegesis, Al-Qurtubi said that the part of the Quranic verse that says: ‘...sent down soldiers whom you did not see...’ (at-Tawba:26) meant the angels who strengthened the believers by instilling faithful thoughts and firmness into their hearts, and weakened the disbelievers by instilling fear and cowardice in them without their being able to see them. They did this without actually fighting, since the angels only fought at the Battle of Badr. It was narrated that a man from Banu An-Nadir said to the believers after the battle, ‘Where are the piebald horses and the men in white who were riding them? Compared to them, we were mere blemishes, and we were only killed because of them’. They told Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him about this, and he said, ‘These were the angels’.*

them to us and we learned of their existence and how they existed. All these elements and components existed in Allah's universe from the moment He created it, but we did not know about them. Our lack of knowledge of them cannot detract from their existence in the slightest. For this reason, if you are told about something beyond your understanding, do not deny that it exists because there are things which we knew nothing about before Allah gave us knowledge of them. And later, we found out that they lived according to fixed physical laws. Clearly, the existence of something and the perception of its existence are two completely distinct facets.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Then Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Messenger [Muhammad] and upon the believers and sent down soldiers (angels) whom you did not see...' (*at-Tawba*: 26). The words: 'whom you did not see' provide an excuse for all those who did not see. And it is enough that Allah said it to make it a true fact. Allah says: '...none knows the soldiers of your Lord but Him...' (*al-Muddaththir*: 31).

When we are told that Allah has creatures called jinn, just as He has other creatures called angels, and that the jinn can see us while we cannot see them, some people disapprove of this. Likewise, when we hear that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Satan runs through the son of Adam like blood',⁽¹⁾ some people object to this and say, 'How can Satan enter a person's veins and run in them like blood?' It is undeniable that we have progressed in empirical science and discovered microbes, and have seen how they can invade the body and enter the bloodstream; yet does anyone feel the microbes as they enter his body? Is anyone aware of the moment when the microbes enter the body? Of course not; but when they divide and reproduce, and their affects begin to show on our body, we become aware of it. This shows that microbes are so minute that the sensory nerves under the skin do not feel them. They are so minute that they can travel through or between these nerves without our sensing it, and enter the bloodstream without our knowing it. As the blood flows in the veins, it is governed by a law which

(1) Narrated in *Al-Bukhari and Muslim... Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (book of authentic Hadiths) (2035 and other places) and Muslim (2175) on the authority of Safiyya bint Huyyay, the wife of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him*

states that the square of the radius needed for all the blood has to be distributed over every vein and capillary. An example of this is to be found in water distribution. We take a main pipe whose radius is eight inches and connect it to a village, the area of water that flows from it will be 8x8 inches or 64 square inches. When we come to distribute it to the pipes that branch off from it, we will run into a pipe with a four-inch diameter, and then from this runs a pipe with a two-inch diameter, and then from this runs a pipe with a one inch or half inch diameter. What is important is that the square of the diameters of the tributary pipes is equal to the area of the water that flows out from the main pipe.

The same applies to veins. The blood flows through large arteries, veins and capillaries. The minuteness of the microbe allows it to penetrate these vessels without any blood spilling from them. And when these vessels are blocked, this leads to the diseases we hear about, such as cholesterol or blood clots. Medicine, therefore, has to intervene to widen the vessels because they are the 'pipes' through which blood flows. There are surgeries that can be performed using laser beams or other modern inventions which can penetrate the skin between the blood vessels and because the rays are very accurate, they do not cut the vessels or spill any blood.

Clearly, everything in the body is arranged according to Allah's Pattern. Every microbe has an incubation period inside the body during which we do not feel it, but after this time its effects begin and illness appears. It takes a long time for the microbe to replicate in the blood and to fight the white blood cells, all the time we do not feel or sense what is going on.

A microbe, which is a physical entity like you, i.e. with specific mass and volume, can only be seen with a microscope and appears to have a frightening form. It reproduces by multiplying and has a life cycle. If you cannot feel this microbe when it is inside your body, what do you think about Satan who is made of an even more transparent substance than a microbe? Is it possible for you to feel him if he enters your body? No. And if a material object can enter your body without your feeling it, what about a creature that Allah made from a substance more transparent and subtle than clay? Is he not able to enter the son of Adam and run through him like blood?

So when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Satan runs through the son of Adam like blood', do not be amazed by this or deny it simply because you cannot feel it. Allah has given you something in the material world that is more substantial than this and yet it enters your body without your feeling it.

Science has confirmed that there exist creatures that we cannot see with the naked eye. By using modern electronic microscopes and studying every cell in the human body, we can see marvels. We will observe on the human skin, which we consider to be smooth, deep pores from which sweat comes out and other such tiny details which the eye cannot see. Consequently, when Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that angels came down and fought, we believe this. The Lord *Blessed and Glorified is He* gave us something to placate our human natures by saying: '...soldiers (angels) whom you did not see...' (*at-Tawba*: 26). If one person said that he saw them, and another said that he did not see any, we say that Allah's Words: '...whom you did not see...' (*at-Tawba*: 26) mean that not all of you could see them. There were those who saw a glimpse of them and those who did not.

The Lord's Words: '...punished those who disbelieved' (*at-Tawba*: 26) mean through death, capture or the loss of their wealth. And His Words: '...and that is the recompense of the disbelievers' (*at-Tawba*: 26) mean that the loss they suffered was a requital for their disbelief. But some people may ask why the punishment did not descend on them at once, and why the defeat did not occur at the first moment of the battle. We say that Allah wanted to increase the disbelievers' torment. If He arranged it for them to be defeated right away, this will have been easier for them and less of a torment. But by first giving them the joy of victory, the ultimate defeat will certainly be more difficult and severe. As a poet said:

It is as when a thirsty people see a cloud overhead,
But as soon as they see it, it dissipates and clears.

When a cloud passes over the heads of drought-stricken people, they hope that it will rain on them; but then the dream completely vanishes. Or, it is like a prisoner who is very thirsty and asks his guard for water. The guard says, 'I will get some for you', and he really leaves to get him a glass of cold water

after which he gives it to him; but as soon as the prisoner takes the cup in his hand and his soul fills with joy, the guard knocks his hand and the cup falls to the ground. Of course, the prisoner will be severely disappointed. This is the worst kind of torture. Had the guard simply refused to bring him water in the first place, this will have been less painful for the prisoner; but when he brought the prisoner the cup of water and placed it in his hand, and then prevented him from drinking it, this is a worse torment. Thus Allah wanted to increase the disbelievers' punishment by first giving them the signs of victory and its sweetness, and then making them taste the bitterness of defeat that dispossesses them of everything. Hence, they were struck by a double calamity involving two facets: a positive one and a negative one (i.e. winning and then losing).

We are then given a glimpse of the Mercy in which Allah envelops His whole universe, opening the door for the sinner to return to the way of Faith for Allah to accept him. The Lord *Blessed and Glorified is He* says:

ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

But God turns in His mercy to whoever He will. God is most forgiving and merciful [27] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 27)

This is the greatness of the Creator, the Most Merciful and Ever Merciful. He always leaves the door open for His slaves; for He is the Creator of this universe. Allah opens the door of repentance before every sinner. And this is logical because those who sin and disbelieve do not hurt Allah in the least, but only hurt themselves. They attempt to transgress the laws of the Lord. Once any sinner realises that he has no refuge except Allah, Allah *Glorified is He* opens the door of repentance for him.

In this chapter, Allah *Blessed and Glorified is He* made it clear to us that He and His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* have disavowed the polytheists (those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity or worship), and He revealed to us that their nature is to not respect any covenant or treaty. He made this matter official by stating: 'A release by Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] from the treaty you (believers) made

with the polytheists (is announced)...’ (*at-Tawba*: 1), and He instructed us to annul all the treaties that existed between us and them. Those who violated their treaties were to be disavowed immediately, but we respected the treaties of those who kept them until their appointed period was over. He then ordered the polytheists to keep away from the Inviolable (Sacred) Mosque (in Mecca), and also made it possible for any error or sin to be effaced by opening the door of repentance. After all this, Allah *the Most High* turns from the issue of the expired covenants with the disbelievers to the issue of the disbelievers themselves, saying:

يَتَّيِّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ
الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ عَيْلَةً فَسَوْفَ يُغْنِيكُمُ اللَّهُ
مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنْ شَاءَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

**Believers, those who ascribe partners to God are truly
unclean: do not let them come near the Sacred Mosque after
this year. If you are afraid you may become poor, [bear in
mind that] God will enrich you out of His bounty if He pleases:
God is all knowing and wise [28] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 28)**

That is, it is not enough for the believers to annul all their covenants with the polytheists, but rather, they must also disavow the polytheists themselves because they are impure. An impure thing is something repellent and detestable to people. One of these polytheists might be acceptable with respect to his appearance and his clothing, but this is only the external appearance. When Allah *the Exalted and the Glorious* speaks, He only speaks about spiritual and moral values. Allah does not look at external appearances, but rather, He looks at hearts. Abu Huraira *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Allah does not look at your bodies or your forms, but rather He looks at your hearts’.⁽¹⁾

(1) This means that what counts on the Day of Resurrection is your hearts, not your outward forms. This encourages us to look after our hearts and purify them. Narrated by Muslim (2564), Ahmad in his Musnad (vol. 2, p. 285, 539) and Ibn Majah (4143); this is the wording of Muslim

The appearance might be superficially acceptable, while the beliefs held within the hearts of these bodies are foul and impure. Allah *Glorified is He* does not judge by appearances or forms, but rather by moral values. But if you contemplate true and sincere values and beliefs, you will find that every belief is visible in the material form that contains it. For example, when you are happy, your facial features show this. Those who meet you will recognise this and see that you are in a good mood. And if you are angry or annoyed, this will also show on your face.

Clearly, the material of the body interacts alongside the moral values. Since the moral values are corrupt, the material of the body will rebel against its owner. Any material, in its natural state, worships and extols Allah, as does the spirit. Corruption may only occur after the spirit is placed within the body resulting in the self having this combination, body and spirit. When the self gives preference to Allah's Way, it becomes a tranquil soul. When the self swings between obedience and disobedience, it will either obey and become a 'self-reproaching soul', or else it will choose disbelief and the way of wickedness and become a 'soul that is inclined to evil'. But before the spirit is breathed into the body, all of the body glorifies Allah because everything in existence worships and glorifies Allah. Concerning all that it does, the soul is compelled to obey its owner in the way that Allah *Glorified is He* has created it to do. When death comes, human free will comes to an end and the human loses control of his body. This body will even testify against its owner on the Day of Resurrection. But during this worldly life, the will of an individual is in command of his physical form, by Allah's Leave. Consequently, the hand might strike someone or it might aid someone in difficulty; and the tongue of the Muslim testifies that there is no god but Allah, while the tongue of the disbeliever associates other gods with Allah.

The human body is subject to the will of the individual in this world of vicissitudes, but with the transition to the Hereafter, humans will no longer have control of the material body. The body will be free of having to obey its owner in sin, and it will rebel against him and testify that he used it to commit evil. In this regard, the Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Their ears, eyes, and skins will, when they reach it (hellfire), testify against them for their misdeeds. They will say to their

skins, “Why did you testify against us?” and their skins will reply, “Allah, who gave speech to everything, has given us speech—it was He who created you the first time and to Him you have been returned” (*Fussilat*: 20-21).

It is as though the body parts of the human will say to him on the Day of Resurrection, ‘You wore me out in the worldly life and forced me to do things I will not have done on my own, since I worship Allah and glorify Him. The things which you commanded me to do were disobedience to Allah *Glorified is He*’. We gave the example before of a squadron commander who gives bad instructions which the soldiers nevertheless obey, and when they return to the high commander, they complain to him about what the squadron commander made them do. Likewise, the body parts will testify against their owners before their Creator on the Day of Resurrection. When you worship Allah and glorify Him, your body will be for you; and if you do otherwise, your body will be against you. For example, the tongue in itself worships and glorifies Allah; if you force it to associate partners with Allah, it will obey you in this worldly life and then testify against you on the Day of Resurrection. The Lord *Blessed and Glorified is He* will call out on that Day: ‘...whose is the kingdom this Day?’ (Allah Himself will reply to His Question): ‘It is Allah’s, the One, the Irresistible!’ (*Ghafir*: 16)

Here, Allah *the Most High* says: ‘Verily, the polytheists are impure...’ (*at-Tawba*: 28), that is, their corrupt beliefs are clearly manifested in their actions. Allah *Glorified is He* sustains the concepts of Faith in the soul and makes them grow. For example, we pelt Satan with pebbles as one of the rites of the pilgrimage to Mecca; we pelt a pillar of stone which represents Satan for us. We cannot see Satan, and for this reason we have made a symbol for him, and have firmly established in our minds the notion that Satan is our enemy and that we must pelt him to stay clear of his intentions. By doing this, we have represented these abstract notions in a physical way to make it clear to the human soul that Satan is our enemy. Every time Satan whispers an insinuation to us, we pelt him by remembering the pure articles of Faith so that he flees from us. We must all remember well that Satan will laugh at the sinners and disbelievers on the Day of Resurrection and say, as Allah *Glorified is He* tells us: ‘I had no power over you except that I called to you, and you responded to

my call. So do not blame me; [rather] blame yourselves...' (*Ibrahim*: 22). These words serve to mock those who used to listen to Satan and believe him; for force is either authoritative, such as when you compel someone to do something by using physical force, or persuasive, such as when you persuade a person to do something using convincing arguments—and Satan possesses neither the power to force nor the power to argue.

When the Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Verily, the polytheists are impure. So let them not come near the Sacred Mosque (at Mecca) after this year...' (*at-Tawba*: 28), He thereby clarifies for us that their impurity makes it necessary for us to prevent them from entering the places which only pure people may enter. Allah *Glorified is He* considers spiritual impurity to be the same as material impurity, which is why the scholars say that as long as the Lord describes them as being impure, they must have some kind of physical impurity. This is the reason why, when you approach them, you may find that some may have an unpleasant smell because they do not cleanse themselves properly (with water or any hard material) after answering the call of nature, and they do not take purificatory baths after sexual relations. When we went to Algeria after it was liberated from the French rule, we found that the houses did not contain baths since the occupiers only bathed every twenty days or so, and as a result they kept the baths far away from the houses. But after Algerian independence, they began to put baths in the houses because Islamic culture is based on purity, and it is obligatory for Muslims to clean themselves properly after using the restroom, and take a full ritual bath after sexual relations.

Some people say, 'If I shake an idolater's hand and it is wet, I must wash my hand⁽¹⁾; and if it is dry, I just wipe my hand'. This is a way of being

(1) Al-Qurtubi narrated in his exegesis (vol. 4, p. 3030) that Al-Hassan Al-Basri said, 'Whoever shakes an idolater's hand should then perform ablution'. Ibn Kathir said in his exegesis (vol. 2, p. 346), 'This noble verse indicates that the idolater is spiritually impure, as the authentic Hadith states, "The believer is never impure". As for the impurity of his physical body, the majority of scholars say that he is not actually physically or personally impure because Allah declared the food of the people of the Book to be lawful. But some literalists (zhahiri school) say that they are physically impure. Ash'ath narrated that Al-Hasan Al-Basri said, "Whoever shakes an idolater's hand should then perform ablution". It was narrated by Ibn Jarir'.

cautious and an affirmation that these idolaters should be avoided. And if we should avoid them with our physical person, is this not all the more reason for us to avoid them with our hearts?

Allah *Glorified it He* sent down this noble verse in the ninth year after *Hijrah* (the Emigration to Medina), the year in which the polytheists were barred from approaching the Inviolable Mosque (in Mecca) and the disavowal from them was announced. The scholars asked whether the polytheists were banned from entering the Inviolable Mosque, or from the entire Sanctuary.

Imam Ash-Shafi'i specified that the polytheists were only barred from entering the Inviolable Mosque itself; and although we respect Imam Ash-Shafi'i's opinion, we say that the Lord has said: '...let them not come near the Sacred Mosque' (*at-Tawba*: 28), not 'let them not enter into it' which means that they were not even allowed to come near it. The nearest thing to the Inviolable Mosque is the Sanctuary in its entirety. If only the Mosque itself was meant, the Lord will have directly specified that they were barred from entering it alone.⁽¹⁾ As such, we see how it is possible for someone to exercise independent human reasoning and extract the true import of a text.

The Lord *Glorified is He* continues: '...and if you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you if, He wills, out of His Bounty. Surely, Allah is All Knowing, All-Wise' (*at-Tawba*: 28). These noble words speak about the Unseen. As we know, the Unseen means that which is unknown to you and also to others. As for that which is unknown to you but not to others, this does not belong to the Unseen. For example, if some money is stolen from you and you do not know who stole it, in such a case the thief is unknown to you but not to others. The thief knows himself, and the one who helped him do the crime knows him, and the one who saw what he did but concealed it knows him. Moreover, you

(1) Al-Qurtubi said in his exegesis, 'Imam Ash-Shafi'i, Allah have mercy on him, said that the noble verse refers to all polytheists, in general, specifically regarding the Inviolable Mosque, which means that they are not forbidden from entering other mosques. As such, he held it permissible for Jews and Christians to enter other mosques. Ibn Al-'Arabi said that this was a restrictive opinion on his part that deviates from the plain meaning of the text, since Allah's Words: "Verily, the polytheists are impure..." (*at-Tawba*: 28) alert us to the fact that Shirk (joining false gods with Allah) and impurity go hand in hand'.

do not know where the stolen objects are now, but the thief knows where he has hidden them.

Although it is unknown to you, it is known to others. This is the game of the sorcerers and fortune-tellers who utilise the jinn in this domain. As long as something is known to other than you, it is easy to discover it. But there are things which are unknown both to you and to everyone else, and are solely known to Allah. This is what the Lord refers to in His saying: 'He is the One who knows the Unseen. He does not disclose it except to a Messenger of His choosing' (*al-Jinn*: 26-27).

There are also things which are unknown to all people, but will not remain unknown until the end of time. Electricity, for example, was unknown to us before we discovered it, as this was the case with details about splitting the atom and the laws of gravity, then these things became known to mankind. However, this is not the kind of the Unseen which Allah means when He says: 'He is the One, who knows the Unseen,' (*al-Jinn*: 26), as this verse refers to matters of the Unseen which only He knows. Therefore, one should not say that so-and-so knows the Unseen, but rather say that he has been given knowledge of something that was unknown before. Unseen matters are veiled by either time or space. Buried relics, for example, point to something that existed in the past and disappeared. They provide information on past nations which no one knew, and which were hidden by the veil of the past until they were discovered and Allah gave some people the ability to solve their mysteries.

Moreover, the knowledge that Allah gave His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about previous nations in the Noble Quran was an uncovering of the veil of the past such as His Words: 'That is from the news of the Unseen which we reveal to you (O Muhammad). And you were not with them when they cast their pens as to which of them should be responsible for Mary. Nor were you with them when they disputed' (*Al-Imran*: 44). Allah also says: 'And you (O Muhammad) were not on the western side (of the Mount) when we made clear to Musa (Moses) the commandment, and you were not among those present. But we created generations [after generations i.e. after Musa], and long were the ages that passed over them. And you (O

Muhammad) were not a dweller among the people of Madyan (Midyan), reciting Our Verses to them. But it is We Who kept sending [Messengers]' (*al-Qasas*: 44-45). His saying: 'you were not', which is repeated in other glorious verses as well, indicates that Allah *Glorified is He* informed His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of issues that were hidden in the past. As for the issues that will happen in the future, they are hidden from you by the veil of the future. The Noble Quran also lifted the veils of the future in many verses which all began with the Arabic letter '*sin*' (translated as shall), which indicates an event that has not happened yet.

Allah's saying: 'We shall show them our signs in every region of the earth and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth...' (*Fussilat*: 53) indicates that Allah, throughout the future, will continue to reveal to us His signs in the universe. Another example is Allah's saying: 'Alif, Lam, Mim. The Byzantines have been defeated in the nearest land. But they, after their defeat, will overcome, within a few years. To Allah belongs the command, in the past and in the future...' (*ar-Rum*: 1-4). The previous saying pierces the veils of the future because the victory referred to was achieved nine years after the revelation of these verses. That which will happen in the future is veiled from you by future time. There are also things which are happening in the present, but you do not know about them because they are veiled from you by the veil of place. In other words, that which occurs in a place where you are not present is unknown to you. If you are sitting in Mecca, for example, you do not know what is happening in Medina because it is veiled from you with the veil of place. There is also the veil of the soul; as no one but you knows what is going on in your soul because it is veiled by the veil of the soul.

When the Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Verily, the polytheists are impure. So let them not come near the Sacred Mosque (at Mecca) after this year,...' (*at-Tawba*: 28), He is addressing people who He expects will implement this commandment. At the same time, Allah knows the kind of thoughts that will go through the minds when they hear these words. It is like when someone comes and tells you that the bakery near your house will close. The first thing you think is, 'Where shall we get our bread now?' Or, if you are told that the

shipment of meat and vegetables has got lost, the first thing you will think is, ‘What shall we eat?’

The polytheists used to bring their wealth to the pilgrimage and engage in trade and spend money. This was considered the time of financial boom for those who lived around the House of Allah as they earned enough money at this time to live on for the rest of the year.

So what kind of thoughts arises in the souls of the believers when the Lord tells them, ‘Verily, the polytheists are impure? So let them not come near the Sacred Mosque (at Mecca) after this year’ (*at-Tawba*: 28)? The question that would certainly present itself in the depths of their souls will be, ‘Then, who will buy our wares?’ But did Allah leave this question unanswered? No, He answered it by saying: ‘And if you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you, if He wills, out of His Bounty’ (*at-Tawba*: 28).

Thus Allah removed the veil of the soul, answering the worries that entered the believers’ souls in the very same verse in which He forbade the polytheists from coming near the Inviolable Mosque. The Lord *Glorified is He* did not wait for the believers to give voice to what they were thinking, but He answered the thoughts that were in their minds before they even gave them voice.

When Allah removes the veil of the soul in this way, the sagacious believer will say to himself, ‘This is what was in my mind’. He will feel contented and say, ‘Since Allah knows what occurs in my mind, He will surely provide for me’. If this had not occurred to their minds, they will have denied the text; and if they had denied the text, they will not have retained their faith. But they continued to retain their faith which shows that the text expressed exactly what was going on inside their souls.

Allah *Glorified is He* removes the veil of the soul in many other noble Quranic verses, for example, when He says about the hypocrites and the disbelievers: ‘And (they) say inwardly, “Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?”’ (*al-Mujadala*: 8)

No one can hear the speech of the soul. If these people had not really said this to themselves, they will have said, ‘By Allah, this never occurred to us!’ But because they truly did say this to themselves, they were amazed when the

Noble Quran revealed what was inside their souls. In this noble verse, Allah *Glorified is He* responded to what could occur to the souls of the believers when they heard this command. The Lord *Glorified is He* did not wait until the believers complained to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of their fear of poverty or scant provision, but rather, He *Glorified is He* answered this before it even crossed their minds. It is as though the Lord *Glorified is He* even legislates for thoughts before they cross the mind; He does not leave things until they occur and then react to them by legislating for them.

The Lord *Glorified is He* uses here the word ‘*ayla*’ (poverty): ‘And if you fear poverty (*‘ayla*)...’ (*at-Tawba*: 28) and follows it by saying: ‘Allah will enrich you, if He wills, out of His Bounty...’ (*at-Tawba*: 28). The future particle ‘*sawfa*’ (translated as ‘will’) is used for the distant future, which indicates that some time will pass, but it will be a relatively short time. In this context, it signifies that the prosperity that will ensue will be produced by many different means. It is as though Allah will compensate them for the profits they used to obtain through the disbelievers by causing rain to fall for their crops to grow which will require time, or by giving them the means to engage in thriving trades with people other than the polytheists, or by revealing to them treasures of the earth which will enrich them. Therefore, Allah used the Arabic future particle (*sawfa*) which refers to the distant future. Definitely, instruments and means need time to develop and crystalize. Rain fell near Jeddah, whose people had embraced Islam, and crops grew in the valley of Khalit, Tabali in Yemen, Jerash and Sana‘a, and caravans loaded with goods came to the people of Mecca. Moreover, the Islamic conquests occurred, and the revenues of the non-Muslim poll-tax and the land taxes started to flow in. Thus we can see that: ‘Allah will enrich you...’ (*at-Tawba*: 28) is a process that evolves over many stages, and it still continues to this day.

So the process took a considerable amount of time. However, we must be aware that the Lord’s Words: ‘And if you fear poverty...’ (*at-Tawba*: 28) point out that the believer must not be lax in his religious observances for the sake of attaining some worldly gains. To any person who commits a sin out of fear that he will otherwise lose some material or worldly benefit, such as fearing to speak the truth lest he should lose his job, or anger his boss and get

fired, we say, ‘You have no excuse because Allah says: ‘And if you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you, if He wills, out of His Bounty...’ (*at-Tawba*: 28).

Since all provisions come from Allah *the Exalted and Glorious* and these words are spoken by Allah, no one has an excuse for committing a sin under the pretext of preserving his livelihood, or driving away poverty from himself, his family and his children. Yet Allah’s saying: ‘if He wills’ might induce one to think that time may stand in between him and his livelihood because it is dependent on Allah’s Will. But how can this be the case, when He *Glorified is He* intended this noble verse to be a source of reassurance for the Muslims? In the light of Allah’s Words: ‘And if you fear poverty, Allah will enrich you, if He wills, out of His Bounty’ (*at-Tawba*: 28), we answer this by saying that the Lord wants His slave to be always connected with Him, and not to ruin His slave’s constant feeling of hope and confidence in Him. The expression: ‘if He wills’ is a means of preserving this hope in Allah because the slave will continue to hope in Him *Glorified is He* and therefore will remain mindful of Him. He will always seek Allah’s Pleasure, and this will make him keep away from sin and remain constantly obedient.

Above all this, the Lord *Blessed and Glorified is He* has absolute power over His creation. Allah’s Decree and Predestination cannot be an argument against the total freedom of Allah’s Will. Allah’s Will is absolute and is not restrained even by His Predestination. If He wills, the predestination occurs; and if He does not will, it does not occur. This is how Allah maintains absolute power over His creation.

Sometimes Allah may reveal a glimpse of the Unseen to one of his devoted slaves, but if His slave divulges any of this to another person, Allah *Glorified is He* causes events to happen in a way contrary to what he had previously divulged, for Allah to remain the Sole Knower of the Unseen. Since the one whom Allah has chosen to inform him of the Unseen decided to tell other people about it, Allah *Glorified is He* changes the events of the Unseen and never gives that person knowledge of any other unseen matter.

Consequently, Allah’s saying: ‘if He wills’ affirms Allah’s Omnipotent Power over His creation. If He wills, He will give to you; and if He wills, He will not give to you. There is wisdom in giving, and wisdom in withholding.

Some people may misuse blessings, and consequently the Lord withholds them. This is what happens in many lands which transgress and show ingratitude to the blessings that Allah has bestowed on them. Were Allah to simply leave the giving of His Blessings without any regulations, corruption and sin will spread throughout these lands. Hence, Allah's Will entails giving or withholding, and giving and withholding are both administered for a particular wisdom. This is because the Lord treats His creatures based on their changeable and mutable natures, as some people, on becoming possessed of worldly goods, commit transgressions. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '(The nature of) man is that, when his Lord tries him [by] giving him honour and blessings, he says, "My Lord has honoured me", but when He tries him through the restriction of his provision, he says, "My Lord has humiliated me"' (*al-Fajr*: 15-16). That is, when Allah confers worldly gifts on a human, the man considers this to be generosity from Allah *Glorified is He*; but if Allah withholds such gifts from him, man sees this as a disgrace and a mark of disfavour from Allah. Allah corrects this wrong way of thinking by answering: 'No indeed', that is, wealth is not a mark of favour from Allah, nor is its absence a sign of disfavour. 'No indeed! You (people) do not honour orphans, you do not urge one another to feed the poor, you consume inheritance greedily, and you love wealth with inordinate love' (*al-Fajr*: 17-20).

So if wealth comes to you and you abuse it, it becomes a curse upon you and not a blessing. Conversely, if the lack of wealth prevents you from transgression, it counts as a blessing for you, not a curse. Allah *Blessed and Glorified is He* says: 'Nay! Verily, man does transgress all bounds. Because he considers himself self-sufficient' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7).

You might be deprived of wealth which, if it came to you, could delude you into thinking yourself as being self-sufficient, not needing Allah's Help, and thus you will fall into transgression. Such withholding acts as a blessing, not a curse. Consequently, Allah's Statement: 'Allah will enrich you, if He wills, out of His Bounty...' (*at-Tawba*: 28) preserves Allah's absolute sovereignty over creation. Accordingly, sufficiency is not only a question of material wealth, but also of moral values. Wealth must never come at the cost of heavenly values, nor pull one away from Allah's Way.

Allah's Saying: 'if He wills' means that if Allah wills, He gives; and if He wills, He deprives. No one can withhold what Allah gives, and no one can give what He withholds. It is Allah's Absolute Will, as His Wisdom dictates. As such, do not say when He withholds, this does not fulfil His Words: 'Allah will enrich you, if He wills, out of His Bounty ...' (*at-Tawba*: 28) because just as enrichment can be material, it can also be moral. This is reinforced by the following Words of Allah: 'Surely, Allah is All Knowing, All-Wise' (*at-Tawba*: 28) that is, He knows what is best for you, and He wisely gives when it is best to give and withholds when it is better to withhold.

Allah then says:

فَقَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا يَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ
اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ
حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

**Fight those of the People of the Book who do not [truly]
believe in God and the Last Day, who do not forbid what
God and His Messenger have forbidden, who do not obey the
rule of justice, until they pay the tax and agree to submit [29]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 29)**

Here Allah returns to the theme of fighting. We know that the Lord *Glorified is He* is speaking in this chapter about the polytheists and their circumstances, the annulment of covenants with them, their banishment from the Sacred Mosque, and the fighting of those of them who continued to spread *Shirk* (joining false gods with Allah) for there not to be two religions in the Arabian peninsula;⁽¹⁾ and we knew earlier the reason for this.

Yet, in this glorious verse, Allah speaks about a different category of people. The Lord *Glorified is He* sent Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

(1) *It was narrated on the authority of `Aisha that one of the last sayings of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him was, 'Let there be no two religions in the Arabian peninsula'. It was narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad (vol. 6, p. 275). Also, Al-Haithamy mentioned it in Al-Majma` (vol. 5, p. 325) saying, 'It was narrated by Ahmad and At-Tabarani in Al-Awsat, and the narrators of the Hadith are the same as those mentioned by Imam Al-Bukhari and Muslim.'*

to the idolatrous Arabs, as a Messenger from among their own people whom they knew well. Likewise, the miracle that Prophet Muhammad brought in support of his prophethood was akin to their skills in eloquence; consequently, anyone who accused him of falsehood will have been gravely mistaken to do so. Despite all this, they denied him and refused to believe in him. It was a different case for those who lived outside the Arabian Peninsula, for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not one of their own and the Quran was not sent down in their own tongue. It was the soundness of the Message that obliged them to follow it. However, we see that the opposition to faith in Islam did not come only from the polytheists of Mecca, but also from some of the Jews of Medina and some Christians from Najran. Having specified in this chapter the position of the religion towards the polytheists, Allah *the Most High* also wanted to specify the position of the religion towards the people of the Book.

We know that there is a difference between the people who join false gods with Allah and the people of the Book. Those who ascribed partners to Allah, i.e. the polytheists, did not believe in the Oneness of Allah, but rather worshipped others alongside Him. On the other hand, the people of the Book believed in Allah, His Messengers, and the Divine Scriptures, and therefore they were closer to true faith. We notice that the Noble Quran presents this kind of distinction to us as a matter of natural disposition; for example, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companions were saddened by the defeat of the Byzantines in the nearest land (to the Arabian Peninsula).⁽¹⁾ Why was the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* saddened by the news of the defeat of the Byzantines although he knew that they will stand against him one day? He was saddened because the Byzantines believed that the universe had One Creator Who sends Messengers to people to convey His guidance and Who has sent down to them scriptures, but this was not the case with the polytheists, since they disbelieved in Allah Himself which is the worst form of disbelief. It is true that some of the people of the Book joined the polytheists in their enmity towards Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, but the Prophet's heart was with them because they were a people

(1) *Byzantine-Sassanid War of 602-628 and the Siege of Constantinople (626).*

who believed in the central article of Faith. In consolation to His Messenger Muhammad, Allah says: '*Alif, Lam, Mim*. The Byzantines have been defeated in the nearest land. But they, after their defeat, will overcome' (*ar-Rum*: 1-3). Here a question arises: when will they be victorious? The Lord *Blessed and Glorified is He* gives the answer: '...within a few years...' The Arabic word '*bid*' (few) means a number between three and ten. Allah *Glorified is He* did not give any further specification here because battles have antecedents and aftermaths, and as such the Lord specified enough time for all these stages to be included and announced that the Byzantines will be victorious over the Persians within a few years. And by the Name of Allah, tell me, how could an unlettered Prophet, living in a peninsula inhabited by unlettered people, who had no information about other nations, have passed judgment about which of these two empires will defeat the other? And how could this pronouncement still remain in the Book that conveyed his prophetic Message and which will continue to be recited and used in worship until the end of time? With all confidence, he announced the outcome of an event which the Quran predicted will occur in the near future because it came to him from his Lord. He was sure that the One Who spoke these words was well able to make them happen.

To explain, what will have happened if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had said this and then a few years passed without the Byzantines achieving victory? And what will have been the attitude of all those who believed in Muhammad as a Messenger of Allah? He could never have said this unless he was confident that the Speaker of these words was the Lord Himself, Who willed to reveal this information in the form of a Quranic verse that will continue to be recited, written, memorised and used in prayers for all times until the coming of the Last Hour. Allah *Glorified is He* sent it down to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at a time when he was weak and inexperienced in matters of military power, and could not have known whether the Byzantines will prepare themselves sufficiently to gain victory or not.

Furthermore, was it not possible that the Byzantine and Persian empires might make peace? But Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not need to consider any of this because the information had come from Allah Himself, the All-Powerful and All-Able Lord.

Did Allah not give us information of other things that pierced the veil of time? Indeed, there were other events that broke the law of time of which Allah *Glorified is He* informed us. Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*, on being given the glad tidings that he will be blessed with offspring, responded by saying: 'My Lord! How can I have a son when my wife is barren and I have reached an extreme old age?' He (the Angel) said, 'So (it will be). Your Lord says, "It is easy for Me. Certainly, I have created you before when you were nothing!"' (Maryam: 8-9)

That is, as long as Allah *Glorified is He* said it, it is certain to come to pass. The believers felt closer to the Byzantines because they were people of the Book, and because they had a connection with Heaven; and those who have a connection with Heaven are filled with a longing for news from Heaven, and they listen eagerly to what the believers have to say about the most essential of doctrines. And amazingly, this verse simultaneously proved true concerning what it said about the Byzantines and the Persians, and also what it said about Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companions, for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companions were victorious at Badr, and for this reason Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'And on that day will the believers [too, have cause to] rejoice, in Allah's Help... ' (ar-Rum: 4-5).

In the verse we are currently examining, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[And] fight against those who—despite having been given revelation [a foretime]—do not [truly] believe either in Allah or the Last Day, and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] have made unlawful, and who do not follow the religion of Truth [which Allah has enjoined upon them] from those who were given the Scripture—[fight] till they [agree to] pay the Jizyah (exemption tax) with a willing hand and feel they are humbled' (at-Tawba: 29).

We may notice here that Allah *Glorified is He* describes them as non-believers, even though they were people who had faith; the meaning is that they did not believe in Allah *Glorified is He* with the faith that acknowledges all of Allah's Attributes of Majesty and Perfection because some of them said that Allah *Glorified is He* has a son named 'Uzayr, and others said that the Messiah was the son of Allah; as such, they did not believe in Allah *Glorified is He* the right way that entails faith and its resulting glorification and exaltation of His

Glorious Essence above all that which cannot be ascribed to Him. Likewise, their belief in the Last Day was contrary to what true faith affirms about it: it was a faith which did not accord with what Allah likes. For example, they say that the delights of the Hereafter is not physical but only spiritual, while we say that when Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about the delights of the Hereafter we must know what the delights are in order to understand the meaning; and what, we ask, is the meaning of ‘spiritual delights’? Do spiritual delights simply mean things which occur to the soul and have nothing to do with reality? Is this what the delights of the Hereafter will be?

Allah *Glorified is He* has clarified, in such a way as to leave no room for doubt, that He *Glorified is He* has made a Paradise for the believers and a Hell for the disbelievers; and He *Glorified is He* has told us of the reward and punishment of this life in such a way as to convince us that it will contain delights with which we are acquainted. If the delights will be spiritual, and we are not acquainted with spiritual delights and know nothing about it, then how can Allah *Glorified is He* attract us with something we do not know anything about? Clearly, the faith these people have about the Last Day is not as Allah *Glorified is He* intended it to be.

When Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about paradise, He only tells us about those things with whose nature we are acquainted, not of those things with which we are not acquainted. It is indubitably true that Allah *Glorified is He* has depicted for us certain images of the delight of paradise and compared them to certain things, such as when He *Glorified is He* says: ‘The parable of the Paradise promised to those who are conscious of Allah [is that of a garden] through which running waters flow: [but unlike an earthly garden] its fruits will be everlasting, and [so will be] its shade. Such will be the end of those who are conscious of Allah—just as the end of those who deny the Truth will be the Fire’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 35).

So Allah *Glorified is He* only gives parables. It is obvious that every word in a language must have a recognised meaning, and when Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about the delights of Paradise He *Glorified is He* speaks to us with words whose meanings we know. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be*

upon him said about Paradise, 'It contains what no eye has seen, nor any ear has heard, nor any human heart has imagined'.⁽¹⁾

That is, there are no words in any language that can express the delights of Paradise because the meaning is not known to us; but Allah *Glorified is He* wants to make us love these delights, and for this reason He *Glorified is He* gives us an image of them which we can understand. He *Glorified is He* says: 'The parable of Paradise...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 35) intending thereby to make us know that it contains delights which are free of all the negative aspects which the parable might contain. For example, in this worldly life wine has two characteristics: the first is that it intoxicates the mind, and the second is that it is not drunk for pleasure. The one who drinks wine does not drink it in the same way as he drinks a cup of mango juice or lemon juice, which he imbibes and drinks slowly; rather, he throws the cup down his throat in a single gulp because it does not have a nice taste, so he shortens the time the wine spends on his taste buds which means that its taste is not appealing. Also, the wine takes away the drinker's consciousness, leaving him having no control of his actions, and he apologises the next morning for what he did when he was drinking the night before saying with shame, 'I could not tell my head from my feet!' This is the wine of this world. Conversely, the wine of Paradise does not intoxicate and it has a sweet taste, and this is why Allah *Glorified is He* describes it as: '...delightful to those who drink it...' (*Muhammad*: 15). That is, it is completely different from the wine which Allah *Glorified is He* prohibited in this worldly life. The wisdom in using the verb 'to taste' here is illustrated by the words of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'There are three qualities which, if one possesses them, s/he tastes the flavour of Faith: to love Allah and His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad, more than anything else, to love one's fellow for the sake of none but Allah, and to hate to return to disbelief after Allah saved her/him from it as a person hates to be cast into fire'.⁽²⁾

In His Mercy to His creatures, Allah *Glorified is He* did not make food just mere fuel, but He *Glorified is He* attracted people to the fuel which preserves their life by giving it a taste which is pleasing to man and making the pleasure

(1) Narrated by Muslim, Ahmad and Al-Hakim

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

of it last as long as it is being eaten, so that a man does not have to wait until after digestion to feel the benefit of food. The Hadith indicates that it is as though Faith persists only for those who love and hate for Allah's sake alone; and this gives them the energy to preserve their Faith, just as food gives man the energy to preserve his life. To continue, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to depict paradise for us by giving us parables of what it contains, not by specifying and stipulating exactly what paradise contains. He *Glorified is He* says: 'And [as for all such believers], no human being can imagine what blissful delights, as yet hidden, await them [in the life to come] as a reward for all that they did' (*as-Sajda*: 17).

Since no human being can imagine this, we do not possess words to describe that which we cannot imagine, and if Allah *Glorified is He* were to tell us what Paradise literally contains, we will not understand; for this reason He *Glorified is He* spoke to us by using parables, saying: 'But to those who have attained to Faith and do good works, give the glad tiding that theirs shall be gardens through which running waters flow. Whenever they are granted fruits therefrom as their appointed sustenance, they will say, "It is this that was granted to us as our sustenance before!"—For they shall be given something that will recall that [past]. And there they shall have pure spouses, and there they shall abide' (*al-Baqara*: 25).

As such, it will be provision that resembles the provision that they had in this worldly life, but it will not be exactly the same. If it is claimed that the delights of paradise are spiritual, mental images, or 'pleasant dreams' such as when a hungry person imagines that he has eaten a large amount of meat or fish for his spirit to be pleased with this even though he did not eat such food in reality. But all of these ideas are not true: the only reason they make this claim is that if the delights of Paradise are only mental images, the torment of Hell will also be only mental images, and this will make the torment easier—for they fear the corporeal torment of Hell, and this is why they want to make it only a spiritual torment.

But the sensations of delight and torment must have something to resemble them in this world, otherwise there will be nothing to make us desire the delights of Paradise and fear the torment of Hell; clearly, the delights of

paradise must be real, and the torment of Hell must be real. Allah's Will was to cleanse the delights of Paradise from all impurities, and therefore He *Glorified is He* said about the rivers of Paradise: '...and rivers of honey pure and clean...' (*Muhammad*: 15). This means it contains none of the impurities which the honey of this world contains. And likewise He *Glorified is He* said about the milk of paradise: '...and rivers of milk the taste whereof never alters...' (*Muhammad*: 15).

The words 'the taste whereof never alters' had a special meaning to the Arabs at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because an Arab used to milk his camels and then put their milk in pots, and the taste of the milk changed and became sour, but he drank it if he needed to. Consequently, when he heard the words '...the taste whereof never alters...' (*Muhammad*: 15), this gave him a parable from an experience in his own life, and an image of milk cleansed from all the impurities which spoil it in this worldly life.

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'fight against those who... do not [truly] believe either in Allah...' (*at-Tawba*: 29), i.e. with the proper faith which is owed to Allah's Magnificence and His Transcendence, The Jews believe in Allah *Glorified is He* in totality, but they anthropomorphise Him by saying that He *Glorified is He* sat on a rock and stretched out His Feet putting them into an emerald bowl, but then He *Glorified is He* disdained to stretch out His Hand to the Children of Israel; but this image does not befit Allah's Perfection or His Sacred Essence, and it is a faulty image. Likewise, their depiction of the delights of Paradise and the torment of Hell were also mistaken, and as a result they did not have true faith in the Last Day, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'or the Last Day'. Moreover, they did not only stand against Islam as a way of life, but rather, they also took the same stance against their own religions, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] have made unlawful' (*at-Tawba*: 29).

And as people of the Book, they corrupted and altered their religion by permitting that which Allah *Glorified is He* had forbidden, and for this reason He *Glorified is He* says: '...and (they) do not follow the religion of Truth...' (*at-Tawba*: 29).

The Truth, as we know, is that which is constant and unchanging. If we consider every Divine Messenger at his time, we will find that he brought the Truth; and when the next Messenger came after him, he did not abrogate any doctrines, only rulings. As such, we know that every Messenger brought unchanging doctrines and the rulings which were appropriate for his time, until Allah *Glorified is He* sent Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was the Final Prophet, with no prophet coming after him until the end of time; clearly, the Truth which he brought had to be, by necessity, the constant unchanging Truth because he was the Seal of the Messengers and Prophets, and there are no Messengers after him. Hence, Allah's words: '...and (they) do not follow the religion of Truth [despite having been given revelation]' (*at-Tawba*: 29) means that they do not even believe in what their own scriptures tell them of the glad tidings of Prophet Muhammad's coming; and they were the only ones who had this specific characteristic, for their problem was that they did not believe that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was truly sent by Allah *Glorified is He* to them. By his example, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* established Allah's Decree in how they should be treated which is that they should be treated differently to the idolaters: the idolaters were treated by having their covenants disavowed and being banned from the Sacred Mosque, and being fought wherever they were found unless they entered Islam. As for the people of the Book, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* dealt with them by giving them the choice to either enter Islam or pay the non-Muslim poll-tax and preserve their lives; therefore Allah *Glorified is He* said: '[Fight them] till they [agree to] pay the *Jizyah* (exemption tax) with a willing hand and feel they are humbled' (*at-Tawba*: 29).

This means, fight them until they pay what they are obliged to pay in return for safety and shelter; and this was a means for their protection. As a result we find that Muslims conquered non-Islamic lands and were able to rule over them, but they did not kill their citizens; rather, they allowed them to live. Hence, sparing their lives was one of the favours which Islam did them. The second favour was that they were not forced to convert to the religion, but rather, Islam protected their right to choose whatever religion they wanted. This is a rebuttal to those who claim that Islam was 'spread by the sword'; to this claim we say, 'The citizens of the lands which Islam conquered

chose their own religion, and their freedom to choose was protected; indeed, the Muslims turned their swords towards those who prevented the people from having the right to choose, and they gave the people the freedom to choose what religion they want'. But we find that the books of the West are full of exaggerations about the issue of the sword; and we always respond to this by saying that had Islam truly been spread by the sword, there will not still be people in the lands it conquered who keep their old religions. Rather, Islam took the exemption tax from those people of the Book who held to their old religions, and the fact that the exemption tax was taken proves that they remained in their old religions and remained alive. These were two of the favours which Islam did them; and they had to give some recompense for this, this recompense being the exemption tax (*Jizya*). The word '*Jizya*' is derived from the root '*jaza*', which means 'reward' or 'recompense'; it is as though the exemption tax was truly recompense. Islam did them a good deed by allowing them to keep their lives and their old religions without any compulsion to enter Islam, and in return, they were obliged to give some recompense for this favour which Allah *Glorified is He* gave them through Islam.

Moreover, they will henceforth live in a faithful society in which Islam is the guardian, and the Muslims will undertake to defend them and guarantee their safety and the safety of their families, wealth, and all that they had. As the Muslim was obliged to pay *zakat* (the poor-due) for the sake of the poor and the Muslims in general, the people of the Book who lived in the Islamic society also benefitted from the services which Islam rendered them, and they were naturally obliged to pay something in return for these favours. Furthermore, Islam did not, for example, oblige the people of the Book to join the army to fight in any war against the enemies of the Muslims, unless they volunteered to do so. Clearly, the exemption tax was not an oppressive obligation, but rather, it was payment rendered for the services Islam did for them by sparing their lives and their religious freedom. Allah *Glorified is He* specified that they should give the exemption tax 'with a willing hand'. The hand is the body part with which we act, and most actions are performed by the hand; we find that the Noble Quran says: '...though it was not their hands that made it. Will they not, then, be grateful?' (*Ya Sin: 35*)

The tongue is also the tool of speech, and Allah requites speech for its fairness or foulness, but the essential tool of action is the hand. Moreover, the word ‘hand’ can be used to mean the power which acts; in Arabic it can also be used to mean ‘favour’; you can say that ‘So-and-so has a hand above so-and-so’, i.e. he has done him a favour, or ‘So-and-so has white hands’, i.e. he is helpful.

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...till they [agree to] pay Jizyah (the exemption tax) with a willing hand...’ (*at-Tawba*: 29). Do the words ‘with a willing hand’ (‘*an yad*’, which literally means ‘out of hand’) refer to those who give the exemption tax, or the others who collect it?

The words ‘out of hand’ are like the expression ‘So-and-so has washed his hands of this affair’, meaning that he has abandoned it and no longer wishes to participate in it; in this case the words ‘out of hand’ mean ‘without refusing our favour’, i.e. out of the willing hands of those who give the exemption tax. Or ‘out of hand’ might mean that it must come from the hand of the payer, meaning that one of the people of the Book living in the Islamic community under Islamic rule may not send a messenger to pay his exemption tax, while he stays where he is, but rather, he must pay it in person from his own hand. Or we say that ‘out of hand’ means ability which means we only take the exemption tax from those who are able to pay it, not from those who cannot afford it.

As such, the hand which they offer must be characterised by three things: firstly, they must be loyal to us and our rule and not seek to rid their hand of us; secondly, each of them must bring it themselves without sending a messenger to give it for them, and he must bring it on foot and give it standing while the one who collects it is sitting, which is what: ‘...and feel they are humbled’ (*at-Tawba*: 29) means. And why must they give it in a humbled state? Because Allah *Glorified is He* wants Islam to have the upper hand, and Islam did them more than one favour, neither killing them nor forcing them to convert to Islam; this is why they had to deal with the Muslims without any arrogance or haughtiness, yield to Islam’s rules, be loyal to the Muslims and not wash their hands of them, and give the exemption tax in person. As for those who could not afford it, they were excused from paying the tax.

‘...Till they [agree to] pay the Jizya (exemption tax) with a willing hand and feel they are humbled’ (*at-Tawba*: 29). The word ‘humbled’ (*sighar*) is derived from the root (*s-gh-r*), which has two meanings: it can mean ‘young’, in which case the verb is ‘*saghura*’, or it can mean ‘small’ in which case the verb is ‘*saghira*’ meaning someone or something which has a low rank or diminutive size. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘dreadful’ (*kabura*, literally ‘large’) is this saying that comes out of their mouths...’ (*al-Kahf*: 5).

Here, His words ‘...till they [agree to] pay the *Jizyah* (exemption tax) with a willing hand and feel they are humbled’ (*at-Tawba*: 29) mean that they must pay it in a state of humility, not a state of pride, and the one who gives it should not imagine that he has the upper hand when he gives it; we say to him, ‘No, the hand which takes has the upper hand here’.

Allah wanted to give us the reasons why those who do not believe in Allah *Glorified is He* or the Last Day must be fought. For this reason He *Glorified is He* said:

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرٌ ابْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ
ذَٰلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهِئُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَبْلُ
فَنَلَّهِمُ اللَّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

The Jews said, ‘Ezra is the son of God,’ and the Christians said, ‘The Messiah is the son of God’: they said this with their own mouths, repeating what earlier disbelievers had said. May God confound them! How far astray they have been led! [30] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 30)

This claim is an affront to Allah’s Majesty; a man has a child for various reasons: either because he wants to be remembered in this world after he leaves it—but Allah is Ever-Present; he wants his son to help him when he grows old and weak—but Allah is always Almighty; he wants someone to inherit his wealth and his possessions—but Allah is the Ultimate Inheritor of the earth and all who dwell upon it; or he thinks having children will make him more powerful—but Allah is Ever Powerful. Thus, all the reasons that lead to such a claim are nullified. It does not make sense that Allah *Glorified is He* sends the people a Messenger to show them the true way, only for the

Messenger to say that he is the son of Allah, resulting in them not having complete faith in Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah tells us what the Jews and the Christians say: ‘And the Jews say, “Ezra is the son of Allah”, while the Christians say, “The Messiah is the son of Allah...”’ (*at-Tawba*: 30). Thus we see that they have not properly affirmed Allah’s Transcendence, and therefore they have fallen short of true faith. We must be aware that not all the Jews say that Ezra is the son of Allah, but rather, only some of them declared that Ezra was the son of Allah when they saw the favours which Allah *Glorified is He* gave him; they said, ‘Allah *Glorified is He* does not give such tremendous blessings to an ordinary man, but only to His son’. This is because after the time of Prophet Musa (Moses)⁽¹⁾, the Jews murdered prophets, and hence Allah *Glorified is He* punished them by causing those who had memorised the Torah to forget it; but there was one child who was not pleased that the Prophets were murdered and so he went out into the desert, fleeing from his people. A man met him and said, ‘Why are you wandering aimlessly?’ He replied, ‘I have left my town in search of knowledge’. The man who asked him was the angel Gabriel and he taught him that Allah *Glorified is He* has sent down a Torah. The child memorised it, thereby becoming one of four people who had memorised the Torah: Moses, Jesus, Ezra, and Elias—and because in the past books were not written on thin paper as they are today, but rather on stones and date-palm leaves, the whole Torah weighed the same as seventy camel-loads. When Ezra returned having memorised the Torah, his people were amazed and said, ‘He must be the son of Allah because Allah gave him the Torah and chose him above all other people’.⁽²⁾ A certain faction amongst the Jews came to believe this, including

(1) *The story of our master Ezra with the Jews and how he memorized the Torah*

(2) *This story is mentioned in the exegesis of al-Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir. Ezra was one of the Prophets of the Israelites, the one to whom Allah gave a parable of the raising of the dead to life, as Allah says: ‘Or [are you, O man, of the same mind] as he who passed by a town deserted by its people, with its roofs caved in, [and] said, “How could Allah bring all this back to life after its death?” Thereupon Allah caused him to die for a hundred years; then He brought him back to life...’ (al-Baqara: 259). Ibn Kathir relates that Ibn ‘Abbas asked Abdullah ibn Salam why the Jews said ‘Ezra is the son of Allah’, and he told him the story of how the children of Israel were amazed that Ezra memorised the Torah even though Moses had given it to them in a book. For this reason, some of them said he was the son of Allah.*

Sallam ibn Mashkam, Shas ibn Qays, Maik bin Sayf and Nu'man ibn 'Awfa. When Allah *Glorified is He* sent down His words ‘And the Jews say, “Ezra is the son of Allah”’, the Jews who lived in the place and time of this revelation did not deny it or repudiate it; this suggests that some of the Jews who lived in Medina believed in this, for otherwise they would have objected to it. This shows that the verse applied to some of them, or that they knew that some of them had made this claim. Likewise, the Christians said the same about Jesus. Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘...while the Christians say, “The Messiah is the son of Allah...”’ (*at-Tawba*: 30). Allah continues: ‘Such are the sayings which they utter...’ (*at-Tawba*: 30), clarifying for us that to declare that Allah *Glorified is He* has sons is an anthropomorphism, and they should have been aware of this and have declared Allah to be Transcendently Exalted above such a thing; for Allah *Glorified is He* describes His slaves as Allah’s slaves, and all creation as Allah’s creation.

Allah *Glorified is He the All-Powerful Creator* Who can do all things created all creation out of nothing, and took for Himself neither spouse nor son. The problematic point for some of the followers of the Messiah was that the Messiah came into the world without a father. We say to them, ‘If this is the reason why you hold this belief, there was all the more reason for you to have the same opinion about the creation of Adam, since the most that can be said about the Messiah is that he had no father, while Adam had neither father nor mother; which one of them is more fittingly described as the “son of Allah”?’

In fact, the Noble Quran says: ‘Verily, in the sight of Allah, the nature of Jesus is like the nature of Adam...’ (*Al-Imran*: 59). Allah *Glorified is He* creates things—all things—with means, and all the means are also His creation. Each one of us was born from the mating of father and mother. When there are two elements present, this gives us four logical possibilities: either the person is created by the presence of both male and female, or he is created in the absence of both, like Adam, or the person is created with the presence of the male alone, like Eve, whom Allah *Glorified is He* created from Adam, as He says: ‘...and out of it created its mate’ (*an-Nisa*: 1), or the person is created with the presence of the female element alone, as was the case with Jesus, who had no father. This is in order for Allah *Glorified is He* to teach us all that

means have nothing to do with creation, and that the Creator of all means is well able to bring a person into existence without father or mother as He *Glorified is He* created Adam, or with both father and mother as He *Glorified is He* created most people, or with a mother and no father as He *Glorified is He* created Jesus, or without a mother as He *Glorified is He* created Eve.

This allocation exists by the Power and Will of Allah, and nothing else besides Allah's Will has anything to do with it; the means do nothing on their own, but rather, the Will of the Creator is what acts. He says: 'To Allah alone belongs the dominion over the heavens and the earth. He creates whatever He wills: He bestows the gift of female offspring on whomever He wills, and the gift of male offspring on whomever He wills; or He gives both male and female [to whomever He wills], and causes to be barren whomever He wills: for, verily, He is all-knowing, infinite in His power' (*ash-Shura*: 49-50).

Both the male and female elements might be present, but Allah might still not give them children; this is the Omnipotent Power of Allah *Glorified is He*. Beware of saying that it is dependent on material means; rather, Allah *Glorified is He* gifts female offspring to whom He wills, and gifts male offspring to whom He wills, and gifts both male and female offspring to whom He wills, and He makes whomever he wills barren. People's attitudes towards new-borns differ: the Arabs loved to receive male offspring because they were stronger, brought more pride, and could mount horses and wage war against the enemies; they did not like to have girls born to them because they might disgrace them. Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'for whenever any of them is given the glad tidings of [the birth of] a girl, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger; avoiding all people because of the [alleged] evil of the glad tidings which he has received...]' (*an-Nahl*: 58-59).

Islam then came to make it clear that as long as you have nothing to do with determining what children if any you will be given, leave the matter in the hands of Him who bestows the gift of children. Allah *Glorified is He* called children 'gifts' to remind you that procreation is something He *Glorified is He* gives to you free of charge; male children are gifts, and females are gifts, too; do not prefer one gift to the other. I always say to the one who has girls and then takes his wife to doctors to attempt to remedy this, 'If you accepted

Allah's gifts of girls just as you want to accept His gift of boys, Allah will give you a reward beyond your expectation, making each of your daughters seem fair to the eyes of pious men so that they marry them; and if you have ten daughters, they will bring ten husbands who will treat their wives' mother and father as their own'. In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* provides for those who are content with the children He *Glorified is He* gives them, and the husbands of these daughters will be even more dutiful than any sons may have been. Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies to the one who is happy to be given daughters, 'You were pleased with my gift to you, and you did not follow the ancient Arabs in their hatred of daughters, and therefore I will give you, by means of your son-in-laws, sons whom you did not toil to raise, and who will be more loving and loyal to you than any sons you might have had'. Consequently, if you find a man who has been granted success in marrying his daughters off to men of good standing who treat their in-laws well, know that the father was pleased to have female offspring because they were gifts from Allah, He says: '...and [He] causes to be barren whomever He wills' (*ash-Shura*: 50).

Similarly, to be barren is also a gift because if a person gladly accepts Allah's decision to make him childless, he will feel that all men are his sons; this is because he gladly accepted this privation, just as the other man gladly accepted to be given only daughters. Hence, as long as it is a gift from Allah *Glorified is He* you must receive both what Allah bestows and what He withholds with satisfaction.

Jesus was born by means of the Absolute Power of the Creator because all the possible arrangements, both logically and doctrinally, could not have been realized without such a birth; and this will not be repeated. This is because Adam was created first, and those who came after Adam all had two parents; and likewise, Eve came before them. These three forms had already come into existence (before the birth of Jesus), but there was still one other form that was yet unfulfilled which was for a person to come into existence with a mother but no father; and Allah *Glorified is He* completed this with Jesus: '...while the Christians say, "The Messiah is the son of Allah". Such are the sayings which they utter with their mouths...' (*at-Tawba*: 30).

Allah's word 'such' refers to their claim that the Messiah or Ezra were sons of Allah; and Allah adds by way of clarification: '...are the sayings which they utter with their mouths' (*at-Tawba*: 30). We ask, 'Is there any type of speech which is uttered by something other than the mouth?' All speech is uttered by the mouth; even the believers' assertions that Allah is One and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah is a saying uttered by the mouth. We say, 'There is such a thing as a statement made by the mouth alone without having any meaning, and there are also statements made by the mouth which do mean something, but which are untrue and false'.

First of all, we should know what speech is. It is the vocal means by which all people convey their intentions, such as when you say to a child, 'Sit down'. The child must know what it means to sit; if you say this in Arabic to an English child, he will not understand what it means.

Clearly, language is a system of words by which all people convey their intentions; and the intention must be something whose meaning is accepted by both the speaker and the listener, and they must both know what the words are supposed to mean. If the listener does not know the meaning of the words used by the speaker, he will not understand anything.

Furthermore, we see that in order for the speaker and listener to understand each other, it is necessary that they both be familiar with the words used; if a person speaks using words the listener does not know, the listener will not understand him/her. They used to tell us the story⁽¹⁾ of the grammarian 'Ulqama who was famous for his knowledge of grammar and lexicology and adept at using words, but he only spoke using unusual words and phrases which the people did not know. 'Ulqama had a servant, and one day 'Ulqama fell ill and went to a doctor named A'jaz to complain of his ailment. 'Ulqama described the ailment to the doctor using very archaic words which the doctor could not understand because he was not a specialist in linguistics and did not have a dictionary with him. He was confused by 'Ulqama's words, and said, 'Repeat what you said, for I did not understand any of it!' 'Ulqama repeated what he said with anger and reproach at the doctor for not understanding the

(1) *The story of the grammarian 'Ulqama and A'jon the physician*

language he used. The doctor finally understood 'Ulgama's complicated words, and said to him, 'Give me a pen and paper for me to write your treatment down for you'. He wrote a prescription using very complicated and bewildering medical jargon, and 'Ulgama said, 'Repeat what you said, for, by Allah *Glorified is He* I did not understand a thing!' The doctor replied, 'May Allah *Glorified is He* curse those who make themselves the least understandable to their fellows!' 'Ulgama realised that the language he used was too complicated, and that the words he used were not in common usage by the people. Our teacher told us that it was his servant who finally rebuked him for this: 'Ulgama⁽¹⁾ awoke one night and said some archaic words to his servant which mean, 'Have the cockerels crowed yet?' which the servant did not understand, so he replied by saying, '*Zaqfalila* (a nonsense word)'. 'Ulgama said to the servant, 'What is this '*zaqfalil*'?' The servant said, 'And what did you mean just now?' 'Ulgama said, 'Boy, I meant to ask you if the cockerels have crowed yet'. The servant said, 'and I meant to say: not yet!'

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Such are the sayings which they utter with their mouths' (*at-Tawba*: 30). As such, speech means the words that the mouth pronounces, and this utterance might have a meaning, or it might not. Take, for example, the word '*zaqfalil*' which 'Ulgama's servant uttered: this word does not exist in any language; it is an utterance of the tongue which has no meaning. Furthermore, speech might well have a meaning, but it is only speech of the tongue which is not backed up by reality: this is a lie.

Allah's words '...Such are the sayings which they utter with their mouths' (*at-Tawba*: 30) include both of these notions. It may be that they are saying something they do not mean, and they do not know what they are saying; for example, the word '*kataba*' (to write) is made up of the root letter (*k-t-b*), and we can use the same letters in a different order and say '*kabata*' (to stifle) which is composed of the same letters and also has a meaning; or we could say '*tabaka*' which is not a real word: it is speech with the mouth, but it has no lexical meaning; rather, is a nonsense word. If a person says something which has a meaning we can understand such as 'Zayd was in such-and-such

(1) *The story of the grammarian 'Ulgama and his servant when he asked him 'Have the cocks crowed?'*

place yesterday'; here 'Zayd' is known to us, and 'place' is known to us, and 'yesterday' is known; but if Zayd did not really go to that place, this statement is actually a lie which never occurred. It is speech made with the mouth, but it has no corresponding reality in life.

To sum up, a statement made by the mouth may either have no meaning at all, being used as a nonsense word which does not exist in any language, or otherwise it may have a meaning in itself, but with no reality to back it up.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Never has Allah endowed any man with two hearts in one body...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4). And He *Glorified is He* says: '...and [just as] He has never made your wives whom you may have declared to be "as unlawful to you as your mothers' bodies" [truly] your mothers, so, too, has He never made your adopted sons [truly] your sons: these are but [figures of] speech uttered by your mouths...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4). This, then, is speech which has no corresponding reality: the wife does not become her husband's mother, and the adopted boy does not really become a son to the man or the woman; Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Call them by their [real] fathers' names: this is more equitable in the sight of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5).

And Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'All praise is due to Allah who has bestowed this Divine Book from on high upon His slave, and has not allowed any deviousness to obscure its meaning: [A Divine Book] unerringly straight, meant to warn [the godless] of a severe punishment from Him, and to give to the believers who do good works the glad tidings that theirs shall be a goodly reward, [a state of bliss] in which they shall dwell forever. Furthermore, [this Divine Book is meant] to warn all those who assert, "Allah has begotten a son"' (*al-Kahf*: 1-4). That is, this speech of theirs has a meaning according to their belief, but it has no corresponding reality, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'Dreadful is this saying that comes out of their mouths...' (*al-Kahf*: 5) which means that this speech is not supported by reality, and is therefore false.

'Such are the sayings which they utter with their mouths...' (*al-Kahf*: 5). Does this statement of theirs with their mouths mean that they have invented or innovated something new? Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies for us that they are merely '...following in spirit assertions made in earlier times by people who denied the Truth...' (*at-Tawba*: 30) This means they did not come up with

this notion on their own, but rather, they derived it from something that already existed; for Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that the idolaters: ‘...claim that the angels—who are themselves slaves of the Most Gracious—are females’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 19).

The idolaters imagined that Allah *Glorified is He* has daughters—we seek Allah’s refuge from this—yet Allah *Glorified is He* is Transcendently Exalted above such a thing; and the Lord addresses them directly concerning this by saying: ‘Why—for yourselves [you choose] male offspring, but for Him [you attribute] females?’ (*an-Najm*: 21) The above indicates that this is an old claim, which is why Allah says that they are: ‘...following in spirit...’ (*at-Tawba*: 30), i.e. resembling those who came before them and made similar claims, just like how the Buddhists in China and Japan spoke about Allah having sons and being incarnated, and some of them received these ideas from them. Nothing new came from their lips; rather, as the Noble Quran describes them, they were ‘...following in spirit...’ (*at-Tawba*: 30), i.e. resembling the claims of those disbelievers who came before them. To ‘follow in spirit’ (*mudaha*) means to resemble and act like others; it is said that it is derived from the root word ‘*dahya*’ which means a woman who resembles a man in that she does not menstruate or bear children.

‘Following in spirit assertions made in earlier times by people who denied the Truth...’ (*at-Tawba*: 30). What follows these words comes directly from Allah *Glorified is He* to them; He *Glorified is He* did not leave us to comment on it. When you hear the words ‘Allah has begotten a son...’ (*at-Tawba*: 30) naturally sound human disposition dictates that whoever hears such words should say, ‘May Allah destroy them! How could they say this?’ Here, Allah willed to take it upon Himself to say what follows for all of us; for if we said, ‘May Allah destroy them’ or ‘May Allah curse them’, none of us could be sure that our supplication against them will be answered, for it might not be answered; but when Allah *Glorified is He* says this Himself, it is assured. Consequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘May Allah destroy them! How perverted are their minds!’ (*at-Tawba*: 30) What does: ‘May Allah destroy them’ mean? If you see someone do something vile, you say ‘May Allah destroy him’ because his life causes evil to increase. For example, if someone reviles

his own father, the one who hears him says, 'May Allah destroy him', while if you see a person doing good deeds, you say, 'May he live a good life' because you see that his life is a source of goodness for others.

And the words: 'May Allah destroy them' mean 'May Allah curse them and banish them'; He *Glorified is He* then says: 'How perverted are their minds!' (*at-Tawba*: 30) The word 'how' (*anna*) has two meanings in Arabic: it can mean 'from where', or it can mean 'how'. An example of the first meaning is found when Allah *Glorified is He* tells us what Zechariah said when he came to see the Virgin Mary: 'From where (*anna*) does this come to you?' (*Al-Imran*: 37) He said this because he saw she had with her good things which he had not brought for her even though he was her only guardian and the one who brought her all her life's needs. When he came to her and saw she had something he had not given her, he said: 'From where does this come to you?' (*Al-Imran*: 37) That is, 'Where did you get this from?' In reply, Mary, the chosen one, said, as the Noble Quran tells us: 'It is from Allah; for Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning' (*Al-Imran*: 37).

These words of Allah *Glorified is He* serve to support a great many matters of Faith; and He *Glorified is He* put these words into the mouth of Mary, the chosen one, because it was not only a matter of food which came to her from a source unknown even to her guardian, but it was also a precursor to what will come later. Do not think that everything comes to pass by the measures of means and consequences, causes and effects, and actions and results; rather, it all comes from Allah's Will. If it were an act of man, he will do it with a measured reckoning; but Allah *Glorified is He* gives beyond all reckoning, for He is the Creator of all means, and He is well able to create any consequence directly, for He '...grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning' (*Al-Imran*: 37). When Allah *Glorified is He* put these words in Mary's mouth, it was meant to clarify for her and for Zechariah at the same time, 'You, Zechariah, bring her provision from your own limited resources and human measures, but Allah *Glorified is He* provides sustenance beyond all reckoning, and provides that which no human powers can provide'. The provision that Zechariah saw with Mary may have been in the form of summer foods during winter, or vice versa, and it may have been a provision

which did not exist in their land, and therefore he said: 'From where does this come to you?' (*Al- 'Imran: 37*) Allah's words: 'From where does this come to you' impart a lesson to society: if a guardian sees that his wards have something he did not give to them, he must ask where it came from. If you see in your son's hand an expensive fountain pen which you did not buy for him, you must ask him where he got it from, in order to know what outside influences he may be exposed to: Did he steal it? Or did someone who wished to incite him for nefarious purposes give him the pen to tempt him? You must therefore ask your son where he got it from. Likewise, if you see your daughter wearing a dress that you did not buy for her, nor did her mother, as far as you know, you must ask your daughter where she got it from. If this became the rule in every one of our households, nothing disgraceful will happen to them; but sadly we see that in some households, a child might enter the house with a piece of chocolate, yet his mother does not ask him where he got it from, but rather, she pats his back and even takes a piece of the chocolate to eat herself. However, the mother who is a good parent asks her son, 'Where did you get this?' She asks him to determine whether he could have afforded to buy it with his pocket-money or not; and if she finds that he did not get this chocolate from a source which is both known to her and lawful, she tells him off and smacks his hand.

We should be aware that the law of 'from where does this come to you' should govern the whole world; it applies to all aspects of social upbringing. Islam preceded the world fourteen centuries ago when Allah *Glorified is He* revealed His words 'From where does this come to you?' (*Al- 'Imran: 37*) And Mary replied with the response of faith, clarifying for Zechariah, 'Your words are based on your own reckoning, but I am speaking with the reckoning of Allah; for Allah *Glorified is He* grants sustenance to whom He wills beyond all reckoning'. He *Glorified is He* put these words into her mouth because this statement deals with many aspects of the Doctrine

The first of these issues is that when she said: 'For Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning' (*Al- 'Imran: 37*), she reminded Zechariah of a particular aspect of the Doctrine, which is that Allah *Glorified is He* is not governed by means, and He *Glorified is He* gives beyond all reckoning.

Zechariah then looked at himself and wondered, ‘As long as Allah *Glorified is He* gives beyond all reckoning, and I have reached a great old age and my wife is barren, why should I not ask Him to give me a son?’

So Mary reminded Zechariah and drew his attention to a particular aspect of the Doctrine which is that Allah *Glorified is He* gives without means and beyond all reckoning; consequently, he beseeched Allah *Glorified is He* to give him a son. When He *Glorified is He* gave him tidings of a son, he asked, ‘How could he be given a son when his wife was barren and he had reached a great old age?’ And the answer came from Allah: ‘He [the angel] said, “This is what your Lord has said, ‘It is easy for me: I did indeed create you before, when you were nothing’”’ (*Maryam*: 9).

This is how Zechariah benefitted from Allah’s gift to him of a son; and Allah *Glorified is He* did not stop there, but rather, He took it upon Himself to name the child for Zechariah; and He *Glorified is He* had a reason for the name He chose. We know that people give their children positive names in hope of good fortune for them, such as a man naming his son ‘Sa’d’ (happiness) in the hope that he will be happy, or ‘Faris’ (knight) in the hope that he will be chivalrous, or ‘Fadl’ (grace) in the hope that he will be generous, or he may name his daughter ‘Qamar’ (moon) in the hope that she will be beautiful. For this reason, people choose names which have noble meanings in the hope that the child will live up to them. There was a poet whose children always died at birth, and then he had a son whom he named ‘Yahya’ (he who lives), but this son died as well, so the poet said in his grief:

I named him Yahya that he might live,

But there was no way to deter Allah’s Will.

Hence, people choose noble names, or names which have optimistic meanings, expressing the hope that the child might live up to them; but the one who gives the name does not have the power to ensure that the child will be happy or chivalrous, or that he will live because all this is in the Hand of Allah *Glorified is He*. But if Allah *Glorified is He* Himself chooses the name ‘Yahya’, this is different since the One Who has given the name is the One Who can cause it to be manifested. Did John (‘Yahya’ in Arabic), the son of Zechariah,

live the same life we live, ending as it does in certain death for all? Yes he did, and therefore Allah *Glorified is He* willed that he die in order that he will be resurrected when the Hour comes. Mary realized that Allah provides everything the moment Zechariah said to her, 'From where does this come to you?', as she answered: 'For Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills beyond all reckoning' (*Al- 'Imran: 37*).

She also saw all of this in the story of Zechariah and in the birth of John, and Allah *Glorified is He* made all these things precursors for her because she was going to be tested in the matter of her reputation, and was going to conceive a child without a father; as such, she always had to remember: 'Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning' (*Al- 'Imran: 37*).

Consequently, we find that in the course of this amazing story, the Noble Quran tells us that Mary said: 'How can I have a son when no man has ever touched me?' (*at-Tawba: 20*) Allah *Glorified is He* gave her glad tidings of this, as the chapter of *Al 'Imran* tells us: 'O Mary! Behold, Allah sends you the glad tiding [of a son, brought into being] by a word from Him, who shall be known as the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary' (*Al- 'Imran: 45*).

As long as he is ascribed to Mary, this meant that he has no father; she wondered, 'How could I have a child with no father?' And Allah *Glorified is He* reminded her of the words: 'Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning' (*Al- 'Imran: 37*), and said: 'Thus it is, your Sustainer says' (*Maryam: 21*), just as He had said to Zechariah before.

To conclude, the word 'from where' (*anna*) was the key which started the discussion on all aspects of the Doctrine for both Zechariah and John, and Mary and Jesus. This is the meaning of 'from where' (*anna*). And we said that '*anna*' can also mean 'how'. This is akin to what Abraham said to Allah: 'O my Sustainer! Show me how You give life to the dead!' (*al-Baqara: 260*). Prophet Abraham did not doubt that Allah could raise the dead, but he wanted to ask about how this takes place.

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'May Allah destroy them! How perverted are their minds!' (*at-Tawba: 30*) meaning, how could they stray from the Truth in such a way? This is a logical matter of which they should not have been unaware; how could they stray from the reality which is affirmed by the

sound natural disposition of faith? And how could they err from the Truth when it was very plain, and stray into falsehood? He *Glorified is He* then says about the People of the Book:

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ
وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا
وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَنَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

They take their rabbis and their monks as lords, as well as Christ, the son of Mary. But they were commanded to serve only one God: there is no god but Him; He is far above whatever they set up as His partners! [31] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 31)

The word ‘rabbi’ (*habr* in Arabic) is the Jewish name for a religious scholar; the word (*habr*) in its general sense means a man who chooses his words carefully and precisely in a scholarly fashion; and monks (*ruhban*) are Christians who devote themselves solely to worship. A rabbi is a Jewish teacher, and a monk is a Christian ascetic worshipper; a Christian scholar is called a ‘priest’, as Allah says: ‘...priests and monks...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 82).

When we refer to the scholar of the Christian religion, we say ‘priest’, and when we refer to the man of action, i.e. the ascetic worshipper, we say ‘monk’. The monk is the one who chooses to devote himself solely to the worship of Allah *Glorified is He* above and beyond that which Allah *Glorified is He* has obliged him to do, but with works of the same kind which Allah has made obligatory. We know that there is no monasticism in Islam,⁽¹⁾ but a man is free to draw near to Allah as much as he likes with works of the same kind which Allah *Glorified is He* has already asked of him. If Allah *Glorified is He* has commanded us to pray five times a day, the Muslim who wishes to draw closer to Allah *Glorified is He* can offer double the number of prayers; and if

(1) The wife of ‘Uthman ibn Mazh’un complained to ‘A’isha that her husband had neglected her by spending all his days in fasts and all his nights in prayer, so Prophet Muhammad went to ‘Uthman and said, ‘O ‘Uthman, monasticism has not been made obligatory for us. Do you not have a good example in me? For, by Allah, I fear Allah more than any of you, and keep to His Limits more than any of you’ Narrated by Ahmad (vi. 226) and Ibn Hibban (1288).

Allah *Glorified is He* has commanded us to pay *zakat* (poor-due) of two-and-a-half percent, the pious servant may give double this or many multiples of this, if he wishes. This is an increase of the same kind of works which Allah *Glorified is He* has made obligatory, and in Islam this means that one has entered the station of Spiritual Excellence (*Ihsan*);⁽¹⁾ if you wish, read the words of Allah *Glorified is He*: '[But] truly, the Allah-conscious will find themselves amid gardens and springs, enjoying all that their Sustainer will have granted them [because], verily, they were doers of good ('*muhsinin*', from the root word '*ihsan*') in the past' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16).

This means they reached the station of Spiritual Excellence (*Ihsan*), which is above the level of Faith (*Iman*.) Allah *Glorified is He* tells us more about the station of Spiritual Excellence when He says: 'They were [in the habit of] sleeping but little during the night, and praying for forgiveness in the hours of early dawn, and [assigning] in all that they possessed a due share for the beggar and the deprived' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17-19).

Allah *Glorified is He* did not make it religiously obligatory for us to sleep for only a little part of the night, but we only have to pray the Early-Night prayer and then we can sleep until the Dawn Prayer. But if one of us rises at night and prays the Night Vigil, this is more than Allah *Glorified is He* obliged him to do, but it is an action of the same type as that which Allah *Glorified is He* made obligatory. The same is the case with seeking forgiveness: if someone does this of his own volition, it is good for him. The same is true of giving charity to the poor: this means to give more than that which Allah *Glorified is He* has made obligatory through the poor-due, whose determined portion was referred to when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and in whose possessions there is an acknowledged right' (*al-Ma'arij*: 24).

Monasticism was the expression of the desire of some of them to reach the station of Spiritual Excellence, but Allah *Glorified is He* did not make it

(1) *Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbali* said, '*Spiritual Excellence (Ihsan) means that the believer worships his Lord in this worldly life as though He is with him and watching him, and as though he sees Him with his heart and looks towards Him as he carries out acts of worship; and it is as though the reward of this is to see Allah for real in the Hereafter.... This requires reverence, fear, dread and exaltation of Allah, and also requires sincerity in worship and the expending of effort to perfect this worship and refine it*'.

obligatory on them; for He *Glorified is He* is the One Who created man and knew from pre-eternity the capabilities of those He created; and for this reason He *Glorified is He* said: ‘But as for monastic asceticism—We did not enjoin it upon them: they invented it themselves...’ (*al-Hadid*: 27). They invented it themselves in order to seek Allah’s Goodly Acceptance and increase their worship; and this was not blameworthy on their part, but it is against human nature, and as a result they did not observe monasticism as it ought to have been observed.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in the verse we are currently examining: ‘They have taken their rabbis and their monks... for their lords’ (*at-Tawba*: 31). Does this mean that they literally called their rabbis and monks ‘lord’? No, but they treated them as though they were lords; for Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who declares things permissible and forbidden by saying ‘Do’ and ‘Do not do’, and if these rabbis came along and permitted something which Allah *Glorified is He* had made forbidden, or banned something which Allah *Glorified is He* had made permissible, they thereby took the attribute of divinity and applied it to themselves; as the authority to legislate what is prohibited and what is permissible is reserved for only Allah. Therefore, when ‘Udayy ibn Hatim went to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the latter saw a cross of silver or gold around his neck, our Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Remove that idol’. The man removed the idol out of politeness to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and he *peace and blessing be upon him* said, ‘You have taken the rabbis and monks as lords’. ‘Udayy said, ‘We do not worship them’, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied to him, ‘Do you not obey them in what they forbid and what they allow?’ He said, ‘Yes’. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘That is worship’.⁽¹⁾ The Quran says: ‘They have taken their rabbis and their monks—as well as the Messiah, son of Mary—for their lords

(1) ‘Udayy ibn Hatim said, ‘I went to Prophet Muhammad wearing a gold cross round my neck, and he said, “O ‘Udayy, take off that idol”. And I heard him recite from the Quran: “They have taken their rabbis and their monks... for their lords beside Allah...”’ (*at-Tawba*: 31), and then say: “They did not worship them, but if they permitted something for them they held it to be permitted, and if they forbade something for them they held it to be forbidden”’ (Narrated by At-Tirmidhi (3095).

beside Allah' (*at-Tawba*: 31). Someone might ask, 'Why is the Messiah connected to the 'lords' here, and to the rabbis and monks?' The answer is that if the one who forbids and permits is not a Messenger, then he is merely a man seeking temporal power; but this could never be the case with a Messenger because Messengers only come to urge the people to worship Allah *Glorified is He* by the means Allah has established. Jesus was a Messenger and he only told the people what Allah *Glorified is He* told him to say, but some people mistakenly took him to be the son of Allah—and Allah continues: '...although they had been commanded to worship none but the One God [Allah]. There is no Deity but Him: glory to Him, [He is] far above all that they associate with Him in His Divinity!' (*at-Tawba*: 31) Thus Allah *Glorified is He* states that all He commanded was that all those who believe in the Divine Messages must worship the One God [Allah]. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The best thing that I and the other prophets have said is, "There is no Allah but Allah"' ⁽¹⁾

If you consider the phrase 'there is no god but Allah', you will see that 'there is no' is a negation, and 'but' is an affirmation; this negates Divinity for all but Allah and affirms it for Him alone. When you say 'Allah is one', on the other hand, this implies only affirmation. The philosophers who possess the power of exposition have taken this notion of 'negation and affirmation' or 'negative and positive' and said, 'Every time a positive and negative meet, energy is produced, and energy can be used to create light or to power a machine; likewise, the energy of Faith requires both "positive and negative"'; the poet Iqbal said:

Monotheism combines both positive and negative energies,

They give soul resolution and acuteness.

Allah *Glorified is He* ends this noble verse by saying: '... [He] is utterly remote, in His limitless Glory, from anything to which they may ascribe a share in His Divinity!' (*at-Tawba*: 31) When you hear the Words 'He is utterly remote in His limitless glory' (*subhanahu*), know that it is meant to affirm Allah's transcendence; there is no being like Allah's Being, and no attributes

(1) Narrated by *At-Tirmidhi* (3585) and *Al-Bayhaqi* (iv. 89)

like Allah's Attributes. Allah is Rich, and you are rich. However, is your temporal wealth like Allah's timeless wealth? Also, you are alive, and Allah is Alive. However, is your temporary life like His Life? His Life is Essential, but yours is nonessential. Therefore, you must differentiate between His Name (or Attribute) '*Al-Hayy*' (The Ever-Living) and His name '*Al-Mu'hyi*' (The Giver of life). He is alive without beginning or end, and He gives life to others. If an Attribute of Allah describes His Essence, it is not attributed to others; it is exclusive to Allah, and its opposite cannot be attributed to Him. He is described as 'The Ever-Living', but cannot be described by the opposite of this attribute or name. On the contrary, if an attribute of Allah describes an action of His, such as 'The Giver of life', then He can be described by the opposite of this attribute, which is 'The Taker of Life' or 'the Creator of Death'; So, Allah *the Almighty* is described as 'The Straightener', 'the Expander', 'the Dispenser of Mercy' and 'the All-Dominant'.

Thus, Allah's Self-attributes do not have corresponding opposites, whilst His Action- Attributes do have corresponding opposites since they are transitive to beings other than Him: He *the Most High* gives life to others and takes it from them, but He is Self-Existent. Thus, the Words '... utterly remote, in His limitless Glory ...' (*at-Tawba*: 31) refer to the transcendence of His Essence, Attributes and Actions. If Allah performs an action and the same kind of action is performed by man, we say that the action of Allah *the Exalted* is not the same as the action of man since Allah's Actions do not require the intermediation of means, whilst man's actions do require them. In other words, an action takes a certain part of time; for example, when you move something from one place to another, you take as much time to do this as your strength allows, while the actions of Allah *the Almighty* takes no time, and His strength is infinite.

Therefore, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* announced that he had been taken up by night to Jerusalem, those who heard him said, 'Do you claim that you got there in a single night, when we strike our camel's livers (ride camels) for a month to get there?'⁽¹⁾ None of them

(1) *Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him narrated that after the Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him had been taken up to Jerusalem by night and returned to Mecca in the morning, but he saw that the people did not believe him, he sat alone in=*

paid attention to the fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say, 'I went there by my own powers.' Rather, he said, 'I was taken up from the Sacred Mosque (in Mecca) to the Farthest Mosque (in Jerusalem).' Therefore, the One Who took him up was Allah, the All-Powerful, and He requires no time.

Thus, the Words '... utterly remote, in His limitless glory ...' (*at-Tawba*: 31) are meant to declare Allah's transcendence above all human attributes. Do not compare Allah's Powers to the powers of the human beings, however great they might be; rather, an action is ascribed to the power of its doer, and the greater the strength, the greater the power will be. Allah is *the Almighty*. His Words '... The One Who is utterly remote, in His limitless glory, from anything to which they may ascribe a share in His Divinity' (*at-Tawba*: 31) are meant to declare Allah's transcendence; and you never find any human being saying this word to another, even in the case of disbelievers who are opposed to faith – none of them ever says this to another, 'Glorified are you!' This is due to transcendence being something which applies solely to Allah *the Exalted*.

People give their children names, along with choosing whichever ones they like, but you never find even an obstinate disbeliever, who is opposing Allah's religion, naming his son 'Allah'. A believer would never dare give this name to his child because he believes in Allah, and a disbeliever will also never dare to do it because of Allah's Power and Might. Therefore, the Words '... The One Who is utterly remote, in His limitless glory ...' (*at-Tawba*: 31) and the Divine Name 'Allah' are two expressions which belong to Allah alone by means of His Omnipotent Power. He *Glorified is He* says: 'The Lord of the heavens and

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- = sadness, and then God's enemy Abu Jahl passed by him, and came up and sat next to him and said in a mocking tone, 'Is there anything new?' The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, {Yes.} Abu Jahl asked what it was, and he replied: {I was taken up last night.} 'To where?', asked Abu Jahl. {To Jerusalem}, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* answered. Abu Jahl said, 'And then you arrived back to us the next morning?' He said, {Yes.} Abu Jahl was then afraid to give the lie to him, lest he call his people and they confirmed what he said. (*Narrated by Ahmad.*) And Jabir ibn 'Abdullah *Allah be pleased with him* related that the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: {When Quraysh gave me the lie when I was taken up to Jerusalem, I stood in the Precinct and God showed Jerusalem to me, so I began to describe it to them as I beheld it.} *Narrated by Ahmad (iii. 377), Al-Bukhari (4710) and Muslim (170).*

the earth and all that is between them! Then, worship Him alone and remain steadfast in His worship! Do you know any whose name is worthy to be mentioned side by side with His?' (*Maryam*: 65) Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* by His Power and Might, has held back the tongues of all human beings from saying to one another, 'Glorified are you' or naming their children 'Allah'.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... The One God, save Whom there is no deity. The One Who is utterly remote, in His limitless glory, from anything to which they may ascribe a share in His Divinity!' (*at-Tawba*: 31) The attitudes of idolaters and the people of the Book are included in this verse, for the Discipline of Heaven comes to address the widespread corruption and Allah *Glorified is He* wants man, His vicegerent on the earth, to be righteous himself and helpful to others. The lowest level of righteousness is to leave sound things as they are without corrupting them, even better if you can improve things. For example, if there is a well from which people drink, it is right to leave it sound without damage, but it is even better to protect its sides with bricks so that it does not collapse, thus trying to make it easier for people to get the water from the well. What is better than this is to build a high water-tower and to extend pipes from it so that people can have water supplies in their own houses so they have less labour to do. This is an improvement, and by doing this, you utilise the means of the True Lord Who said of Dhu Al-Qarnayn (the possessor of the two horns): '[We] endowed him with [the knowledge of] the right means to achieve anything [that he might set out to achieve], and so he chose the right means [in whatever he did]. ' (*al-Kahf*: 84-85)

This means that Allah *Glorified is He* gave Dhu Al-Qarnayn means, or instruments, and he further utilised other means by his hard work. Therefore, the True Lord *the Most High* wants man to make improvement in the earth so that society will be happy with and benefit from them; this is why He gives us choices in certain matters but not in others. A person can choose whether to pray or not, or to give charity or not, or to work or not, and so on, but the higher cosmos is compulsorily manipulated and managed by Allah. The sun, the moon, stars, air and water are all governed by a precise order; none of them nor any object of the higher cosmos is subject to man's will – otherwise, the universe would have been ruined. Everything is working by sound

predisposition, and corruption only occurs in things over which man has free will, for free will might follow desire and whims of the soul. Even compelled created beings, such as animals that Allah has subdued for man, do not cause this evil; indeed, even their excrement can be used to fertilise the earth, but the things which man has made have filled the farthest corners of the world with poison and pollution. This is due to the former being created with Divine design, while the latter being made by human design, its maker knowing some things and being ignorant of others.

People might believe that some of man's discoveries have solved some of the world's problems, yet later when some years have passed by, they realise that they actually have caused distress to mankind. Perhaps, the pollution of the environment, which has begun to affect life in the world, will finally alert us to this fact. Man has cut down trees, cleared away the forests, which Allah created in this world to be a source of clean air, and built factories and cities in those places; yet, now he is trying to replant trees after finding out that his interference with nature has corrupted its climate and water, along with spoiling the lives of all living beings. If man, with his free will, were only to live in the world according to Allah's Way, the world would be safe and sound just as the higher cosmos is safe and sound. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The most gracious has imparted this Quran [unto man]. He has created man. He has imparted unto him articulate thought and speech. [At His behest] the sun and the moon run their appointed courses[Before Him] they prostrate themselves, the stars and the trees. And the skies has He raised high and has devised [for all things] a measure.' (*ar-Rahman*: 1-7)

Thus, the order, the balance or the scale of the higher creatures is never disrupted; having known this, you should obey the commandment of the True Lord *Glorified is He* presented in His saying: 'So that you [too, O men,] might never transgress the measure.' (*ar-Rahman*: 8)

So, if you act in accordance with Allah's Way, your worldly matters will be as sound as the higher ones; you see the cosmos running in an orderly manner, and the same rule applies to things with which man has free choices. If it is not guided by the Way of Allah, you will have disruption in them. Thus, if you see a flaw in the world, know that a rule of Allah's approach has been violated.

Therefore, you also find that when corrupt people see that a reformer has come to restrain them and correct their ways, they try to corrupt and attract him to live the same way they are living; if they do not manage to do this, they stand in the way of this reformer since they only live through corruption and by corruption, and they gain power and tyranny for themselves and enslave others. Therefore, when the corrupt see a man who wants to restore balance to life, they fight him.

When you buy a commodity, the merchant weighs an amount equivalent to the price you pay, and the merchant needs precise scales to weigh what you buy. If he is a dishonest merchant, he tinkers with his scales so that he can sell you a smaller amount for a higher price so as to usurp what is rightfully yours. This merchant is one of the corrupt ones who feel distressed to see a reformer coming and redressing the balance of the world since Allah *Glorified is He* commanded that justice should be upheld and that the unbalanced be restored.

We said before that the True Lord *the Most High* has given a parable in which He stated that He has two Lights: the first light is physical, and the other is spiritual. The physical light guides man to the right way to avoid colliding with other things, for, by colliding with something smaller, man will destroy that thing, and by colliding with something bigger, it destroys man. Likewise, Allah has made a light for spiritual matters; therefore, He says: '... Light upon Light! Allah guides unto His Light him that wills ...' (*an-Nur*: 35).

The corrupt hate that this light exists and desire to extinguish it; therefore Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا
 أَن يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

**They try to extinguish God's light with their mouths, but
 God insists on bringing His light to its full- ness, even if the
 disbelievers hate it [32] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 32)**

However, can they extinguish Allah's Light? No, they cannot, even in the material world; no one can extinguish light, for there is a difference between the source of light and the tool which gives light. Someone can break a light

bulb which gives light, but no one can extinguish the 'giver of light', and the greatest Giver of Light is Allah, and no one can extinguish Him. 'They want to extinguish Allah's [guiding] Light with their utterances, but Allah will not allow [this to pass] ...' (*at-Tawba*: 32) this means that Allah does not want this, '... for He has willed to spread His Light in all its fullness...' (*at-Tawba*: 32). Allah *Glorified is He* sent the Messengers to convey the way of light; He did not send them to be defeated by disbelief. Therefore, He says: '...but Allah will not allow [this to pass]...' (*at-Tawba*: 32) This means that Allah *Glorified is He* does not want this: '... for He has willed to spread His Light in all its fullness, however hateful this may be to all who deny the truth' (*at-Tawba*: 32).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* continues:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظَاهِرَهُ
عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ

**It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance
and the religion of truth, to show that it is above all
[other] religions, however much the idolaters may
hate this [33] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 33)**

The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* has already presented the values which lead to the straight path, and he has presented the religion of truth; the word 'religion' (*din*) can also be used to apply to false creeds and rites. Did the True Lord *the Most High* not command His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to say to the disbelievers and idolaters of Mecca: 'Unto you, your moral law (*din*), and unto me, mine' (*al-Kafirun*: 6)? Did they have a religion? Indeed, they did have something they followed as a religion, along with beliefs which they had invented for themselves, but 'the religion of truth' is the one which came down from Heaven.

'It is He Who has sent forth His Prophet with the [task of spreading] guidance and the religion of truth, to the end that He may cause it to prevail over all [false] religion ...' (*at-Tawba*: 33). We can observe that Allah *Glorified is He* said these Words to affirm that Islam came to be ascendant over all religions; we know that many religions were founded on falsehood, as He

the Exalted says: 'But 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]!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71)

Let us take some time to consider the True Lord's Words 'over all [false] religion'. If all the corruption in the world was of a single kind, it would have been said, 'to prevail over the existing corrupt religion', but there are several religions, including Buddhism, polytheism beliefs, the religions of the people of the Book, the Magi and the Sabians.⁽¹⁾ Due to this, Allah *Glorified is He* does want His religion, the religion of truth, to prevail over not only one religion amongst the corrupt religions which exist, but over all of these religions. If something comes to prevail (*yazhar*), it becomes prominent and significant; thus, the True Lord *the Most High* says: 'and thus [the rampart was built, and] their enemies were unable to scale (*yazharu*) it...' (*al-Kahf*: 97). What this means is that they could not climb over its back (*zahr*). All religions are far inferior to the Islamic religion. Some people ask, 'So, why is it that disbelievers exist, like *Magi, Buddhists, Sabians* and followers of other religions like Judaism and Christianity? They still exist, and their followers are many.' My answer is that we should understand the meaning of 'ascendancy'. Ascendancy means that clear proofs and sound teachings become ascendant, meaning that non-Muslims' world will run into practical and social problems, which it cannot solve without following the teachings of Islam, and thus taking its legislation from Islam. When they do this, they do not take the teachings of Islam in a religious way; rather, they take them as social necessities without which life cannot be rectified. As a Muslim, when you are loyal to the teachings of your religion, this is not a testimony on your part that you have faith; rather, your inner being and your insight inspired you to believe in the religion of truth. The strong testimony comes when the enemy who hates Islam and resists it is forced to use one of Islam's teachings to solve his problems. When this happens, the strongest testimony comes from the enemy of your religion, or your rival. This means that he could not find any other idea in existence to solve this problem, so he had to take his solution from Islam.

(1) The Sabians were a community whose religion was a cross between Jewish and Magianism belief. Al-Khalil said that their religion was similar to Christianity, except that they prayed towards the south; they claimed to follow Noah's religion.

For example, the Vatican in Italy has authority over all Christian doctrine in the West, and the Catholic Church was against divorce and attacked Islam for allowing it, and then the severe problems which faced Italian society and other European societies forced them to legalise divorce since they could not find any other solution to their serious social problems.

However, did they allow divorce since Islam allows it or because their social problems could only be solved by allowing it? When they take a solution to their problems from our religion and apply it as a law, this is a strong testimony which affirms for them the correctness of Allah's religion, along with confirming the True Lord's Words: '... to the end that He may cause it to prevail over all [false] religion – however hateful this may be to those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah.' (*at-Tawba*: 33) By Allah, if prevailing in this verse means a complete doctrinal conquest that no other religions would exist in the world but Islam, the True Lord *Glorified is He* would not have said here, 'however hateful this may be to all who deny the truth'. Also, He would not have said, '... however hateful this may be to those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah.' (*at-Tawba*: 33) This means that Allah *the Exalted* has made those who oppose Islam themselves cause Islam to prevail over other religions, not because they are convinced of and believed in it; rather, they remain with their own religions but are forced, by circumstance, to seek solutions from Islam for their difficulties.

Another example of this is found in the issue of breastfeeding. The True Lord *the Most High* says: 'And the [divorced] mothers may nurse their children for two whole years, if they wish to complete the period of nursing ...' (*al-Baqara*: 233).

In Europe and America, there were many campaigns against natural nursing, and they told people to use powdered milk that was produced chemically instead of the milk of the mother; in their opinions, this was a better source of nutrition for the baby. Then, after this, serious health problems emerged in infants, and in their psychological welfare because they had not been nursed by their mothers, the whole world was forced to go back to natural nursing with great enthusiasm. Do they do this because they believed in the Noble Quran, or because they found that the only way to solve their problem was to return to the natural way of nursing infants?

The same is true on the case of alcohol. We now find that there is an urgent campaign against alcohol in the countries which broadly permitted it before. Recently, they have begun to wage this war against alcohol; now that science has discovered the harm it does to the liver, the brain, and to human behaviour. This is the meaning of '... that He may cause it to prevail over all [false] religions ...' (*at-Tawba*: 33). This means that He will cause it to be ascendant, with its clear proofs and true arguments, over all who oppose it. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... that He may cause it to prevail over all [false] religions – however hateful this may be to those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah.' (*at-Tawba*: 33) This religion has prevailed and become ascendant in the way it deals with many of the things which have emerged in the societies of polytheists and disbelievers who hate this religion and fight against it; this prevailing has not been based on faith, rather, it is based on necessity. What this means is that they have accepted it despite themselves.

After making it clear to us that the rabbis and monks do not have completely correct faith in Allah or the Last Day, along with permitting what Allah has forbidden and forbidding what Allah has permitted, their followers take them as lords besides Allah *Glorified is He* Who says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لِيَآكُلُوا أَمْوَالَ
النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيُصَدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ
الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا ينفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٤﴾

Believers, many rabbis and monks wrongfully consume people's possessions and turn people away from God's path. [Prophet], tell those who hoard gold and silver instead of giving in God's cause that they will have a grievous punishment [34] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 34)

Allah *the Almighty* explains to us what goes on in their minds, and how they stray from Allah's Way. He also describes how they became steeped in the love of this worldly life and passions, along with how they bartered Allah's Words away for a trifling price and distorted the teachings of Heaven so that they could wrongfully devour people's wealth. However, can wealth be devoured really? Of course, it cannot, rather, we use it to buy the food

which we eat. Why does the True Lord *the Most High* use the expression 'devour men's possessions' (*at-Tawba*: 34)? By this, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to alert us to the fact that not only did they take enough wealth to meet their needs for food and drink, but they took more than they needed in order to hoard it.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, He says in this verse that they '... turn [others] away from the Path of Allah. But as for all who lay up treasures of gold and silver and do not spend them for the sake of Allah – give them the tiding of grievous suffering.' (*at-Tawba*: 34) Thus, they wrongfully devoured people's wealth, as the True Lord *the Exalted* says: '...do indeed wrongfully devour men's possessions' (*at-Tawba*: 34); this means that it is possible to devour people's wealth rightfully by engaging in beneficial trade transactions; a merchant takes your money and gives you a commodity in return, and then takes this money and uses it to buy another commodity to sell, and so on. The law of circumspection in this verse means that there must have been some rabbis and monks who did indeed preserve the teachings of their religion and did not wrongfully devour people's wealth, which is clearly implied in the True Lord's Words '...Behold, many of the rabbis and monks do indeed wrongfully devour men's possessions...' (*at-Tawba*: 34). Allah *Glorified is He* did not say, 'All rabbis and monks wrongfully devour men's possessions', instead He said: '...Behold, many of the rabbis and monks ...' (*at-Tawba*: 34). Allah said it like this since there may well have been a limited number of rabbis and monks who adhered properly to their faiths, and He does not wrong anyone. Therefore, He allowed for this possibility. Had Allah *the Almighty* made a general statement even though some of them did indeed adhere to their religion, this would mean that the Noble Quran was not aware of all the possibilities –Allah forbid such a thing, for the True Lord *Glorified is He* allows for all possibilities in His Quran.

(1) *Al-Qurtubi says in his exegesis (iv. 3049): 'They used to tax their followers' wealth and take contributions for the churches and synagogues, which deluded them into thinking that this spending was part of the Sacred Law and a way of drawing nearer to God; but they would conceal this wealth, as Salman Al-Farisi narrated about the monk who dug up his treasure.'*

Therefore, some of these rabbis and monks appropriated people's wealth in a wrongful way; this means that they not only took that which they needed to suffice themselves, but they took it wrongfully by taking more than they needed.

They took wealth in order to turn others away from the Path of Allah, for the path they followed was that of seeking worldly gains. They changed Allah's Way so that it would accord with their lust for wealth and help them gain the vast wealth they desired. Therefore, this verse specifies what their punishment will be, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... But as for all who lay up treasures of gold and silver and do not spend them for the sake of Allah – give them the tiding of grievous suffering [in the life to come].' (*at-Tawba*: 34) The Arabic word for 'treasure' (*kanz*) is derived from a root word meaning 'fullness and gathering'; when a sheep is described to be (*muktanaza*), it means it is very meaty which means much meat has collected on it.

Therefore, to 'lay-up treasures' means to gather, and the True Lord *Glorified is He* says that they 'lay-up treasures of gold and silver' (*at-Tawba*: 34). These two metals are the basis of worldly economics. Economic dealings began with swapping, i.e. the exchange of commodities which is called 'bartering'. When economic dealings progressed, currency was invented and became the basis of dealings between people and nations. From its inception until the present day, currency is based on gold and silver. Even when paper currency was invented, it had to be backed up by an equivalent value of gold in order to have any economic value since paper money has no value unless it is backed up by gold and silver.

An aspect of the miraculous nature of the Noble Quran is that when the True Lord *the Most High* speaks about gold and silver which are both metals, He makes them the basis of money and business even though other minerals have been found which are more valuable than gold or silver, such as diamonds. The basis of currency in the world still remains gold and silver. The currency of any nation rises and falls in value based on the gold reserves which back up paper currency. For example, in Egypt during the British occupation, there were eight million pounds in circulation, and our gold reserves were worth ten million pounds, so there were two million pounds worth of extra gold; therefore, the Egyptian pound was worth one pound and two-and-a-half pence of gold.

Money is devalued if the gold reserves are small and the amount of currency in circulation is large. Therefore, gold remains the primary basis of the world economy.

Thus, in this noble verse, Allah *the Almighty* wants to attract our attention to the fact that gold and silver are the basis of dealings in the world's economic movement and that this requires money to be constantly circulating since the purpose of money is to benefit from it to make the world thrive. If you do not circulate your wealth and you are a believer, then every year 2.5% of it is taken in the form of the poor-due (*zakat*), and therefore all of this money will disappear in forty years. If a believer wants to maintain his money, he should circulate it in the activities of life, investing it so that it will grow, and not hoard it away so that the poor-due will consume it all. The poor-due is a small amount to be paid from one's wealth, but if the owner of the wealth circulates what he owns in life's activities, the people will benefit from this even if he does not intend so, for the one who invests his wealth in building an apartment block, for example, is only concerned with making profit for himself; however, people will benefit from this wealth even if he does not intend to benefit them. The one who digs the foundations will be paid, as well as the one who brings the bricks, the one who brings the cement, the one who brings the iron, the factories that produce building materials, the people who work in the factories that produce the safety apparatus, electric cables and so on and the ones who install these things. Therefore, a great many people in the owner's society will benefit from his building, even if he did not intend to benefit them; thus, the one who builds an apartment building provides an economic service to society which benefits many people, and the same is true of anyone who makes an investment project.

Therefore, Allah *the Most High* does not want wealth to be static, rather, He wants it to be dynamic, even if it is in the hands of disbelievers; if it is dynamic, then it will benefit all people, and there will be buying and selling. Goods will be produced, factories will be built and people will find jobs, and so on. However, if we all saved our money instead of investing it in the life processes, goods would not be used, factories would shut down and people would lose their jobs.

Just as Islam encourages us to invest our money, it tells us not to give people money if they do not work for it so that they will not be used to getting money in exchange for idleness and inactivity. Therefore, it is said that if there is a lot of money and there is no need for any new projects, do not let the people become idle, rather command them even to dig a well and then fill it again, and pay the workers for digging it and for filling it. This will prevent idleness from spreading and prevent people from getting accustomed to eating without having to work for it since this is the quickest way to corrupt society.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* wants wealth to circulate, and not be hoarded. Thus, He says: '... But as for all who lay up treasures of gold and silver and do not spend them for the sake of Allah – give them the tiding of grievous suffering.' (*at-Tawba*: 34) This is due to the fact that by hoarding wealth, they bring to a halt the motions of life which Allah wants for His creation. You see that today there is a serious unemployment problem in the world since wealth is not being placed in motion to make the world thrive, rather, there are those who only hoard it.

Someone might say, 'But in these days, people use paper currency, while Allah *the Almighty* speaks of gold and silver.' We say that paper currency is not money in itself, rather, it is used to spare people the inconvenience of carrying large and heavy amounts of gold and silver around with them which they might not be able to carry; it is therefore a matter of convenience, but it is linked to a value of gold. So, those who hoard paper currency and do not spend it to make this world thrive are also meant by this noble verse.⁽¹⁾

However, in this verse, 'to lay up treasure' not only means that they amass wealth, but it also means that they do not honour Allah's right concerning it.

(1) *Al-Qurtubi* says in his exegesis (iv. 3049): 'The root meaning of 'treasure' (*kanz*) is 'to collect and gather'; and this does not only refer to gold and silver, for the Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: {Shall I not tell you of the finest treasure a man can obtain? A virtuous woman.} That is, he can gather her to himself (by marrying her). Gold and silver are singled out for mention here because they are hidden from others, unlike other possessions.' *At-Tabari* said that a 'treasure' is everything which is collected, whether below the earth or above it. The Hadith quoted by *Al-Qurtubi* was narrated by *Abu Dawud* in his book (*Sunnan*) (1664) and *Al-Hakim* in his (*Mustadrak*) (i. 409).

Therefore, the money for which you pay the poor-due is not considered to be a hoarded treasure since it decreases by the poor-due every year; hoarded-up wealth means the wealth for which no poor-due is paid.

The one who owns wealth, no matter how much, but honours Allah's right in it, is not thereby considered to be a hoarder of wealth; rather, the meaning of hoarded treasure here is the wealth for which Allah's right is not honoured.⁽¹⁾

Let us return to the text of the noble verse: '... But as for all who lay up treasures of gold and silver and do not spend them...' (*at-Tawba*: 34). We might ask why Allah did not use the Arabic dual form (*huma*) here for 'them' (rather, the non-human plural form *ha* was used) since gold and silver are two metals. We say that the True Lord *the Most High* used the plural form because 'gold' means many things: one person owns a thousand gold pieces, another owns one hundred and a third owns only a single piece; the same is true of silver. As long as this plurality exists, we must say 'spend them' in the plural.

Further, the noble verse did not say, 'he who lays up treasures', rather, 'all who lay up treasures', so this refers to several people: one has gold, another has gold and a third has silver, so the plural must be used. The Noble Quran alerts us to this fact when it says in another verse of a different chapter: 'Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting ...' (*al-Hujurat*: 9); in this verse, the verb is in the Arabic plural form, not the dual, since the word 'group' means a plurality made up of many individuals, and when fighting breaks out, the whole group does not fight the other with a single sword, rather, each individual from the one group fights each individual of the other. Thus, they are two groups in times of peace, but, when war breaks out, each individual from one group fights each individual of the other. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says 'fall to fighting' (*iqtatalu*) in the Arabic plural form, not (*iqtatala*) in the dual form. As for the time of reconciliation, He *the Most High* says, 'make peace between them' (*al-Hujurat*: 9) in the dual form; this is due to the fact that when we make peace between the two groups, we do not bring each individual from the one group and reconcile him with each

(1) *Ibn 'Umar said that if the poor-due is paid for wealth, it is not hoarded treasure, even if it is buried seven fathoms deep in the earth; and if the poor-due is not paid for it, it is a hoarded treasure even if it is kept above ground. Narrated by Al-Qurtubi in his exegesis*

individual from the other, rather, we bring the leader of the one group and reconcile him with the leader of the other, thus, peace is made; therefore, the dual form is required.

The same is true when He says: '...all who lay up treasures of gold and silver...' (*at-Tawba*: 34): He does not say 'and do not spend them both' in the dual form, rather, He says, '... and do not spend them for the sake of Allah ...' (*at-Tawba*: 34) in the plural form. Spending for Allah's Sake takes many forms, and, for Allah's Sake, there occurs motion in society, and the people benefit from it. When the poor-due is paid, people benefit. Likewise, when it is used to equip the Muslim army, people benefit. The theory which states that money should not be hoarded might have only recently appeared in global economics, but it has existed since the Noble Quran was revealed.

If you spend and do not hoard, the market becomes active, and this creates work, sources of provision, along with the impetus which leads to the progress of humanity. When you buy a washing machine, a fridge or build a small house, you contribute to an economic boom in society, and at the same time, you improve your living standard with the appliances you obtain, and this economic boom leads to new discoveries which benefit mankind. On the other hand, if you hoard all your money, this leads to economic stagnation.

This does not mean that a person should spend all the wealth he owns and then some since the True Lord *the Exalted* wants us to follow the middle way in everything. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And who, whenever they spend on others, are neither wasteful nor stingy, but [remember that] there is always a just mean between those.' (*al-Furqan*: 67)

In this verse, the True Lord *the Most High* warns us not to spend foolishly without retaining part of our wealth in case of emergency. However, if you are stingy, the market will become stagnant, production will cease and jobs will be lost. Islam wants us to spend in moderation to make the market boom, along with saving money in order to improve our lives and to deal with crises.

Spending is of two kinds: spending which is given to one's equal to preserve the constant motion between producer and consumer and spending which is given to those less fortunate in the form of the poor-due to the poor

and needy. The poor-due cleanses society from many impurities⁽¹⁾: it prevents people from resenting each other since if a poor person finds someone to give to him, he will hope that they continue to be blessed so they will keep on giving to him, and, therefore, the poor will not feel hatred towards the rich. Also, the rich and the poor benefit equally from this because when the poor person takes, he will not be bitter at his poverty, rather, he will feel that all those around him give to him; furthermore, when the rich person gives, he will feel this is a means of security for him since if one day were his blessings to end, he will find someone to give to him, too.

Therefore, there will exist equality amongst people in society, and there will not be anyone who is unable to obtain his life's essential needs, nor will there be anyone who hoards their excess wealth from the people.⁽²⁾ Therefore, our faith calls us to work hard so that we can earn living more than our needs, so that there will be excess wealth for poor-dues and charity. When a person works, they not only benefit themselves, but they also benefit society. For example, if a taxi driver earns one hundred pounds a day, he might think that he has only benefitted himself, but in fact he has benefitted all society by making things easier for people: he took one person to work, another to hospital, another to the market to buy what he needed and another to visit a relative, and so on.

Thus, when a person works, his work is good for him and for society too; if everyone were to work only enough to meet his own needs, how would those who are unable to work live? How would those eligible for poor-dues and charity live? They can only live off the excess wealth of those who are able to work, and, therefore, every Muslim should work as much as he can, and not only as much as he needs. If he works as much as to only meet his

(1) *Therefore, the True Lord Glorified is He says in this very sura: "accept that [part] of their possessions which is offered for the sake of God, so that you may cleanse them thereby and cause them to grow in purity, and pray for them: behold, your prayer will be [a source of] comfort to them – for God is all-hearing, all-knowing."* (at-Tawba: 103)

(2) *The Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him stressed this to the believers when he said, as Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri Allah be pleased with him narrated: {Whoever has a spare mount, let him give it to him who has no mount; and whoever has spare provisions, let him give them to him who has no provisions.} Abu Sa'id said: 'And he continued to name different kinds of possessions in this way, until we felt that none of us had the right to anything spare.'* Narrated by Muslim (1728), Ahmad (iii.34) and Abu Dawud (1663)

needs, this will allow him to provide for the needs of those whom he supports, so he will not have to stretch out his hands to ask others; what this means is that he is saved from the evil of need. Yet, if he works as much as he can, he not only fulfils his own needs but also gives to those who cannot work to attain the means to live; therefore, he does the good for himself, for those whom he supports and others as well.

The society in which the needs of the incapacitated are met, is a society in which both the capable and the incapable have peace of mind. We know that we live in a world of fluctuations, and there is no one whose wealth or poverty is bound to last forever since nothing in this life lasts forever; so, if a wealthy person lives in a self-supporting society in which the poor's needs are met, he will not fear the fluctuations of time, for if he gives to the poor now, and then, he were to ever become poor himself, he would be provided with his life's essential needs; also, if Allah enriches a poor person, he will remember how he used to take from the wealthy, thus, he will be eager to help the poor as a way of returning this favour. In this way, all society will live in security, and living in such a society will cause people to feel secure about their children and their descendants, for the lives of people are in Allah's hands, and if a person feels that if he were to die and leave behind young and weak children, society would take care of them, then he will feel secure about their life. On the other hand, if society is brutal and ignores the rights of the orphan, fathers will not feel secure about their young children. Therefore, we find that the True Lord *the Most High* commanded us to take care of the orphan⁽¹⁾, in order to replace the one father who was lost with many fathers

(1) Taking care of orphans is something Islam urges us to do; orphans are mentioned in the Quran 23 times, such as His Words: "And worship God [alone], and do not ascribe divinity, in any way, to aught beside Him. And do good unto your parents, and near of kin, and unto orphans, and the needy..." (*an-Nisa'*:36) And see how the Quran counsels those who look after orphans to act with a faithful sensibility which comes from their hearts and their consciences when they deal with their financial matters, as He *Glorified is He* says: "And test the orphans [in your charge] until they reach a marriageable age; then, if you find them to be mature of mind, hand over to them their possessions; and do not consume them by wasteful spending, and in haste, before they grow up. And let him who is rich abstain entirely [from his ward's property]; and let him who is poor partake thereof in a fair manner. And when you hand over to them their possessions, let there be witnesses on their behalf – although none can take count as God does." (*an-Nisa'*: 6)

who will all look after the orphan; so fathers can feel secure, as well as mothers and children. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And let them stand in awe [of Allah], those [legal heirs] – who, if they [themselves] had to leave behind weak offspring, would feel fear on their account – and let them remain conscious of Allah and let them speak [to the poor] in a just manner.' (*an-Nisa*': 9)

Allah-consciousness assures that society will take care of orphans, and, therefore, security will enter the heart of every father who fears of dying and leaving young children behind.

Thus, when society takes care of an orphan, the child will not rail against fate for being deprived of a father since he will find that he has many fathers to look after him. There is a story which many of our scholars have told. Once, there was a colleague of theirs who died and left behind young children, and their mother wept for them because they had been orphaned. Then, the years went by, and the children grew up; one became an engineer, another doctor and another lawyer, while those whose fathers were still alive were unsuccessful in their studies. One of these fathers said to the other, 'If only we had died, so that Allah would have opened the door of provision for our children!'

So, there are some fathers who block the coming of provision, and, if they die, Allah showers their children with provision. This is something we see occurring in the world, and so, we see that the matter is all in the hands of Allah *Glorified is He* Who said: 'for, verily, Allah Himself is the Provider of all sustenance, the Lord of all might, The Eternal!' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 58)

Therefore, Islamic economics are based on the existence of motion in the world, and this motion must be commensurate with the abilities of those who perform it, and not only with their needs, in order that there be excess wealth which those who are unable to work can take from those who are able to work.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* gives us a lesson of faith when we see an incapable poor person taking his sustenance from a rich one who works hard; it is as though those who are richer are working to provide for the poor one. Thus, when Allah *the Exalted* takes the strength away from him, He compensates him by giving him some of the fruits of the labour of others, so that he does not become bitter that Allah has tested him with this trial.

'... But as for all who lay up treasures of gold and silver and do not spend them for the sake of Allah – give them the tiding of grievous suffering.' (*at-Tawba*: 34) When you hear the Words 'give them tidings', you know that 'tidings' usually means good news; if it is used to introduce grave news, it is meant to be ironic. If a leader of a certain people, who is highly respected by his people, acts with tyranny and oppression, his people are afraid to resist him because he does not fear Allah, and thus, he treats them unfairly. This oppressor will be brought forth on the Day of Resurrection and chastised severely, and it will be said to him: 'Taste it – you who [on earth] has considered yourself so mighty, so noble!' (*ad-Dukhan*: 49)

Given the nature of his position in the Fire as he is humiliated by the torment of Hell, he is neither mighty nor noble; the words of the angels of hell, 'Taste it – you who [on earth] has considered yourself so mighty, so noble!', are meant as stern irony. In this respect, they resemble the Words of the True Lord *the Most High*: '... and if they beg for water, they will be given water [hot] like molten lead, which will scald their faces ...' (*al-Kahf*: 29).

When they hear the Words 'they will be given water', he will be happy because his thirst is severe and he has asked for water and been told that he will be given it. This seems to him to be glad tidings, but the water he will be given will be as hot as molten lead which will scald his face. Will this bring any relief? It is meant ironically, and it serves to further increase his suffering. Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* says here: '... give them the tiding of grievous suffering.' (*at-Tawba*: 34) The True Lord then describes for us this grievous suffering which people like this will encounter, depicting for us the matters of the Hereafter which we are unable to see by use of a sensory image. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَوْمَ يُحْمَىٰ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَىٰ بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُوهُهُمْ
وَيُظْهِرُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِأَنفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

On the Day it is heated up in Hell's Fire and used to brand their foreheads, sides, and backs, they will be told, 'This is what you hoarded up for yourselves! Now feel the pain of what you hoarded!' [35] (*The Quran, at-Tawba*: 35)

We know that only metals are heated up in fire; so, if what they have hoarded up is paper currency, how will it be heated? If what they have

hoarded is metal, it will be suitable to be used to brand their bodies, but how will this be done with paper currency? We say that the All-Powerful *Glorified is He* is well able to heat that which cannot ordinarily be heated, or transform it into gold and silver, and then brand these parts of their bodies with it. To brand means to take heated metal and press it onto the skin so it burns it and leaves a mark.

When one of the Companions died during the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they looked through his clothes and found a gold coin there, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'This shall be used as a brand in the fire.' This was due to the fact that the owner of this coin was obsessed with hoarding it. Likewise, there was another Companion who was found to have two coins which he had hoarded, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'These are two brands.'⁽¹⁾

This was before the poor-due had been legislated, but if the owner of wealth has fulfilled Allah's right concerning it, it is not considered to be a hoarded treasure. If this were not the case, we would have to say that a person, who had left money to his children upon dying, even if he had paid the poor-due for it, was thereby guilty of hoarding. Also, if we said this, then we would render meaningless all the verses of the Noble Quran concerned with inheritance since the whole purpose of inheritance is that a person passes on what he owns when he dies. Inherited money has to be from a lawful source such that its owner fulfils all Allah's rights concerning it, and therefore, it is not considered to be hoarded treasure.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... and their foreheads and their sides and their backs branded therewith ...' (*at-Tawba*: 35). Why does Allah single out these particular places for this torment? It is due to each of these

(1) Ahmad narrates this on the authority of Abu Umama, who said that these men were of the 'People of the Bench'. Someone might ask why the possession of one or two coins is such a sin as to deserve branding in hell; the answer is that this man was one of the People of the Bench, that is, one of the poor people who spent all their time at the Prophet Muhammad's mosque and lived on the Muslims' charity, and yet he was hoarding gold, even if only a single coin, in the folds of his clothes. It is, therefore, as though he usurped the rights of others and deprived the Muslim society of what he was hoarding, and of his labour. Had he taken this coin and bought an axe to cut firewood, as the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* instructed others to do, it would have been better for him, his family, and others; and therefore he deserved his fate.

body parts playing a part in the refusal to spend money in Allah's Cause. How is this so? For example, the face is the part of the body with which one faces things: if one sees a poor person turn to him to ask for charity, and he knows that this person is truly poor, coming to him due to severe need, the first thing he does to avoid fulfilling Allah's right is turning his face away from him or frown at him and show anger in his face. This poor person will feel shame and humility since the rich one has ignored him. If turning face does not work, and the poor person continues to follow the rich one, the latter will avoid the former by turning the body side so that he will feel unwelcome. If the poor person continues to stand by the rich person's side, the latter turns his back to the former.

So, these three body parts are all involved in the refusal to spend in Allah's Cause: firstly turning one's face far away, then giving one's side and finally turning one's back to the poor. These are the three body parts involved when the rich withhold the right entitled, by Allah, to the poor, and therefore, they must be punished; so, the face, the body side and the back are all branded.

The True Lord *the Most High* then says: '...These are the treasures which you have laid up for yourselves!' (*at-Tawba*: 35) This means that the wealth for which one refused to give Allah's right. If a person has hoarded up much wealth, his torment will be more severe than the one who hoarded only a little. This is due to the brand being larger, the more wealth that is hoarded, while if the hoarded wealth is small, the brand will be small. Therefore, the one who hoards must not be deluded by the size of what he hoards since the more he hoards, the more severe will be his punishment.

Allah's Words '...Taste, then, [the evil of] your hoarded treasures' (*at-Tawba*: 35) mean one's suffering in the Hereafter will be the result of the wealth he hoarded; the wealth which he rejoiced in hoarding in his worldly life should have been a cause for his grief because he merely hoarded up suffering for himself on the Day of Resurrection. No matter what pride and delusion his hoarded wealth gave him in his worldly lives, it will be repaid with suffering in the Hereafter, suffering which is commensurate with the amount he hoarded.

Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذَلِكَ الْدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَقَاتِلُوا
الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

God decrees that there are twelve months – ordained in God's Book on the Day when He created the heavens and earth – four months of which are sacred: this is the correct calculation. Do not wrong your souls in these months – though you may fight the idolaters at any time, if they first fight you – remember that God is with those who are mindful of Him [36] (The Quran, at-Tawba: 36)

A month means a full cycle of the moon, as is well known. We know that the cosmos contains a sun, a moon and stars, all of which we can see; also, there are other celestial bodies far away from us which could fit one million of our suns inside them. All of this may give you some idea of how enormous the universe is. We should not imagine that the sun exists of its own accord; rather, it derives things from other stars which are much bigger than it, but what we can see with our eyes is limited, and there are things we cannot see because they are not within our range of vision. If we look at an electric light, its light is not intrinsic to it, rather, there are many devices behind it which feed the electricity through wires, cables and transformers, and then there is the power station that generates the electric current, and then the factories that produce the machines that operate in the power station. So behind this small lamp is a huge amount of work and different machinery.

We see that the sun has light which we call in Arabic *diya'*, whilst the light of the moon is called *nur*. What is the difference between *diya'* and *nur*? *Diya'* means the emission of both light and heat, while *nur* contains light but not heat. Therefore, the light of the moon is called 'the mild light' since when we sit in the light of the moon we do not need a parasol to shade ourselves from it. However, if we sit in the light of the sun, we need a parasol to protect ourselves from its intense heat.

The True Lord *the Most High* calls the sun 'a lamp full of blazing splendour', and a lamp (*siraj*); the sun is something which emits both light and heat. As for the moon, He called it 'light-giving' (*munir*) since the rays of the sun

reflect off it and give it light. Allah *the Exalted* has made these two celestial bodies, the sun and the moon, a means of measuring the passage of time. Time has many stages which require different standards and measures: the basic unit of time measurement is day and night, and the basic units of day are morning, noon, afternoon and evening. Also, there is true dawn, false dawn and sunrise, and there are times when the lengths of an object and its shadow (made by the sun rays projecting on the objects) are equal; there are other times when the shadow is twice as long as an object's length, and at night all is dark. In the standards for time measurement, after day and night, come months and then years.

Therefore, the measurements of time require tools to measure them. We know when day begins because the sun rises, which makes the sun the standard means of measuring day, and we know when night begins because the sun sets, which means that the sun tells us when both day and night begin and end; however, it does not tell us anything about the months. If we look at the sun, it does not tell us whether the month has just begun, is in the middle or is about to end. On the other hand, if we look at the moon, we can indeed tell these things: at the beginning of the month, it is a crescent, in the middle of the month, it is full and at the end of the month, it disappears. Also, the number of months in the eyes of Allah is twelve.

Thus, we see that, before Allah *the Almighty* created man and made him His vicegerent on the earth, He created for him a universe which was judiciously prepared for his arrival. For example, He placed a means of sustenance on the earth, made the sun and the moon and sent down rain; everything man needs to live be present in the universe before man came to live in it. Allah made man His vicegerent on the earth and gave him movement, meaning the events which he makes happen, which happen within him or which happen to him; and events require time and place. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* created a time and place for them. So, life in its entirety is an interaction between the actions of man, Allah's vicegerent on one side, and time and place on the other.

Just as Allah *Glorified is He* has prepared for man his life's daily requirements, He also sent down the moral values which would preserve his spiritual life for him. By doing this, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted human motion to be in

harmony, not in discord, and the meaning of harmony is that the motion of all mankind is united in making beneficial things to improve the quality of life on the earth. Yet, if the actions of man are in discord with one another, corruption will appear on the earth since everyone will seek to destroy what the other has done.

In order for man's actions in the world to be in harmony, there must be one sole lawgiver, namely *the Most High* Lawgiver Who makes laws for the actions for all of mankind. When people seek to avoid the laws of Allah and begin to make laws for themselves, we find that human laws follow human whims, and everyone tries to secure advantages for himself while usurping the rights of others, and life is thereby corrupted. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But if the truth were in accord with their own likes and dislikes, the heavens and the earth would surely have fallen into ruin ...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71).

If Allah *the Most High* had allowed them to follow their whims, the universe would have been subjected to human caprices: this one wants one thing, while the other wants the opposite. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants the actions of the world to be peaceful, stable and secure and this will not happen unless all of mankind adheres to the Way of Allah. When this happens, there will be perpetual and universal peace, and man will be at complete peace with himself, the universe and Allah. However man, whom Allah created free and to whom He gave His way of moral guidance, has the ability to either obey this guidance or disobey it; if man disobeys this guidance, he, thereby, corrupts the earth and spreads tyranny and wickedness throughout it.

The True Lord *the Most High* has wanted to ensure peace by making a force which stands in the way of corruption on the earth; therefore He willed the existence of war in this world, so that different desires would conflict with one another. As long as man has free will, along with there being those who obey and those who disobey, conflict will inevitably take place. As for those things in which man has no free will, they do not cause peace to be disrupted in the world. For example, there will never be a revolution with the goal of making the sun rise, nor a war to make rain fall since these things are ruled by the law of compulsion which Allah intended for them, and they give their benefit to all. Corruption happens when people deviate from Allah's Way.

Furthermore, as long as there exists some people who are eager to preserve this way, so that if a person deviates, they reprimand him so that he returns to the right path and, hence the security and peace of life will be preserved. However, if corruption becomes universal, and there is no one in society to stand against him, the motion of life will be stymied, along with people's lives and livelihood being made unbearable.

In order for peace to transpire throughout the world, the True Lord *the Most High* places barriers in time and place which stand in the way of the soul's tyranny, in order to awaken it and return it to the truth: He places in time sacred months in which fighting is not allowed, so that peace prevails during them by the edict of Heaven. Allah *the Almighty* wants this compulsory peace to be an opportunity for those at war to return to their senses and settle their differences. Likewise, Allah makes certain places inviolable so that no fighting is allowed within them, and if the people meet together in these places, it is a chance for them to purify themselves and settle their differences.

When a human being fights a war against another fellow human, they are worn down by the fierceness and the consequences of this war; they are worn down by the loss of blood, loss of property and loss of equipment. People are weakened by all these losses, whether they win or lose the war. However, due to the pride they feel when facing a rival, they want to continue the war so that they do not appear to their enemy to have capitulated. Therefore, by His Mercy with His creation, Allah wants to make times and places in which fighting is forbidden, so that it will not be said that such-and-such tribe or group halted the fighting since they fear their enemy or because their enemy is stronger; rather, people will say that they stopped fighting by Allah's command. In this way, each party of the conflict retains its honour, and reconciliation becomes easy, along with spirits and souls accepting it.

Likewise, if one of the warring parties seeks refuge in one of the places in which Allah forbids fighting, it thereby protects itself, and this prevents the evil from continuing, along with protecting people from degradation and capitulation before the enemy. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* wants to make it clear to us, 'I am your Creator, and I am merciful to you. I shall make times in which fighting is forbidden and places in which all who enter are safe, so

shield yourselves behind this and stop fighting.' This is an aspect of Allah's Mercy by which He gives people a chance to live, and this is one of the gifts of Lordship, which Allah gives to all of His creation, whether believers or disbelievers, obedient or disobedient, and all of the blessings of existence are bestowed by His Lordship.

Allah's gifts do not make a distinction between a believer and a disbeliever: the earth, for example, does not give crops to the obedient and withhold them from the sinner, and the sun does not send its light and heat down on a believer and not a disbeliever; all the material blessings of the universe are gifts of Allah's Lordship to His creation. Material means, then, are for all people, and they can choose whatever schedule they like for their life's motions. For example, they can farm according to whatever system they choose and fix the seasons in the way that benefits them the most; in doing this, they organise their material benefits, which are gifts of Lordship. However, Allah is also a Lord of virtue, and therefore, there are gifts of deity, which Allah has placed in the way of guidance with which He sent the Messengers to mankind. Thus, this clarifies, 'I shall choose the times I hold appropriate for virtue and lofty moral values, and I shall choose the appropriate places for virtue and lofty moral values.' The True Lord distinguished this time and place, along with wanting to establish this by making it well known during all times and places through the message of His Prophet, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Months in Allah's sight are twelve in number; as long as He says: 'in the sight of Allah', this means that there are also months 'in the sight of' other than Allah and 'in the sight of' man.

Allah *the Exalted* made it clear to His creation: 'Set your own times according to what benefits you', and this is what actually happens. We find that people grow crops according to the Coptic calendar in which the summer months are always the same, as are the months of winter, spring and autumn since the Coptic calendar is based on the movement of the sun.

However, Allah wants to allocate times according to moral values, which is why He says: 'Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months...' (*at-Tawba*: 36). Thus, He clarifies: 'Do not make your moral calendar the same as the calendar by which you organise your worldly benefits.'

Allah *the Almighty* wants moral values to encompass all times and not be fixed to any particular time. Therefore, He chose specific times for prayer. For example, dawn prayer has its time, as do midday, afternoon, sunset and evening prayers. However, despite the fact that prayer times are fixed, they encompass all times; for example, the prayer time arrives to Aswan, a few minutes later in Luxor, a few minutes later in Cairo, a few minutes later in Alexandria, and then to the European nations, etc. The prayer never stops for a moment, rather, it continues according to the time in different places. Dawn prayer, for example, is offered before sunrise, and the sun rises every minute in different places in the world. It is therefore as though the prayer is always being offered on the earth. Furthermore, at the time we pray the afternoon prayer, those in Northern Europe, for example, pray the midday prayer, while those in America and Canada pray the morning prayer. It is as though prayer is being offered at all times, all over the world, for the entire universe glorifies Allah *the Almighty*.

After this, we come to Allah's choice for the Day of *Arafat*, the month of fasting and other such times. The month of *Ramadan* sometimes occurs during summer, winter, spring or autumn, and likewise, the pilgrimage occurs during all the different seasons of the earth. In this way, Allah has justly decreed that the days which He made preferable are distributed all over the year. The True Lord made one day the basic unit of time, which is composed of daytime and night, and days are grouped into months, and months into years. Also, He made the sun's task to determine days for us, and the moon's task to determine months. At the start of the month, the moon is a crescent, then a quarter-moon, then a half-moon, then a full moon, etc. Thus, the moon is what determines when a month begins and ends.

The True Lord *the Most High* specified the months of the year by saying: 'Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months...' (*at-Tawba*: 36), and then He says: '... out of these, four are sacred...' (*at-Tawba*: 36).

However, why did Allah not make all the months times of peace (sacred)? We say that by His legislations, the True Lord wanted peace to prevail, but war may also be a war for the sake of making peace, especially since not every man nor every society follows the right path. Therefore, such people must be fought. Goodness must inevitably stand in the way of evil, and as

long as man has free will, there is the possibility that he will choose to follow the way of evil. Therefore, society must be able to reprimand wrongdoers. If a nation decides to aggress against another and fight it, war is necessary for defence. Likewise, had the True Lord made the whole year a time of sacred peace, idolaters and disbelievers would have had believers at their mercy since they would disobey Allah and wage war, whilst believers would have to obey Allah's commandment. This would mean that Allah would have imposed slavery upon those who believe in Him. Moreover, the forces of good and evil are bound to conflict with each other in this world, and the forces of truth and that of falsehood are bound to fight one another, and the truth must stand in the way of falsehood. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* permitted fighting in the sacred months so that if falsehood intensifies, truth can stand up to it powerfully. The poet, Ahmad Shawqi, said:

War for the sake of truth is, for you a sacred right
From venomous poisons medicines may be distilled

So, Allah *the Exalted* decreed that there be people who resist falsehood. He gave the forces of truth the right to wage war against the forces of falsehood and confront them. This is why He did not legislate that fighting to be forbidden throughout the whole year, but only in four months, during which the people may taste the sweetness of peace, cease their fighting and have an opportunity to reconcile.

Allah *the Exalted* set a universal law, which is that when truth and falsehood meet in battle, falsehood is always quickly routed. If you see a battle continue for years and years, know that it is a battle between two opposing forces of falsehood; furthermore, if such a battle is fought, Heaven does not intervene. If a battle is fought between truth and falsehood, however, then Heaven succours the side of truth against the side of falsehood. Battles never take place between two forces of truth since there is only one truth in the whole world, not two; rather, there is truth and there is falsehood, and if there is a conflict between them, it does not last long, for falsehood is doomed to perish by its very nature. If a war breaks out between two forces of falsehood, Heaven makes it clear to us that neither one of these falsehoods is more

deserving of Allah's succour than the other; rather, He leaves them to struggle with the means at their disposal, which makes war lasts for a long time.

When Allah *the Exalted* ordained the sacred months, He provided the requirements for constant peace for people, for war wearies people, making them long and love to be free of it. When the sacred months came, this was an opportunity for people to end their wars without either side feeling the shame and humiliation of defeat. We resort to this sometimes. For example, if we are in a house in which many people live – as is usual in the countryside – and something valuable is stolen from the house and the thief is one of those who live there, we want him to return the stolen item without being discovered. We may specify a particular place, and every resident comes by night and leaves a sack of soil in that place, so that the thief might place the item he stole amongst the sacks of soil. In this way, his small society gives him the opportunity to return what he stole without being found out by anyone, and this screens him without being exposed in front of everyone.

The sacred months are an opportunity for peace without any of the fighting parties being exposed to the people as being weak or unable to continue fighting. During these months, war is stopped so that Allah *the Exalted* screens each party, and the possibility of making peace and reconciliation is much stronger than that of provoking war.

However, what happens if sinful people who do not obey Allah attack the believers during the sacred months in which Allah has forbidden fighting? The True Lord does not ever intend His legislations to be a source of degradation for believers and ascendance for disbelievers. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* informs us that we must not allow His enemies to take advantage of the sanctity of the sacred months by stepping up their offensive against the believers, so He permitted believers to fight in these months if disbelievers attack them therein. The same applies for those places in which fighting is forbidden. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'They ask you [Prophet] about fighting in the prohibited month. Say, "Fighting in that month is a great offence..."' (*al-Baqara*: 217). Thus, Allah permits fighting in the sacred months for believers in the case of self-defence if disbelievers fight them first, and the True Lord also permits fighting in the Sacred Mosque if disbelievers attack believers therein. Although the unlawfulness

of fighting in the Sacred Mosque applies during all times, the True Lord *the Most High* made an exception to this when He says: 'Do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque unless they fight you there. If they do fight you, kill them. This is what such disbelievers deserve.' (*al-Baqara*: 191) In this way, the Divine Legislation came to protect believers from the tyranny of disbelievers. Believers must keep from fighting in the sacred months as Allah has commanded them, as long as the side which is fighting them also keeps from it; if disbelievers do not keep to this ban, Allah does not simply leave believers to be defeated. Therefore, the True Lord wants to establish the appropriate rulings for this matter: if both parties respect it, it applies; however, if disbelievers do not respect it, then Allah has permitted the believers to fight.

In this verse, He *the Most High* says: 'Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months, (laid down) in Allah's Decree...' (*at-Tawba*: 36). The Arabic word for 'decree' here is *kitab* which literally means 'book' or something which is written down and recorded. Words are only recorded if they have some kind of importance so that they can be used as evidence if there is a dispute. People do not write down or record ordinary conversations which they have.

Thus, where is 'Allah's Decree', in which this is written? It is the Preserved Tablet which is with Allah, the Overseer of all the scriptures which were sent down to the succession of Messengers *peace be upon them*. *Kitab* can also refer to the Noble Quran in which this verse was sent down. The Quran is the collected compilation of all of Allah's Ways of Guidance from the beginning with Adam *peace be upon him* until the coming of The Hour. Many of the rulings of the previous messages were changed in the Quran, whilst all doctrines remain the same. In addition, the Quran contains mention of cosmological facts which were unknown at the time of its revelation; for example, the True Lord *the Most High* says: 'They ask you [Prophet] about crescent moons. Say, "They show the times appointed for people and for the pilgrimage..."' (*al-Baqara*: 189). Likewise, the True Lord says: 'It is He who made the sun a shining radiance and the moon a light, determining phases for it so that you might know the number of years and how to calculate time. Allah did not create all these without a true purpose; He explains His signs to those who understand.' (*Yunus*: 5)

Allah links years and measurements of time with the moon, and this measurement system is one of the inimitable rhetorical miracles of the Quran since the world searched for the most precise measurement of time and did not find anything more precise than the moon, and all oceanic life depends on the lunar calendar for its measure of time.

Allah *the Exalted* wants us, when we read a book, to carefully scrutinise the placement of the words therein. He says: ‘Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months, (laid down) in Allah’s Decree on the day when He created the heavens and the earth ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 36). After this comes an exception, which is: ‘out of these’, i.e. out of these twelve months, ‘... four are sacred: this is the ever-true law (of Allah). Do not, then, sin against yourselves with regard to these (months)...’ (*at-Tawba*: 36). Someone might ask why Allah *the Most High* did not say *fiha*, which is usually used for non-human plurals, instead of using the plural form *fihinna*, since this is a pronoun meant to refer to the words: ‘... out of these four are sacred...’ (*at-Tawba*: 36), in which the ordinary feminine singular pronoun *ha* is used for ‘these’.

We say that the True Lord generally forbids sin in every month, but if indeed it is the four sacred months which are meant here, then the forbidding of ‘sin’ in this verse means the sin of war. There is a linguistic rule of which we must be aware: namely in Arabic language, there are plurals which indicate a small amount as well as plurals which indicate a large amount. The small-amount plural refers to a number between three and ten. Some people get confused about these two kinds of plurals, one for a small amount and the other for a large amount. Furthermore, there is the issue of the Arabic ‘broken plural’, in which the form of the noun is changed, and the ‘sound plural’ in which a regular plural ending is affixed to the noun. The plurals of small and large amounts are not the same as broken and sound plurals: a broken plural means to change or ‘break’ the form of the noun. For example, the plural of the word *bayt* (house) is *buyut*, and the plural of *rasul* (Messenger) is *rusul*; the form of the noun is ‘broken’, or in other words, changed.

As for the word *muslim*, its plural is *muslimun*; the letters *un* have been added, but the singular root of the word *muslim* is still sound and has not been

altered in any way. If you say *safina* (ship), the plural is *sufun*, so the singular form of the word has been altered.

The True Lord *the Most High* says: 'Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months, (laid down) in Allah's Decree...' (*at-Tawba*: 36). As long as the number referred to is twelve months, it is above the number of the 'small plural' since this is for amounts between three and ten. Furthermore, if a plural is small, the Arabs treat it as a plural noun, whilst if the amount is greater than ten they treat it as a feminine singular noun. So, when Allah *the Exalted* refers to the four months which He has made sacred in His Decree, He says, '... Do not, then, sin against yourselves with regard to these...' (*at-Tawba*: 36) using the feminine plural form *fihinna* for 'these' since – as we said - the 'small plural' is treated as a plural noun. The reason why the 'large plural' is treated as a feminine singular noun is that the singular is weak unless it is supported within a group.

Likewise, an individual is protected by the group, and in this way the entire group acts like one single body. A poet once mocked the notion of 'strength in numbers' by saying:

I care not for their plurality,
For every plural is feminine!

Thus, every plural in Arabic is considered to be feminine, and this is the case when Allah says: '... Do not, then, sin against yourselves with regard to these ...' (*at-Tawba*: 36). To reiterate, if we take these words to mean sin in general, then Allah has forbidden sin throughout the whole year, whether we sin against ourselves or against others. However, if we take it to mean the forbidding of war during the sacred months, then the word *fihinna* in '... Do not, then, sin against yourselves with regard to these ...' (*at-Tawba*: 36) gives the Arabic feminine plural, so this may also be the case.

The meaning of His Words 'Do not, then, sin against yourselves' (*at-Tawba*: 36) is do not imagine that when you go against Allah's Way that you, thereby, do anything to harm the True Lord; all you do by sinning against yourselves is to harm yourselves or others, but none of you can harm Allah. Allah's attributes concerning creation are not affected whether people obey or disobey.

Therefore, to follow Allah's Way is for the people's own good. All of the moral values which Allah *the Almighty* has revealed are for our own good, whether pertaining to war or to peace, and whether forbidding or permitting.

Therefore, why did the True Lord choose the sun to measure the day, and the moon to measure the month? I say that the reason is that Allah wants to distribute His blessing over all times, to make it easy for people to perform His rights and to hold them responsible for what they do. If the months were measured by the sun, this would mean that the pilgrimage would take place in summer every year, and if those who live in cold places, for example, went to the pilgrimage in summer they would face serious danger; it would be as though there were no fairness in the rites of pilgrimage between those who live in cold places and those who live in hot places. If the pilgrimage were always in summer, those who live in hot places would perform it easily whilst those who live in cold places would find it difficult. Due to Allah's perfect fairness with His creation, we find that He has made the lunar year rotate throughout the solar year, so that the weather of the pilgrimage is not always the same. Thus, all environments and all people are equal under Allah's Laws.

Also, if fasting during the month of *Ramadan* were to be always in summer, some people would have fasted only eight or nine hours a day, whilst those who live near the North Pole would have fasted twenty hours a day. However, since *Ramadan* cycles through all the seasons of the year, those who live near the North Pole sometimes have to fast nineteen hours a day, and other times only two or three hours a day, and the one makes up for the other, so it is fair. If we take the average number of hours of fasting for those people for the whole year, we will find that their fast ranges between nineteen hours and three hours a day, and so the average is the same as those who fast eight or nine hours a day.

By calculation, we find that the lunar year is shorter than the solar year by 11.3 days every year, so that every 33.3 years there is a full year's difference between them. This means that sometimes *Ramadan* comes in January, sometimes February, sometimes March, and so on, as does the pilgrimage. In this way, all the believers have equal opportunities: those who fast long days in summer also fast short days in winter, and those who find fasting difficult

because of the intense heat also fast in the cold of winter. In this way, *Ramadan* and the pilgrimage circulate throughout the months of the whole year. Allah is absolutely just to all by means of His true legislation, and the difficulty and ease of performing religious obligations are equally shared by all the believers.

If we consider how the day is determined by the sun, we find that when the True Lord connected the prayer times to the sun, He thereby assured that the prayer would always be offered. Why is this? The reason is that we see the moon on certain days, but we do not see it when it is waning; so, if prayer had been connected to the moon, we would not have been able to offer it every day. In addition, the moon only appears to us at irregular intervals. For example, when it is a new crescent, it only appears to the eye on the horizon for a few minutes, but the sun rises every day at a certain time and sets every day at a certain time, and it is bright enough for everyone to see from sunrise to sunset, so it is not difficult for people to see it. Therefore, the connection of the prayer to the sun makes it easy to perform the prayer obligation with constancy. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Prayer is the foundation or support of the religion: he who fulfils it fulfils the religion.'⁽¹⁾ It is the only Pillar of Islam which can never be excused: the poor person does not have to pay the poor-due, the sick person does not have to fast, the one who cannot afford to go on pilgrimage does not have to and the testimony 'There is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah' only has to be said once in a person's life; prayer, on the other hand, is never excused. Thus, it is the foundation or support of the religion, and this is why it is repeated five times a day by people all over the world. Dawn in one place might be midday in another place, afternoon in a third, sunset in a fourth and evening in a fifth; this is all due to the time difference between different countries around the world. In this way, prayer times always exist somewhere on the earth, so that Allah *the Almighty* is always worshipped by prayer at any given time

(1) *This Hadith is weak, as stated by Al-'Ajlun i (ii.39) and, Al-'Iraqi in (Takhrij Ahadith Al-Ihya) (i. 147) An-Nawawi said that it was a false Hadith, but Ibn Hajar said that this was not the case, since Abu Na'im – one of the teachers of Al-Bukhari – narrated it with the wording {Prayer is the buttress of the religion} with a sound chain from one of the Companions.*

somewhere on the earth. Likewise, the call to prayer, ‘Allah is Great! I testify that there is no deity but Allah! I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’ is always being called somewhere on the earth at every given moment.

We might find an unlettered man who does not know how to read or write, yet who is granted illumination and insight by Allah to say, ‘O, dawn, you contain all time!’ In other words, it is like he is saying, ‘O, dawn, you contain all the prayer times on the face of the earth.’ Apparently, it seems that there are five prayers, but the truth is that prayer is always being offered on the earth at every second. There is no part of the day when Allah *the Exalted* is not being worshipped by the acts of worship of every allocated time; this means that with every passing moment we find that Allah is being worshipped with the five prayers on the face of the earth. This is why prayer is connected to the sun.

When we realise this fact, and we find that there is someone or persons around the world praying to Allah at every single moment of time, we thereby recognise that the Quran encompasses a great many things and that every generation understands the Quran according to the capacity of its mind. We also realise that every time the mind progresses, the Quran gives new lessons. This confirms that the understanding of the verses of the Quran broadens with the progression of time, and we become cognisant of new meanings, which we had not been capable of conceiving before.

When orientalists say that the Quran contains contradictions pertaining to cosmological matters, we say to them, 'This is impossible.' They say: ‘The Quran says: "Moses continued, ‘Lord of the East and West and everything between them. If you would only use your reason...’" (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 28). And it says: "He is Lord of the two risings and Lord of the two settings." (*ar-Rahman*: 17) And it says: "... and, by the Lord of every sunrise and sunset, We have the power ..." (*al-Ma'arij*: 40).

These verses contain what appears to orientalists as contradictions. We reply that the progress of science has allowed us to understand these verses deeply since every place on the earth has its own sunrise and sunset, and this is the general view. Therefore, His Words ‘Lord of the East and West ...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 28) make sense. Moreover, we know that when the sun rises

for some people, it sets for other people, and vice versa. Thus, with every sunrise there is a sunset, and with every sunset there is a sunrise; this means there are two sunrises and two sunsets. Moreover, we know that the time of sunrise and sunset for every day is different from the next day and that every second there is a sunset and sunrise, so the vow made here: 'by the Lord of every sunrise and sunset' (*al-Ma'arij*: 40) is due to the times of sunrise and sunset differing throughout the year.

If someone asks, 'Why do you use the sun to determine days and the moon to determine months?', we reply that the sun is connected to a daily visible phenomenon called 'daytime', and its absence is connected to a daily visible phenomenon called 'night'. However, the moon is not connected to a daily phenomenon. It is true that the moon is always present, but one can only see it and be aware of it at certain times.

Some people say, 'Since the purpose of this verse, 'Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months, (laid down) in Allah's Decree...' (*at-Tawba*: 36), is to speak of the four sacred months, what is the purpose of mentioning the other months?' We say that you can only specify the four sacred months by first clarifying the division of the year into a number of months. This is essential if we are to specify when the four sacred months of the year occur. If not, how could we distinguish these months and their times? Therefore, we must first know that there is a year and that this year is composed of twelve months, prior to our determining when the four sacred months are. Three of the four sacred months are consecutive, and one of them stands alone: the three consecutive months are *Dhul-Qi'dah*, *Dhul-Hijja* and *Muharram*, and the month which stands alone is *Rajab*. The fact that the True Lord *the Most High* specifies these four months as sacred means that they must have some special characteristics, for had He wanted these months to be at just any time of the year, He would have left us to choose them ourselves according to our knowledge, and we would have chosen whatever months we preferred to cease fighting in. If Allah is specifying these months, it must be that they have some special characteristics. Some people say, 'As long as He made the months twelve in number and made four of them sacred, and we want to fight in *Muharram*, let us do so and cease fighting in some other

month – in this case, we will have preserved the number of sacred months which Allah specified, namely four.’ We say that it is true that you will have preserved the number, but not what is numbered. Had the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not explained to us the identity of the four months that the noble verse mentions, out of the total twelve months, it would be the right of every faction to choose whatever months of the year it liked. However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did indeed tell us which months they are, and by this, we learnt how to preserve both the number and the numbered.

The notion of number and numbered solves many confusions for us, including the confusion stirred up by orientalist who wish to speak ill of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying that Arabs used to be able to marry as many women as they wanted, and then Allah specified that a man may have no more than four wives. Furthermore, the Prophet commanded those who had more than four wives to keep four of them and divorce the others.⁽¹⁾ The orientalist add to this, ‘If Muhammad commanded the people to do this, why did he not apply the same to himself? Also, why did he marry nine wives?’ We say to this that if we undertake a fair accounting of the matter, we will find that this was not a privilege for Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* rather, it is an extra burden for him. If one says that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* took nine wives, but his followers were only allowed four, he has only considered the number and not the numbered. What this means is that if one's four wives all died, he may marry four more, and if one wife dies, he may marry another. Therefore, as a Muslim man, we have an unlimited number of possibilities, such that if we divorce one or two wives, we may marry one or two others. We are restricted as to the number, but free in the identity of the numbered. As for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the following noble verse was revealed concerning him: ‘You [Prophet] are not permitted to take any further wives, nor to exchange the wives you have for others, even if these attract you

(1) *Ibn ‘Umar narrated that Ghilan ibn Salam At-Thaqafi embraced Islam and had ten wives, so the Prophet said to him: {Retain four of them.} Narrated by Ahmad (ii. 44), Ibn Majah (1953) and ad-Daraqatni (iii. 269).*

with their beauty, but this does not apply to your slave-girls. Allah is watchful over all....' (*al-Ahzab*: 52)

Therefore, this legislation restricted the identity of the numbered for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; his exception was only with regard to the number permitted, for he would only marry according to the legislation willed by Allah *the Almighty*.

Allah says in the verse we are currently examining: 'Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months, (laid down) in Allah's Decree on the day when He created the heavens and the earth ...' (*at-Tawba*: 36). We saw before that His Words 'in Allah's Decree' mean the Preserved Tablet or the Quran, and His Words '... when He created the heavens and the earth...' (*at-Tawba*: 36) mean that this was not something that spontaneously entered the universe, rather, it was already ordained before the creation of man. Therefore, it is a matter of the cosmological order upon which the universe was created; He created the universe with great precision and exactitude. It is as though the True Lord wants to alert us to the fact that one of the purposes of the existence of sun and the moon is for them to be means of measuring time: for days, months and years. Thus, He says: 'The sun and the moon follow their calculated courses.' (*ar-Rahman*: 5) What this means is that they were created according to a precise measure. He also says: 'He makes the dawn break; He makes the night for rest, and He made the sun and the moon to a precise measure...' (*al-An'am*: 69). This means that He wants us to use the sun and the moon as means of measuring time. This is consistent with the logic of things, for the thing you wish to use as a measure must itself be created according to a precise measure. If a clock, for example, is not made precisely, it is not fit to be used to tell time since it will run fast or slow. However, if it is made with precision, it will give the exact time. So, the precise measurement of time necessarily depends on the precise manufacturing of the tool used to make this measurement.

Before Allah *the Exalted* revealed this verse we are currently examining, Arabs knew about the four sacred months, but they would change their dates. For example, two factions of them would be at war, and if one of them sensed that their victory was nigh, but then the sacred months came, they would say,

‘Let us replace this month with another month.’ In other words, let us fight in the sacred month and then choose another month in which to refrain from fighting. They believed that as long as they preserved the number, they would thereby fulfil Allah’s requirements, but they forgot that they had not preserved the identity of the numbered, along with forgetting that religion means a collection of moral values in which we must believe and must implement.

It is well known that faith means to yield and submit to Allah; if Allah commands something, we have no choice about it since He sees, with His Wisdom and Knowledge, a particular goal or wise reason for it, and at this point human free will must yield. In other words, none of us has the right to object to Allah’s Will in any way; for in our ordinary lives if we were to see a man who is renowned for his wisdom and knowledge in a particular matter, and he is our superior in this regard, we would say to him, ‘We will rely on you in this matter, and we will follow whatever decision you make.’ This means that we submit our will to the will of this wise person. We do not give anyone this authority unless we have learnt by experience that he has great knowledge of this issue and that he is wise in the way he deals with it. If someone were to ask you, ‘Why did you do what so-and-so advised you to do?’, you answer that he is wise and experienced in these matters; this indicates that you trust his knowledge, his honesty and his wisdom.

The living and repeated example for us is that of our master Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*. When he was told that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had announced that he was a prophet, Abu Bakr said, ‘If he indeed said this, he has spoken the truth.’ Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* said this because he knew from experience that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had never lied about anything before; if he would not lie about the people of this world, would he lie about Heaven?⁽¹⁾ Of course, this would not make sense.

(1) *These particular words of Abu Bakr were spoken about the event of the Night Ascension, when he was told that the Messenger of Allah had claimed to have been taken up to Jerusalem and back in a single night, as ‘Aisha narrated; and Abu Bakr added: ‘Indeed, I believe what he says about things more amazing than that: I believe the revelation which comes to him morning and evening!’ For this reason, Abu Bakr was named ‘As-Siddiq’ (‘the Great-faithed One’). Narrated by Al-Hakim and Ad-Dhahabi.*

You do not submit your affair to the hands of your equal unless you have experiences which confirmed for you that he has more expertise than you in a particular field. It is true that he is your equal as an individual and a human being, but he has more knowledge than you in the field in which he excels, so you do what he says without argument since you trust his knowledge. If you fall ill – Allah forbid – and a doctor in whose knowledge you trust says to you, ‘Take this medicine’, do you dispute or argue with him? Of course you do not, rather, you do as he says without any discussion. If someone asks you why you are taking this medicine, you tell him, ‘The doctor I trust prescribed it for me’, and this is enough of a justification.

Consider Allah Who prepared this world for us and revealed to us a way of guidance, asking us to submit to Him and to obey everything He commands with all aspects of life. If we need wisdom, He alone is the Wise; if we need power, He is always the All-Powerful; if we need dominance, He is the All-Dominant over His servants; if we need provision, He is the All-Provider, and He possesses the treasures of the heavens and the earth. Is there anyone who is more worthy than the True Lord for us to submit to and do as He commands us? No, of course not! So, if someone asks us why we follow this way of guidance, we say that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* commanded us to follow it. This is true Islam. The word Islam is derived from *taslim* (to submit); in other words, one submits his free will in life to the Will of *the Almighty* Creator. Religion means to adhere in obedience to Allah, which is why He says: ‘This is the ever-true law’. *Qayyim* (ever-true) means the ever-true authority for all the affairs of our life, and the evidence for this is well established in all that we have discussed. As long as Allah is the One Who says it, we do it. Therefore, the religion is the ever-true authority to which we adhere, and it also has authority over all the other Divine messages which were sent before it which means that it protects and encompasses them, as the True Lord says: ‘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 verse which we are currently examining specifies that there are sacred months in which fighting is prohibited, and it warns against sin,

whether the sin of war or anything else. It has been said that this means the spirit of war must weaken for those who wish to wage war against the forces of falsehood, so that we may see falsehood before our eyes during the sacred months but be unable to fight it. We say that this is not correct, for this period of peace can be a period of recharge for the aspirations of those who fight against the forces of disbelief and evil; you might see falsehood right before your eyes, but you obey Allah's command to cease fighting, and this increases the reaction which falsehood produces by the challenge it poses to the believing soul. Once the sacred months are over, you will be even more fervent. It is just like the forbearing man whom someone abuses constantly, but he bears this patiently for two or three months. However, once his patience finally wears out, his anger will be all the more vehement, and his rebuttal all the more terrible. Therefore, it is said, 'Beware of the anger of the forbearing man' since his anger is more terrible than that of any other man. The forbearance which a believer shows a disbeliever during the sacred months should be a means of recharging a believer's fervour if the forces of falsehood keep up their challenge; this is a warning to believers not to allow the thought of fighting and the resolve to fight wanes in their souls. The True Lord *the Most High* says: 'And fight those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah, all together – just as they fight against you, (O, believers) all together' (*at-Tawba*: 36). The word 'all together' is preceded by the command 'fight'. Thus, which side is meant by the words 'all together'? Does this refer to the warring believers, or the warring disbelievers? This is an aspect of the richness of the Quranic discourse, giving us a word which gives a different meaning depending on how it is interpreted.

However, does the True Lord *the Most High* want us to fight polytheists when we believers are all together? Or does He want us to fight them when they are all together? As we know, the Arabic word *kaffah*, meaning 'all together', has one single form and cannot be made into a plural or a dual form: one man can be called *kaffa*, as can two men along with a whole group of people. It is derived from the word *kaff* (palm of the hand); it also means the 'edge' of something since it prevents it from going any further, and it also means the 'hem' of a garment which prevents it from unravelling.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse: 'And fight those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah, all together ...' (*at-Tawba*: 36). In other words, O, believers, unite together in fighting polytheists; this word can apply to even a single warrior, to two warriors or to a whole army. He says, '... fight against those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah, all together – just as they fight against you, (O, believers) all together ...' (*at-Tawba*: 36); this means that the forces of falsehood always come together; the clear example of this from the life of the Prophet is that the Jews of Medina made an alliance with the polytheists against the Muslims. So, just as the forces of falsehood ally with one another, you must also unite your powers, O, believers and people of truth, to combat the falsehood, disbelief and polytheism.

'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* said, 'Amazed am I at how the people are united to defend their falsehood, yet you have failed to defend your truth!' 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* was amazed that the people of truth were lax in defending their truth, whilst the people of falsehood were united in defending their falsehood. The Quran gives us a clear example of how the people of falsehood unite when it tells us what the Jews said to the polytheists of Mecca: 'Do you not see how those given a share of the Scripture, [evidently] now believe in idols and evil powers? They say of the disbelievers, "They are more rightly guided than the believers."' (*an-Nisa*': 51) This means that the Jews said that the idol-worshippers were certainly more guided than the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his followers.⁽¹⁾ They said this even though their scripture told them that the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would come with the final religion; and they even said to the idolaters of Medina a foretime, 'The time is nigh for the coming of a prophet whom we shall follow, and with whom we shall slay you even as 'Ad and Iram were slain.' 'Ad were the people of Prophet Ad, and Iram was the father of Ad. Thus, the scripture of the people of the Book contained tidings of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and a

(1) When Ka'b ibn Ashraf led a Jewish delegation to Mecca to make a pact with them after the battle of Uhud, Abu Sufyan said to him, 'You are man of scripture and learning, and we are unlettered and devoid of learning; tell me, which of us is more rightly guided and closer to the truth: us, or Muhammad?' Ka'b replied, 'By Allah, you are closer to the truth than Muhammad.' Narrated by Al-Qurtubi in his exegesis of *an-Nisa*': 51

description of his attributes and his time, but when what their scriptures had said actually came true, they denied it and allied themselves with the people of falsehood.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies for us that as long as the forces of falsehood unite against us and we are on the side of truth, we must unite to fight falsehood and bring an end to it. Therefore, Allah says: ‘... And fight against those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah,, all together – just as they fight against you, (O, believers) all together – and know that Allah is with those who are conscious of Him.’ (*at-Tawba*: 36). Thus, Allah commands believers to unite in the fight against polytheists. Furthermore, since Allah is on the side of believers, He will aid them. If Allah is on the side of some, and not on the side of others, then which side is stronger? Of course, the side of the believers is stronger: ‘... and know that Allah is with those who are conscious of Him.’ (*at-Tawba*: 36)

Knowledge, as we have said, is a conviction based on the certainty of evidence; what this means is that it requires no further evidence, for knowledge means to take something unknown, and then prove it with evidence so that it becomes a certainty. If Allah says ‘and know’, the level of knowledge here goes from ‘the knowledge of certainty’ (*at-Takathur*: 5) to ‘the eye of certainty’ (*at-Takathur*: 7). It is well known that knowledge means something known to the soul, which real life corroborates and which you can prove with evidence. If you know something by having been told of it, then your certitude in this knowledge will be commensurate with your trust in the one who told you of it.

For example, when Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* was told that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had claimed to have been taken up from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque in Jerusalem and to have been taken up through the seven heavens, he said, ‘If he indeed said this, he spoke the truth.’ This was the extent of his trust in the one who said this, and concerning this, he based his trust in everything he subsequently said.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told his wife Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* about the first revelation and spoke of his fear at what he had seen. She assured him, ‘No, indeed. Allah would never disgrace you, for you keep your family ties, support the needy, give to those

who have not, honour your guests with great generosity and strive to uphold the truth.’⁽¹⁾ In doing this, she based her judgement on her prior experience, and therefore, she was the first Muslim to use the principle of analogy to arrive at a sound line of reasoning; she based the present on the past.

When the True Lord *the Most High* says ‘... and know that Allah is with those who are conscious of Him’ (*at-Tawba*: 36), it is enough for us to remember that this is the speech of Allah, taken as a matter of certainty in our souls. *‘Ilm al-yaqin* (knowledge of certainty) may come to you from someone whose knowledge and honesty you trust, and when you actually see the thing he told you about by witnessing it for yourself, it becomes *ayn al-yaqin* (eye of certainty). When you actually experience and live it, it becomes *haqq al-yaqin* (true certainty).

When Allah *the Almighty* says ‘... and know that Allah is with those who are conscious of Him’ (*at-Tawba*: 36), we find that some believers took this as knowledge of certainty, eye of certainty or true certainty since they witnessed this in battles when they were few in number. Those who accepted these words without any rational discussion – because it was Allah who spoke them – took it as certain knowledge; those who accepted these words to the level that it is as though they had witnessed them with their eyes took them as certain vision, while those who accepted these words as though they had lived them for themselves took them as certain experience. In order for us to know these levels better, let us read the words of the True Lord *the Most High*: ‘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.’ (*at-Takathur*: 1-5) This is the first level, namely knowledge which is certain because it comes from Allah.

‘You will surely see the Hellfire. Then you will surely see it with the eye of certainty.’ (*at-Takathur*: 6-7) This means that in the Hereafter you will see it with your eyes, after having believed in it as certain knowledge, for then it will become certain vision, namely a beholding of the eye. In this chapter of

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* (3) and *Muslim* (160) on the authority of ‘A’isha Allah be pleased with her

the Quran, Allah *the Exalted* gives us an image of the first two levels of certainty, namely certain knowledge and certain vision. In the Hereafter, a bridge will lead over hell, and all the people – both believers and disbelievers – will see Hellfire as they pass over it. They will both see it blaze and rage. When a believer passes over the bridge and sees hell with its horrors, he will see how faith has saved him from this awful torment, so he will rejoice; furthermore, when he enters paradise and sees its delights, his joy will increase: he will rejoice in being saved from suffering, and then rejoice again in the bliss of paradise and in Him Who gives it. Thus, a believer will say, ‘Praise be to Allah Who saved me from the Fire!’ This is a great blessing and a tremendous triumph. The True Lord *the Most High* says: ‘... Whoever is kept away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise will have triumphed ...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 185). To be saved from hell is in itself a great grace, and to enter paradise is an even greater grace.

Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘But every single one of you will approach it, a decree from your Lord which must be fulfilled.’ (*Maryam*: 71) *Wariduha* (will approach it) is derived from *warada* which means to reach it without actually entering it;⁽¹⁾ They say that ‘*warada al-ma’a*’ means to arrive to

(1) *There are different interpretations of this ‘coming in sight’ (wurud): Some say it means ‘to enter’; Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah said that he heard the Messenger of Allah say: {(Wurud) means to enter: every single righteous and wicked person shall enter it, but for the believer it shall be cold and peaceful as it was for Abraham... And then Allah will deliver those who fear Him from it, and leave the evildoers in it on their knees.} Narrated by Ahmad, Al-Hakim and Adh-Dhahabi.*

Others say it means to pass over the bridge above hell, as several Hadiths on this matter indicate.

Others say it means to come near it and see it, as all will do when they stand in the place of Reckoning.

Some say that this (wurud) means the fevers which may afflict the believer in this worldly life, which are like a taste of hell for the believer, who thereafter will not enter it.

Others say it means to see it, whilst one is in the grave, when the successful will be saved from it, but those who are destined to enter it will enter it and then be taken out by virtue of intercession or some other grace of Allah; this is indicated by the Hadith: {When one of you dies, his ultimate destiny (in the Hereafter) is shown to him morning and evening.} Imam Al-Qurtubi mentions all these possibilities in his exegesis, and says that the believers will pass through hell, but it will be cool and peaceful for them so that they will not even realise they have passed through it.

where a source of water is without actually drinking from it. Thus, every one of us will see hell, and a believer will recognise how Allah has favoured him by saving him from it, whilst a disbeliever will feel regret as he will be tormented in it.

I gave the example before – to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection – of the one who reads about New York City of the USA. The reader knows that it is built on several islands that it contains skyscrapers and that it has a very large population. This reading gives him certain knowledge. When this person gets on a plane and sees the city from the sky, he gains certainty by vision. Also, when he lands and lives there amid the skyscrapers and large population, he attains certainty through experience of it.

In the chapter of *at-Takathur*, Allah only mentions the first two stages of certainty, and He speaks about the third stage in the chapter of *al-Waqi'a* when He says: 'If that dying person is one of those who will be brought near to Allah, he will have rest, ease and a Garden of Bliss. If he is one of those on the Right, [he will hear], "Peace be on you" from his companions on the Right, but if he is one of those who denied the truth and went astray, he will be welcomed with scalding water. He will burn in Hell. This is the certain truth.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 88-95) *Haqq al-yaqin* (the certain truth), or literally 'the truth of certainty', is the final stage of knowledge. A person might deny a certain fact when he reads it or argue about something he has witnessed, but he cannot deny something which he experiences for himself. The history books tell us that this indeed happened to our master 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* who said about one of the battles in which he fought, 'When I held my sword aloft to cut off so-and-so's head, I found that something had been ahead of me and had severed his head.'⁽¹⁾ This means that he witnessed this for himself.

After giving His verdict concerning those who alter the sacred months or exchange them by bringing them forward or postponing them, Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

(1) *Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani narrates in (Fath al-Bar i) (v. 313) that it was actually Abu Waqid Al-Laythi who said this.*

إِنَّمَا النَّسِيءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ يُضِلُّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُحْلُونَهُ عَامًا
وَيُحْكِرُمُونَهُ عَامًا لِّيُوَاطِعُوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ فَيُحِلُّوا مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ زَيْنَ لَهُمْ
سُوءُ أَعْمَلِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Postponing sacred months is another act of disobedience by which those who disregard [God] are led astray: they will allow it one year and forbid it in another in order outwardly to conform with the number of God's sacred months, but in doing so they permit what God has forbidden. Their evil deeds are made alluring to them: God does not guide those who disregard [Him] [37] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 37)

Nasi'a means postponement. It is as though if they were fighting and a sacred month came, they would say, 'We will transfer this sacred month to next month' and continue with their fighting; by doing this, they permitted the month which should have been forbidden and made an ordinary month into a sacred month. Thus, the True Lord *the Most High* makes it clear that such an action is an increase of disbelief since it makes permitted that which is not permitted and makes forbidden (sacred) that which is not forbidden, for disbelief means to lack faith, and if you then try to alter and change the way of faith, this is an increase in disbelief.

He then says: '... by which those who disregard [Allah] are led astray. They will allow it one year and forbid it in another ...' (*at-Tawba*: 37). The verb 'led astray' here is in the passive voice, which means that there must be someone who leads disbelievers astray; this is the work of Satan, for there is a difference between going astray and leading astray: to go astray is a personal matter, whilst to lead astray is to affect others. There are some who are astray and are not content to only be astray themselves, rather, they go to others, lead them astray and tempt them into sin by making it seem alluring to them. Therefore, those who go astray will be requited, but those who lead others astray will be requited even more severely. If a man is astray, he is a disbeliever in his own self; what this means is that his error does not go beyond his own person and is not transferred to others. However, if he tries to tempt others into error and sin, he both goes astray and leads others astray by doing this.

Some orientalist try to use this matter as a way to criticise the Quran – without any understanding or sagacity on their part – by saying, ‘The Quran says: "No burdened soul will bear the burden of another ..." (*Fatir*: 18), and then in another verse it says: "They will bear their own burdens and others besides..." (*al-'Ankabut*: 13). So, how can the Quran say that no one will bear more than his own burden, and then say that there will be those who bear burdens other than their own?’

We say to them that they have not understood the meaning. The first case is that of a person who has gone astray by committing sins, but has not tempted others to do the same; this means that, he has disobeyed Allah but not gone any further than this. As for the second case, this refers to a person who both goes astray and leads others astray; in other words, not only did he commit sins, but he also tempted others to disobey Allah. Every time he tempted someone to sin, he earned the same burden of sin as the one he tempted did.

In this verse, the True Lord *the Most High* says: ‘... by which those who disregard [Allah] are led astray. They will allow it one year and forbid it in another.’ (*at-Tawba*: 37) Of course, they permitted and forbade in this way because they saw that it was in their interest to do so, which means that they subjected the sacred months to their own private desires and went against what Allah willed for His universe the day He created the heavens and the earth.

However, why did they make it permissible one year and forbidden another year? Allah *Glorified is He* gives the answer: ‘... in order to conform outwardly with the number of Allah's sacred months ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 37). Thus, they did so in order to preserve the number of months which Allah *the Exalted* made sacred so that they could justify their actions, and say to themselves, ‘We are not sinful, for if Allah wants there to be four sacred months, we have adhered to this!’ However, Allah’s Law does not only specify the number, but also the identity of the numbered, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* specified for us which months are sacred.⁽¹⁾

(1) *Abu Bakr narrated that the Prophet said: {Time began to turn its course on the day Allah created the heavens and the earth. The year is made of twelve months, of which four are sacred: three are consecutive: Dhu al-Qa'da, Dhul-Hijja and Muharram, and then there is Rajab Mudarr, which stands between Jumada and Sha'ban.} Narrated by Al-Bukhari (3197) and Muslim (1679)*

The first person to intercalate the sacred months in this way was either ‘Amr ibn Luhayy or Na’im ibn Tha’laba, in which one of them profaned (made fighting permissible in) the month of *Muharram* and made another month sacred in its stead.

Those who did this knew that there were four sacred months, proven by how they permitted and forbade in this way, which they would not have done, had they not known this. However, they wanted to subject Allah’s Law to their own whims, and this was their motivation for profaning the month of *Muharram* and making another month sacred instead. They wanted to subject Allah’s demands to their own vain desires, for *Muharram* is proven sacred by evidence from the Quran, and it is a sacred month whether men postpone it or not. It is a sacred month by Allah’s Will, not by the will of men. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* declared that this postponement is an increase of disbelief, for when you defer the sanctity of *Muharram* to another month, you thereby do two things: you profane a sacred month which itself is an act of disbelief, then you sanctify an ordinary month which is also an act of disbelief. The True Lord *the Most High* then says: ‘... in order to conform outwardly with the number of Allah’s sacred months, but in doing so they permit what Allah has forbidden ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 37). Allah declared that they were guilty of disbelief for permitting what He had forbidden in this way.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘... Their evil deeds are made alluring to them ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 37). To ‘make evil deeds alluring’ means to add something to it in order to make it acceptable to people. A woman, for example, has her natural beauty, but she *tatazayyan* (wears make-up) in order to exaggerate her charms so that she will seem more beautiful to men; this is what *tazyin* (to make evil deeds alluring) means. Therefore, to make something seem good means to change its appearance, but not its essence. This occurs in many different things. For example, one can ornament an idea, as when a commander comes to his troops as they prepare for battle and says to them, ‘You shall win victory in mere hours, none of you shall be harmed and your enemy shall flee’; this kind of ornamentation is praiseworthy.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* wants to reveal to us the true nature of how they made evil deeds alluring when they profaned the sanctity of the sacred

months. Furthermore, He revealed to us that this was a blameworthy kind of ornamentation by saying: ‘... Their evil deeds are made alluring to them. Allah does not guide those who disregard [Him].’ (*at-Tawba*: 37) As long as evil seems good to them, this action is outside the confines of guidance and has gone beyond the confines of praiseworthy ornamentation into the confines of blameworthy ornamentation. As long as they have abandoned guidance, Allah *the Exalted* will not aid them, for He does not aid those who disbelieve, those who do evil or those who are iniquitous.

Allah *the Exalted* thus, says: ‘... Allah does not guide those who disregard [Him].’ (*at-Tawba*: 37) This means that by disbelieving they have expelled themselves from Allah’s guidance. The True Lord *the Most High* did not deny them guidance, but they are the ones who denied it to themselves by disbelieving and thereby expelling themselves from Allah’s Will to guide them. This applies only to the guidance of aid; we know that Allah gives both guidance of direction and guidance of aid. The guidance of direction is given to both believers and disbelievers, and Allah guides everyone to His Way, by showing them His signs, and likewise, the Messengers *peace be upon them*, convey the Divine Way, which clearly shows the path that leads to Allah’s good pleasure, as well as the path that leads to His wrath and chastisement. Those who believe in Allah thereby follow into His Will to give them the guidance of aid, and thus, He aids them in this world and gives them Paradise in the Hereafter. As for those who refuse the guidance of direction from Allah, He does not give them the guidance of aid since they disbelieved first. The same is the case with evildoing and iniquity: those who commit these sins thereby deny themselves the guidance of aid. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘... Allah does not guide those who disregard [Him]’ (*at-Tawba*: 37). He *the Most High* also said the same before : ‘... Allah does not guide those who disregard [Him]’ (*at-Tawba*: 19) He *the Almighty* also says: ‘... Allah does not guide those who disregard [Him]’ (*at-Tawba*: 24) Thus, they were the ones who chose disbelief, evil or iniquity, and thereby, they denied themselves the guidance of aid about which the True Lord says: ‘... Allah has increased the guidance of those who follow the right path and given them their awareness [of Him]’ (*Muhammad*: 17).

After commanding the believers to face up to falsehood all together, just as the forces of falsehood will unite against them and fight them all together, the True Lord says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَا لَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ ءَانْفِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
 أَتَقَلَّتْكُمْ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ءَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ فَمَا
 مَتَّعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ﴿٣٨﴾

Believers, why, when it is said to you, ‘Go and fight in God’s way,’ do you feel weighed down to the ground? Do you prefer this world to the life to come? How small the enjoyment of this world is, compared with the life to come! [38]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 38)

When you hear the words, ‘You who believe’ (*at-Tawba*: 38), this call is specifically for those who believe in Allah; for Allah does not command those who do not believe in Him to do anything. None of the rulings of Allah’s way ordain moral responsibility for the disbeliever or the non-believer; all the rulings of Allah’s way are directed to the believers, for, they have chosen to believe by their free will, and have entered faith willingly. He says to you, ‘As long as you have believed in Me as the All-Powerful, All-Sustaining Allah, who possesses all attributes of perfection, so listen to Me as I tell you what I planned for you as a way of life’.

No one should imagine that he can embrace faith without following Allah’s way,⁽¹⁾ and no one should imagine that he can harm Allah in any way. We gave the example before of the ill person who chooses the most skilled of doctors – and no one forces him to go to him – and the doctor runs test to diagnose the illness, and prescribes the treatment for it; but suppose that the ill person leaves the doctor’s clinic, tears up the prescription or buys the

(1) As Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Now whenever Allah and His Apostle have decided a matter, it is not for a believing man or a believing woman to claim freedom of choice insofar as they themselves are concerned: for he who (thus) rebels against Allah and His Apostle has already, most obviously, gone astray.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 36)

medicine but refrains from taking it. In doing this, has he punished the doctor or only punished himself?

The doctor is not affected or harmed in any way by what this ill person does, but he is the one who will have to suffer as the illness becomes worse, and he thereby leads himself towards destruction. The same is true of the man who does not follow Allah's way: he squanders his own soul and immerses it in misery. For the True Lord made His way of guidance so that it contains the cure to all of man's ailments; if man acts in accordance with it he is saved from the trials of this worldly life; and if a society acts in accordance with it, it will not be marred by misery, but rather will be filled with ease, security and peace of mind. And those who do not act in accordance with it do not harm Allah in the least, but rather, they cause themselves misery and destruction.

When the True Lord addresses those who believe, He clarifies to them, 'accept this commandment from Me, for within it lies happiness for man in this life and the next'. The True Lord does not issue any of his commandments or prohibitions without preceding it with the words 'You who believe', such as when He says, 'You who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you...' (*al-Baqara*: 183), and when He says, 'You who believe, fair retribution is prescribed for you in cases of murder...' (*al-Baqara*: 178).

Grammatically speaking, these commandments were not given in the active form, so who ordained them? It was the True Lord. The verb is in all instances given in the passive form, which suggests that these actions of ordaining were performed by many. We might ask, 'Since Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who ordained, why did He not say, "O believers, I have ordained for you", and why did He say, "You who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you..."' (*al-Baqara*: 183)? We say, 'It is because although Allah is the One Who ordained it. He did not ordain it for all of His creatures, but rather, for those who believed in Him. By having faith, you have become subject to all the components of moral responsibility; it is as though the True Lord did not ordain it, then obliged you to do it, but rather, your adherence became a fact the moment you decided, of your own free will, to embrace faith. In this way, all these rulings were ordained for us

by our own free choice. Those who did not choose faith are not ordained to obey the rulings of faith. They cannot be obeyed without the contract of faith which exists between the believers and their Creator. He respected the fact that we entered this contract, so He did not only ascribe it to His own Mighty Essence, but rather, He included in it all those who embraced faith.

If anyone asks about the wisdom of obliging people to carry out religious duties, we say to him, 'Sufficient wisdom is found in the fact that He is the One Who commanded it'. Moreover, the knowledge of the wisdom can only be shared among equals. If a sick person goes to the doctor and he prescribes medicine for him, and the patient keeps on discussing the medicine and its benefits with the doctor, the doctor will refuse to discuss the matter and will say to the patient, 'Go to medical school and study there for seven years, and get your qualifications. Only then we can discuss the matter with each other'. So, you base the justification of the instruction on the status of the one who gives it, even though a human who gives an instruction might make a mistake. If a group of doctors are to examine a patient whose case all previous doctors failed to detect, then they sit after the examination and discuss it. Each doctor will gladly consider the opinions of the other because they are equal in education and learning. But if you want to ask about the wisdom for one of Allah's commandments, you will find no one is equal to Allah, and so this discussion is unacceptable.

So, the one who gives an instruction must have a standing which qualifies him to do so, and the standing of the True Lord is that you believe in Him. Therefore, my opinion is that to look for the reasons behind Allah's commandments is something which faith does not allow. If it is said, for example, that Allah commanded us to fast so that the wealthy person would feel the pain of hunger and therefore feel compassion for the poor, we say, 'No, because if this was the case, poor people would have not been obliged to fast since they already know all about the pain of hunger'. Also, if it is said to us that the wisdom of fasting is that it cures such-and-such illnesses, we say, 'This is not the case because otherwise Allah would not have excused sick people from fasting as He did when He said, "...anyone who is ill or on a journey should make up for the lost days by fasting on other days later..." (*al-Baqara*: 185)

Allah has excused the sick from fasting, then, how can anyone say that the rationale behind the decree of fasting is to cure illnesses? Indeed, there are some illnesses which make it impossible for one to fast.

So, we fast because Allah has commanded us to fast. Since Allah said it, the sufficient reason to do it is the fact that Allah said it, and nothing else besides. If the wisdom of the commandment happens to be apparent, this causes our faith to increase. For example, it has been proven that eating pork is bad for man, because pork is full of microbes and germs which the pig imbibes when it eats refuse. But we do not refrain from eating pork for this reason, rather because Allah commanded us to do so. Had science not discovered this fact for us, this would not have detracted from our conviction of not eating pork; for we take our moral responsibilities from Allah, not from any other source.

Let us return to our examination of the noble verse, ‘You who believe, what is [the matter] with you that, when it is said to you, “Go forth and fight in Allah's way”, you cling heavily to the ground?’ (*at-Tawba*: 38) The words *ma lakum* (what is [the matter] with you that) come when we wonder at a situation which is inconsistent with another. It is as though the notion that the believers should engage in war against the disbelievers is something expected and demanded by the situation. When the believers fight against the disbelievers, they thereby impart a measure of certitude to pious people, for if pious people do not find someone to keep the disbelievers in check, those of them who are likely to be tempted to deviation might deviate. But when they find that there is someone to keep the disbelievers in check, and so their enemy is subjected to chastisement, this will strengthen their faith as believers. It is like when you say to a pupil, ‘What is the matter with you that you are neglecting your studies when the examination is soon?’ That is, when the exam is soon the student is supposed to study hard, and if the pupil neglects his studies, we wonder at his behaviour as it is not consistent with what should be the case. Therefore, we find it hard to believe that such negligence should occur, just as we would find it hard to believe that a sick person would ignore his medicine even though he is in pain.

Here, the True Lord expresses wonder at how the believers were slow to respond when they were called to fight, for the power of faith necessitates that

the believers be always prepared to fight. This preparation firstly intimidates the disbelievers and prevents them from attacking and underrating the believers, secondly it makes the believers able to respond and fight back at any time and thirdly it gives a measure of certitude to the faithful society when it sees that there are those who are always prepared to resist the disbelievers if they attack the believers and try to debase their society.

So, for the believing society to be strong and secure, the believers must always be prepared to fight in Allah's cause and with the desire to be martyred. The True Lord says, '...what is [the matter] with you that, when it is said to you, "Go forth and fight in Allah's way" (*at-Tawba*: 38). It is as though a constant state of preparedness for fighting in Allah's way is something which must necessarily exist by natural disposition and intelligence; and if this preparedness weakens or diminishes, this is a cause for wonder because the believers know that the society of disbelief always lies in wait for them, so they must be constantly prepared for the confrontation. The True Lord *the Exalted* condemns the believers for clinging to the earth, or slackening, when they were called to fight in Allah's cause.

The Arabic word for 'go forth' is *infiru*, from the root word *nafara* which means to set out to something which disrupts one's stability. When one is sitting in his place, something might take place and disturb him so that he is forced to stand up and deal with it. For instance, when you see that a person is about to fall into a well, this disturbs you and you rush from your place to pull him away from danger. From this word is derived the word *nufra* which means estrangement which takes place between loved ones who live in constant affection, but then something happens between them which turns this love into coldness.

So, the word 'go forth' means to set out to deal with a provocative situation; and this is natural and inevitable because the actions of the disbeliever will stir up the believers to confront them. The True Lord's words 'go forth' indicate that the disbelievers will constantly do things to rile the believers. And the True Lord says, 'You who believe, what is [the matter] with you that, when it is said to you, "Go forth and fight in Allah's way", you cling heavily to the ground?' (*at-Tawba*: 38)

Heavily, which is derived from heavy, means that an object's weight is too much for the one who carries it. If you say, 'This is heavy', this means that its weight is more than the power of your muscles can handle, so you cannot carry it. As for 'to cling heavily', it indicates the incompatibility of something with the nature of its composition. If you say, 'So-and-so is heavy', it means that he weighs so much that he cannot stand up without difficulty, nor can he move without discomfort, whereas, 'To cling heavily' means to feign difficulty in doing something; that is, you are able to do something, but you pretend you are unable to do it. For example, there might be something which weighs only one pound, but you claim that it is too heavy for you and you cannot lift it. So, the meaning of 'you cling heavily to the ground' is that you claim that this is too difficult when this is not really the case; you have the power to fight, but you act as though you have no power.

Therefore, we see that the situation required *nafrāh* (going forth to battle) to combat the forces of disbelief because Allah's way which the believers chose for themselves and adhered to brought peace, security and assurance to them and to others. It is as though to cling heavily to the ground is the opposite of to respond and fight in Allah's cause, and to do otherwise would be to act in the cause of Satan, or the cause of the soul's vain desires.

Scholars have spoken about what makes man sin which are the soul that suggests things to him, and Satan. Man sins because of one of these two inducements only. But what is the difference between the two, and how can one be aware of this? The scholars say that if the soul urges you to do a specific sin, such that if you think of something else it keeps on coming back and urging you to do the same sin to gain a passing pleasure; this urging comes from the 'soul which enjoins evil'.

But Satan does not want this from you, he wants you to disobey Allah's way by any means; if you resist him from tempting you to take unlawful wealth, he will make the desire for women seem alluring to you, and if this fails, he will try and tempt you with alcohol. He wants you to be a sinner no matter what the sin is, whereas your soul wants you to commit the sin which it desires – this is the difference.

So, we see that there are two realities: one that calls the believers to fight the disbelievers who seek to corrupt Allah's way on earth, and another reality which calls them to cling to the earth and avoid this fighting either because of love for this world and fulfilling impulses, or else it is because of Satan's tempting. Therefore, the True Lord says, '...are you contented with this world to the life to come?' (*at-Tawba*: 38) Contentment is the love of the heart; if someone is content, this means that he is happy with his present condition.

Had the believers clung heavily to the earth instead of fighting in Allah's cause, this would have meant that something in their souls have defeated something else; that is contentment with this worldly life have defeated the love for the Hereafter. But the logic of faith says that if there is something else besides this world, or another life besides our worldly life, then we must compare what this world can give us with what the Hereafter can give us. If we are content with what this material life can give us, the believer is therefore bereft of all ambition and all intelligence because he is content with a small and passing pleasure, yet rejects an eternal pleasure which is given by Allah's power.

If you scrutinise this world carefully, you will find that it is always changing and transforming. The healthy become sick, the rich become poor and the strong become weak. The pleasures of this world are in constant change, and you have no control over them. You cannot protect yourself from illness, weakness or poverty because these are all vicissitudes which govern you, you cannot govern them or overpower them. If you are content with the pleasures of this life today, you cannot be sure that they will last until tomorrow.

Therefore, you must not delay implementing that which Allah commands you to do because you are able to do it now, but you cannot be sure that you will be able to do it tomorrow.⁽¹⁾ Likewise, you should not consider religious obligations to be something which will take from your freedom or your wealth; rather, it takes from you and gives to you at the same time. If Allah *Glorified is He*

(1) *Ibn 'Abbas narrated that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Take advantage of five before five. Your youth before your old age, your health before your sickness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before your occupation, and your life before your death.'* Narrated by *Al-Hakim in his Mustadrak* (iv. 306), and by *Ibn al-Mubarak in Az-Zuhd* (2).

commands you to pay alms, you might think that this decreases your wealth,⁽¹⁾ or that it is a loss; but we say, 'This might seem to be the case superficially, but He takes this wealth and makes it grow and increase for you'. A single pound, for example, might be increased to seven hundred pounds, then, increased beyond this by as much as Allah wills. Moreover, the very same ruling which takes from you when you are rich will give to you if you become poor and need other people's help. If the same ruling which takes, will also give, this is justice and an assurance against the vicissitudes of time. You should always keep both sides of the bargain in mind. When you give to those who do not have, you must remember that there might come a day when you do not have.

The Arabic word for 'this worldly life' is *dunya*. This word is completely appropriate since the word *dunya* literally means 'the lowest', opposite of 'the highest'. The highest life will be in the Hereafter. If this worldly life is the lowest life, then why would you cling to the lower unless this is simply a result of the weakness of your resolve?

A fine example⁽²⁾ of the strength of faith is set by 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz *Allah rest his soul*. Before he became caliph, he used to wear the finest clothes and the best perfumes; people would pay the one who washed 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz's clothes to wash their clothes with them so that their clothes would be infused with his perfume; such was the fineness of the perfume that 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz would put on his clothes, which would spread to all the clothes that were washed with them. When 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz became caliph, they would bring him the kind of rough clothes he would disdain to wear before he became caliph, and yet he would refuse to wear them and say, 'Bring me clothes that are rougher still!', and he ceased to wear perfume. This was because his standards had changed; there was no contradiction in this, but rather indeed, it was a higher standard of leading life.

(1) *Abu Hurayra narrated that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Charity does not diminish wealth, and Allah only increases the honour of the servant who forgives, and no one humbles himself before Allah save that He raises them.'* Narrated by Muslim (2588), Ahmad (ii. 235) and At-Tirmidhi (2029).

(2) The story of perfuming the clothes of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz *Allah rest his soul* before becoming a caliph and his status afterwards.

He said, ‘My soul yearned for a position of command, so I said to it, “Be still my soul”, and when I got that position, my soul yearned for the caliphate, so I refused it. And when I attained to the position (of caliph), my soul yearned for Paradise, so I follow every path which leads to it.’⁽¹⁾ Thus, we see that there was no contradiction in his conduct in both cases, but rather, his gain in the faith-based bargain increased ever higher. He always sought a higher level. First, he yearned for the office of governorship, and when he gained it he yearned for the caliphate, and when he gained it, he yearned for Paradise; so his aspiration was always rising higher.

I say that his behaviour was not contradictory in the least. The psychologists have explained to us that contradiction in human behaviour is based on different comparisons: a man compares one thing to another, then to another, and so on; for everything in this worldly life is relative. The meaning of ‘relativity’ is that something is referred to the other things around it. If you say, ‘I live above so-and-so’, at the same time you live below so-and-so who lives on the floor above you. So, you are above one person and below another at the same time. Do not take cognizance of one point and ignore the other. This is what is called a ‘relative concept’; that is, concepts do not exist by themselves, but rather, they are based on something else to which they are compared. Likewise, the standards which differentiate things must be based on their value to you. If you look at this worldly life, you find that the True Lord called it the *dunya* (the lowest) and there is no lower name to describe it. Why? Because the pleasures you enjoy in this world are commensurate to the time you spend in it, i.e. to your life-span. However long life lasts, it is still limited to a few years. Your enjoyment of it might last until you are thirty, forty or fifty, more or less. Moreover, your enjoyment in this life is based on what your powers can attain. The one who has one thousand pounds gains what enjoyment they can bring him, the one who has several thousand gets what enjoyment he can from them and the one who has millions gets even more. So, everyone gets as much enjoyment as the wealth he possesses can buy him. Even if a person attains to the highest pleasure he can in this world by becoming a millionaire, these millions will either leave their owner by

(1) *Abu Na`im related this in (Hilyat al-Awliya`)* (v. 331).

running out, or else he will leave them by dying; either the one, or the other will assuredly happen. So, the enjoyment of this world will either be taken from you, or you will be taken from it.

By contrast, the bliss of the Hereafter is eternal and is never taken from you, and you live therein forever and will never be taken from this bliss by destruction or death. This bliss does not depend on the limits of your own powers, for it is drawn from the power of Allah. It is as though the delight is much greater than your powers, and much higher than anything you could possibly attain. For example, if you have a coin and a poor man approaches you, you give him the coin so he can get something to eat. Apparently, it seems that you have preferred the poor man to yourself by giving him what you have so he can spend it, and denying it to yourself. But you have preferred yourself to the poor man because you have given him this coin so that Allah will multiply it for you -from ten to seven hundred times-. Then, which one of you has benefitted and gained the most? You have.

True religion is opposed to foolish selfishness, and it promotes smart selfishness by transferring you to a higher level of self-love. When you give charity, you love yourself because you want to give what is best and most beneficial. When you give to a person who is equal to you in social status, such as if you give him a gift on a special occasion, you expect that he will give you a similar gift on another occasion. So, the gifts are equal, and this person might return the gift to you, or he might not; or he might intend to return it, but be prevented by circumstances from doing so. But the True Lord says, 'Who will give Allah a good loan, which He will increase for him many times over?' (*al-Baqara*: 245)

So, when you give for Allah's sake, you do not receive an equivalent gift in return, but rather, you receive a gift which has been multiplied with manifold increase; and the One Who gives you this reward is Allah who always exists, and whose bestowal will never run out for you, because His power is eternal, and a time will never come when He is unable to repay you what you have given. His are the treasures of the heavens and the earth, and Allah *the Exalted* is always able to multiply your reward no matter how valuable of what you give. Yet, if you prefer this worldly life to the Hereafter,

you thereby judge by your own standards of value, standards which are false and worthless. If you possess the correct standards, you will know that the highest benefit is gained for you when you give and work for the Hereafter, not for this worldly life. Therefore, the True Lord says, ‘...Are you contented with this world to the life to come?’ (*at-Tawba*: 38) That is, you seem to want this worldly life instead of the Hereafter, yet this comparison is neither intelligent nor wise.

The word *min* (to) indicates substitution referring to the words that precedes it, ‘with this world’; and the usual form of substitution and exchange is buying and selling. We know that the word ‘with’ usually refers to what is paid. You say, ‘I bought it with however many dirhams’; that is, you gave the dirhams to buy the thing. It is as though those who are content with this worldly life have taken this life in exchange for the Hereafter, and this is a bargain devoid of intelligence and wisdom.

After reproofing the believers’ content with this worldly life and neglecting the Hereafter, Allah says, ‘How small the enjoyment of this world is compared with the life to come!’ (*at-Tawba*: 38) ‘Enjoyment’ refers to something which is enjoyed. Man cannot be certain that he will enjoy the life of this world, for this is doubtful. Not every living creature enjoys life, and there are people who are miserable and worn-out, and people whose whole lives are spent in toil; and even those who enjoy life now; how can they know what the future will bring to them? Is it not possible that this enjoyment may be temporary? Is it not possible that some circumstance might befall them, or that some twist of fate might fill their lives with misery?

We find that when intelligent people see that one of the favours which Allah has given them might make their life difficult, they give thanks to Allah, whilst those who consider and perceive matters superficially forebode ill tidings, react and end up making things worse. By contrast, a smart person knows that man lives in a world of vicissitudes which indicates that events come along and move us from one state to another: from richness to poverty, from health to sickness and so on for the other worldly states which change and alter. Nothing lasts forever in this worldly life and as long as the world is subject to vicissitudes, people’s circumstances must always be changing.

Suppose that a man reaches the top such that he cannot rise any further. We say to him: You should not be filled with joy and pride at your situation, and you must never forget that you live in a world of vicissitudes, and that nothing lasts forever; for if it had lasted for someone else, you would not have been able to get it yourself since you only got to the top because someone else fell from it. This means that if you get to the top, you will not remain there forever without any change; and as long as you have got as high as you can go, the only possible change that can happen to you is that you will go down. Since once you get to the top there is nowhere else left to climb. The change which you may expect, then, is that you will descend; it is as the proverb goes: 'expect the vanishing of what becomes complete'. Therefore, we find that people of wisdom and insight say that afflictions in wealth and life are actually a cause for bounty's completion. It is as though the True Lord does not want to make His bounties, in this world, complete because if they were completed, they would have to decline. As such, as long as afflictions occur, they will inevitably decline.

When He says, 'How small the enjoyment of this world is compared with the life to come!' (*at-Tawba*: 38), He wants to stress the fact that the bounty of the Hereafter is greater. *Fi*, which literally means 'in' (here: compared with); if you say that something is 'in' something else, which one of them is bigger? The one which contains the other is bigger. If we say that so-and-so is in the house, this means that the house must be bigger than he is, otherwise it would not have accommodated him. If we say that Mohamad is in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia or in Egypt, this implies that there is a container and content, and the container must be larger than the content so that it is big enough to encompass it on all sides.

The True Lord's words, 'How small the enjoyment of this world is compared with the life to come!' (*at-Tawba*: 38), mean that the enjoyment of this world is nothing compared to the enjoyment of the Hereafter because the enjoyment of the Hereafter is so vast that it encompasses all the enjoyment of this worldly life and more besides. As long as these words issue from the omnipotent power of Allah, this means that the enjoyment of the Hereafter is infinite compared to the enjoyment of this world. If the True Lord says, 'How

small the enjoyment of this world is compared with the life to come!’ (*at-Tawba*: 38), this is meant to depict the vastness of the enjoyment of the Hereafter. Addressing the intellect, the exception found in the words *illa qalil* (but small) and in the verse, ‘How small’ (*at-Tawba*: 38) means: in contrast with the utmost enjoyment which might be attained in this worldly life.

An example to illustrate this is that you find that Allah may give a person the utmost enjoyment in this world, so that he imagines that there could not possibly be more enjoyment than that which he has attained. So, the True Lord clarifies to him: even if you have the most enjoyment which this worldly life could possibly give you, it is still a paltry thing compared to the enjoyment of the Hereafter.

And if someone who has no enjoyment in this world looks to the one to whom Allah has given the enjoyment of this world and wonders, ‘Could there be any enjoyment greater than this? This man enjoys this, and that, as though he were living in Paradise, and I do not see how there could be any more enjoyment than this?’, we say to him: No, what you see as being the utmost end of human enjoyment is but small compared to the enjoyment of the Hereafter.

So, His words: ‘How small...’ (*at-Tawba*: 38) do not refer to the ordinary enjoyment which people experience in this world, but rather, they mean the absolute highest enjoyment which only very few people in the world could reach or attain. A man might live in a huge palace with hundreds of servants and electronic devices which allow him to get anything he wants just by pressing a button, so that everything around him fulfils his desires; indeed he is even able to control the temperature of his palace, and he enjoys the finest kinds of food and drink, and if he wants to move from one place to another he may press a button which moves his chair wherever he wants to go, and everyone around him obeys him blindly so that all his desires are fulfilled and his life is like a sweet dream. If a person lives in such luxury and exults in this blessing, the Lord of Might corrects him and says to him: Do not exult, for this enjoyment in which you live is but small compared with the enjoyment of the Hereafter.

If the people read or hear about the enjoyment in which this man lives, or witness it for themselves, and are dazzled by it, Allah clarifies for them: Do not be dazzled or amazed, for all the enjoyment you see is but small compared

with the enjoyment of the Hereafter. So His words, 'How small...' (*at-Tawba*: 38) indicate that Allah has made it man's natural disposition to love and desire much more than just a little enjoyment. The True Lord warns His servants not to let the blessings of this worldly life bewitch them no matter how great they might seem, clarifying to them: 'Do not think that these blessings are a lot, for in fact they are paltry blessings compared to what awaits you in the Hereafter'. If it is natural for a man to love many blessings, he should not be infatuated with the bounties of this worldly life, but rather, he must seek out the bounties of the Hereafter. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If the son of Adam were given a valley full of gold, he would love to have a second one and if he were given the second one, he would love to have a third...' ⁽¹⁾ That is, the man who owned two valleys of gold would love to keep hold of them and then desire to have a third valley even though he is not likely to live long enough to spend what the first valley alone is worth. By nature, man aspires to greater bounty. Why is this? Because man forgets about the Hereafter, and believes that this worldly life is all there is, and therefore you find that a person like this wants to look after himself, and if he has enough to suffice himself he wants to look after his children, and if he has enough to provide for himself and his children he looks forward to reserve for his grandchildren. But the true believer is the one who knows that the life of this world is but a road which leads to the Hereafter, and a short journey which will come to an end, so he does not feel the need for such precautions. The one who strives his utmost to make such precautions is the one who thinks that this worldly life is the whole purpose of creation, and does not realise that it is merely a path leading to the Hereafter.

We find that such people wrong themselves by seeking to satisfy their passions, trying to take all that this world can give whether it is lawful or unlawful; and this is clearly shown by their worldly behaviour.

As for the believer, he is like the student who works hard in his studies and gets up early to go to school, and stays up late at night to revise, denying himself many enjoyments because by his intelligence and wisdom he knows

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (*Sahih*) (6438) and Abu Na'im in his *Hilya* (i. 337), on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr.

that this is also a temporary denial, and that he will only have to do this for a short period of time so that he can live the rest of his life in comfort and get a good position, and a high income, and all the other things which the future can give him. As for the one who wrongs himself, he is like the student who does not go to school but instead spends his time playing and having fun; by doing this he is being short-sighted, allowing himself to immediate pleasures and ensuring that he will experience hardship for the rest of his life. So, both students have given themselves what they want: the first one gave himself a long and comfortable future, and reached the top of society; the second gave himself an immediate but short-lived pleasure, and then after a few years became a worthless wretch in his community. So, beware of looking no further than your own two feet, for the world does not end where your feet stop, but rather, it stretches on to distant horizons; and if you see these horizons, it is not right for you to choose such limited, short-lived pleasures.

The True Lord's words, 'You who believe, what is [the matter] with you that, when it is said to you, "Go forth and fight in Allah's way" you cling heavily to the ground? Are you contented with this world to the life to come? How small the enjoyment of this world is compared with the life to come!' (*at-Tawba*: 38) were revealed about the battle of Tabuk,⁽¹⁾ the first battle which Muslims ever fought against non-Arabs. This battle had been preceded by all the battles which took place between the Muslims and the disbelievers and polytheists in the Arabian Peninsula such as the battles with the polytheists at Badr or Mecca, or the battles with the Jews of Medina. These battles were fought within the Arabian Peninsula, but the battle of Tabuk was fought against the Byzantines on the northern borders of the Arabian Peninsula. When the army began to be prepared to go to Tabuk to fight the Byzantines, the Muslims were reluctant to go.

Here a question emerges, 'How could the Muslims fight the Byzantines, when they had grieved to see the Persians defeat the Byzantines'? Would the Muslims grieve at the defeat of the Byzantines, and then go to fight them

(1) Al-Qurtubi says in his exegesis (iv. 3066): 'It is unanimously accepted that this verse was revealed about those who deserted the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* at the battle of Tabuk, in the ninth year after the Emigration, one year after the conquest of Mecca.'

themselves? We say yes, because faith-based attitude is not cast in iron, but rather, it alters depending on the attitudes of the disbelievers towards faith and Islam.

The true believer reacts to events with a reaction based on faith. For example, we find that the heart of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* was filled with mercy and compassion, whilst the heart `Umar ibn al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* was filled with strength and resolve. Look at the attitude of each of them when the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* passed away and some Muslims apostatized from Islam and refused to pay alms, Abu Bakr as-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* decided to fight these apostates since they had refused to honour one of the Pillars of Islam, yet `Umar ibn al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* opposed Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* in this regard and said, 'O Abu Bakr, will you fight those who have testified that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah?' Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* replied, 'O `Umar, were you a tyrant in the day of pagan ignorance only to become a coward after embracing Islam? By Allah, if they deny me a single camel-rope which they used to give Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* I will fight them for it!'⁽¹⁾ So, the attitudes were reversed: power and might filled the heart of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* who was famous for his compassion, mercy and empathy, whilst the heart of `Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was filled with softness, though he was famous for his power and might. Had it been `Umar *Allah be pleased with him* who said what Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* said, the people would have said, 'This is but the harshness we have come to expect from `Umar'.

But instead, the people said of `Umar *Allah be pleased with him* 'His heart has softened whilst the heart of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* has hardened!' This is the attitude of faith which fills the soul of every believer. That which determines a believer's attitude is his faith, not his nature, and therefore the True Lord described the believers by saying, '...Allah will soon replace you with people He loves and who love Him, people who are humble towards the believers, hard on the disbelievers....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54)

(1) Narrated by al-Muttaqi al-Hindi in (*Kanz al-Ummal*) (iv. 349).

How can a person be proud and humble at the same time? And how can a person describe himself as being proud and humble? How can two opposites be found in one person? But the True Lord reassures us when He says, ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Those who follow him are harsh towards the disbelievers and compassionate towards each other. ...’ (*al-Fath*: 29) The True Lord describes the believers as being firm, and described them as being full of mercy. In order to understand what this means, you must be aware that the attitude of faith is what determines the feelings of the believer not his personal and individual nature. He adjusts his attitudes to correspond with the attitude of faith and what it requires of him; so he is firm and merciful, as well as humble and proud.

Let us return to the battle of Tabuk about which the verse which we are currently examining was revealed, and to the question: How could the Muslims fight the Byzantines, when they grieved the day the Byzantines were defeated by the Persians? We say: The Muslims grieved because an atheistic force which denied the existence of Allah had defeated a force of faith which was linked to a divine message, and because the Byzantines, as Christians, were therefore closer to the hearts of the believers than the disbelievers. So, it was a matter of belief in the existence of Allah. As for the battle of Tabuk, it was a matter of acceptance of the abrogating message and the prevention of this message from spreading; because of this, the attitude in the battle of Tabuk was that of an enemy of the faith, and this is what led to the war.⁽¹⁾

If we consider the battle itself, we find that Tabuk is very far from Medina, and the time of the battle was during the fierce heat of summer. Moreover, it fell soon after the battle of Hunayn in which the Muslims had fought fiercely. It had also been a difficult year, and the army did not have enough food, horses or camels.

Many hardships were involved in to this battle. The heat was intense, the distance was long and the strength of the Muslims was diminished after the battle

(1) Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani says in (*Fath al-Bari*) (viii. 111) that the reason for the battle was that the Muslims heard from the Nabatean tribesmen who delivered oil from the Levant to Medina that the Byzantines had gathered an army and the Arab tribes of Lakhm and Judham to aid them, and that they had reached the town of Balqa’; so the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* chose people to go out and meet them, and told them where the battle would be fought.

of Hunayn. When the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to go out to a battle, he would not tell his companions about it until they arrived at the battlefield; yet this battle was an exception, for Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told his companions about it before they set out from Medina in order that they could prepare for the hardships which awaited them. But the Muslims dragged their feet, and some of them got used to sitting in the shade of Medina's orchards and eating their fruits. Enjoying the shade and the fruit, they responded with reluctance to go out to fight. So, this verse was revealed to rebuke them for this. The True Lord then revealed the following verse to explain and clarify the consequences of this action:

إِلَّا تَنْفَرُوا يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَيَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ
وَلَا تَضُرُّهُ شَيْئًا وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

**If you do not go out and fight, God will punish you severely and
put others in your place, but you cannot harm Him in any way:
God has power over all things [39] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 39)**

That is, Allah warns you of chastisement if you do not go out to fight; and if the True Lord gives a warning, then what He warns will certainly come true. If you refuse to go out to fight because you fear the possible suffering ahead in the shape of weariness and toil, then what about the suffering which will assuredly befall you if you disobey Allah's command for you to go out and fight? If a comparison is made between the hardships of travel, fighting and intense heat on one hand, and the chastisement of Allah on the other, the believer will undoubtedly choose the hardships of war, however bad they may be; for every action is commensurate with the power of the one who performs it. The possible hardships of heat, travel and the danger of warfare cannot be compared to Allah's chastisement because the chastisement which awaited those who dragged their feet or fled from fighting would be worse than the hardship of agreeing to fight, however hard it might have been.

The True Lord then says, '...and will replace you with another people...' (*at-Tawba*: 39). So, do not think that by dragging your feet and being unwilling to fight, you thereby harm Allah in any way; for Allah is well able to create new men, and this is within His power, which is why He then says,

‘...Allah has power over all things.’ (*at-Tawba*: 39) In another verse, the True Lord says, ‘Though now you are called upon to give [a little] for the sake of Allah, some of you are grudging. Whoever is grudging, is so only towards himself; Allah is the source of wealth and you are the needy ones. He will substitute other people for you if you turn away, and they will not be like you.’ (*Muhammad*: 38)

Hence, do not think that the wealth or power you possess makes you capable of harming Allah’s way with miserliness or dissent; for Allah *Glorified is He* is well able to replace you with other people who possess the fervour of battle and sacrifice for Allah’s cause, for He is able to create anything.

His words, ‘...Allah has power over all things.’ (*at-Tawba*: 39), give the grounds for the previous assertions made when He said, ‘If you do not go forth and fight, Allah will punish you with a painful chastisement and will replace you with another people, and you cannot harm Him in any way...’ (*at-Tawba*: 39). If one of them thought that these were merely theoretical words, the True Lord gave them a practical example based on real events which they had witnessed for themselves, when the polytheists of Quraysh gathered to fight them, but Allah gave them succour against them. Thus, He says:

إِلَّا نَضْرِبُوهُ فَقَدْ نَضَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا
فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّا اللَّهُ مَعَنَا فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ
سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَى وَكَلِمَةَ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

Even if you do not help the Prophet, God helped him when the disbelievers drove him out: when the two of them were in the cave, he [Muhammad] said to his companion, ‘Do not worry, God is with us,’ and God sent His calm down to him, aided him with forces invisible to you, and brought down the disbelievers’ plan. God’s plan is higher: God is almighty and wise [40] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 40)

The orientalists have objected to the words of the True Lord, ‘If you do not help the Prophet, Allah certainly helped him...’ (*at-Tawba*: 40). As is their wont, as doubters in Islam, we find that they try their best to seek out

‘mistakes’ they imagine exist in the Noble Quran, saying, ‘The awe and reverence you have for the Quran, as Muslims, prevents your minds from having the necessary boldness needed to study its language properly and discover the mistakes it contains. However, if you consider the Quran as an ordinary book with no sanctity, you will find contradictions and mistakes in it’.

The orientalisks have taken a lot of time to search for grammatical mistakes in the Noble Quran, and they came upon the grammatical form of cause and effect. Whoever reads their criticism will see at once that the plain truth is that they have been ignorant of the subtleties of the Arabic language; they only learned Arabic in a superficial way, and they have not become adept or even proficient in it. They claim that the form of conditional sentences in Arabic necessitates that every condition have a result (a ‘main clause’ as we would say in English), so that if you say, ‘If Zayd comes, honour him!’, you find that the honouring is mentioned after the coming of Zayd; and if you say, ‘If you revise, you will succeed’, then the success comes after the revision – so the time of the response (the main clause) comes after the time of the conditional clause.

They gave this entire preamble in order that they might then profess doubts about the Quran. We say to them, ‘What you say about conditional clauses and their results are correct?’, but you must understand something further: when the matter is fulfilled, we see that the result was actually the cause of the condition; for when you say, ‘If you revise you will succeed’, if the student does not think of the good things that success will bring him, he will not bother to revise; rather, the student must first imagine the positive things success will bring him in order to be motivated to revise. So, the result is the motive for the condition, but the condition is the practical cause of the result. The success which is first imagined is the reason why the effort is expended to attain this success; so the point of view is different; this is a motivational cause, and the other is a practical cause.

Allah’s words, ‘If you do not help the Prophet...’ (*at-Tawba*: 40) contain a verb in the present simple tense, but the True Lord follows it with a past-tense verb, ‘Allah certainly helped him.’ But can the condition refer to the present or the future, whilst the response refers to the past? We say that the meaning

here is: ‘If you do not help him, then Allah will help him, which is proved by how He helped him before’. This is not a result of the conditional clause, but rather, it is a proof of the result. When the proof of the result is an event in the past, it is even more of a proof that the result will indeed come true. When Allah called them to go out and fight and they clung to the earth, He clarified for them: Do you think that your striving is what will succour Muhammad, and succour his mission? No, because He is able to succour him, which is proved by how He succoured him before on many occasions; and the most crucial of all these occasions was the Emigration, when He succoured him with one single man, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* against Quraysh and all the disbelievers of Mecca. Likewise, He succoured him at Badr with forces which you could not see. So, the previous succour which Allah gave His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a precedent; therefore, it is not the result of the conditional, but rather, it is proof of the result.

We see in Allah’s words, ‘If you do not help the Prophet, Allah certainly helped him...’ (*at-Tawba*: 40), that Allah’s succour of him applied to three different times. The Arabic word *idh* (when), is repeated three times. He says: ‘...when the disbelievers drove him out, when the two of them were in the cave, he [Muhammad] said to his companion, “Do not worry, Allah is with us...”’ (*at-Tawba*: 40). That is, we have the time of the driving away, the time of the cave and the time in which Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* ‘Do not worry, Allah is with us...’ (*at-Tawba*: 40). Succour was given on each of these three occasions: upon the expulsion from Mecca, when Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entered the cave with Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* and when he spoke with Abu Bakr.

Someone might ask, ‘Was it the disbelievers who drove Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* out of Mecca, or was it Allah who made him leave?’ We say that the stubborn refusal of his people, their plotting against him and their enmity towards his mission all forced him to leave; but the True Lord intended a different result for this exit than the disbelievers themselves intended. They wanted to kill him, and when he left they thought that his message would dwindle and die because of his isolation; but Allah made him

leave so that the message would be spread, and He made it clear to them: 'You want to drive Muhammad out by persecuting him, but I will not allow you to expel him in a degraded state, so I will make him leave with the support of helpers'. They say that the Emigration was the 'twin of the mission', meaning that the Mohammedan message came alongside the Emigration, when the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was taken by Khadija the mother of the believers *Allah be pleased with her* to see Waraqa ibn Nawfal after his experiences in the cave of Hira', Waraqa said to him, 'Would that I could live to see the day when your people drive you out!' Waraqa ibn Nawfal said this to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* before he was even sure he was a prophet, so the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'Will they drive me out?' Waraqa ibn Nawfal replied, 'Indeed yes, for no man ever brought that which you have brought save that he was opposed.'⁽¹⁾

So, the Emigration was an indivisible part of Muhammad's responsibility as a message-bearer. Why? Because he was the first one ever to announce to the leaders of Quraysh the message of truth and monotheism. The notion of the Emigration was there from the moment the mission began because the mission was a call made for the leaders of Quraysh to hear, and they were the leaders of the whole of Arabia. Had he made the call to anyone other than the leaders of the Arabs, they would have said, 'He held these people to be weak, and therefore made his call to them'. But the call of the message was proclaimed to the leaders of all Arabia, and they began to torment the Muslims to put an end to this call. Allah did not will to give the Prophet succour through Quraysh in Mecca because Quraysh had become accustomed to ruling the Arabs, and so when a Messenger came to guide all the people to Islam, the people to whom he was sent would have said, 'Quraysh have followed him out of tribal allegiance because they wish to rule the whole world just as they have ruled Arabia'. So, the True Lord wanted to make it clear to us that the first call was given to the leaders of the Arabs, but it was necessary that succour be given to Islam, and the religion be allowed to spread, by a different city other than that one so that it could not be said that it

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (Sahih) (3) and Muslim in his (Sahih) (160)

was only allegiance to Muhammad which created faith in his message – rather, it was faith in the message of Muhammad which created the allegiance to him.

It may be observed that the verb in Arabic for ‘emigrate’ is *haajar*; this tells us that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not *hajar* (abandon) Mecca, but rather, he emigrated from it; *muhajarah* indicates a certain measure of reciprocity on the parts of two sides. His people persecuted him so he was forced to leave; and his leaving in itself was a form of succour because Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was alone when he left his house which was surrounded by strong young men from all the Arab tribes who were determined to strike him a single blow all at once; and he threw dust at them so that their sight was veiled. Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* was waiting for him outside.⁽¹⁾ It was as though the True Lord wanted to affirm to them that they would never get to Muhammad, neither by a secret plot nor by an open assault; and this was help from Allah.

The True Lord continues, ‘...when the two of them were in the cave...’ (*at-Tawba*: 40), and He confirms that, in the cave, another instance of help took place. This was that the tracker⁽²⁾ whom Quraysh employed who was named Karz ibn Alqama from the tribe of Khuza’a followed their tracks until he came to the cave, and said, ‘This is Muhammad’s footprint, and it resembles nothing so much as the print in the *Ka’ba*, that is, the footprint of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him!*’ Then he said, ‘And this is the print of Abu Bakr, or his son, and they did not go any further than this.’ The tracker could identify each foot’s shape and the print it left in the ground, and he added that they had not gone any further than that place unless they had risen into the sky or sunk into the earth. Despite this certainty, they did not enter

(1) *Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him was waiting in his own house with his family, and the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him joined him after having passed through the ranks of forty strong young men who had unsheathed their swords to kill him; the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him then came to Abu Bakr’s house and told him that he had been given leave (by Allah) to emigrate, and he took Abu Bakr as his travelling companion, and they then left together from Abu Bakr’s house. This was narrated by Al-Bukhari (3905), Ahmad (vi. 198), Abu Na’im in (Dala’il An-Nubuwwa) (p. 270), and Ibn Hisham in his (Sira) (ii. 96).*

(2) The story of Karz ibn `Alqama the trail tracer at the time of immigration

the cave, and none of them thought to turn over a stone or search for Muhammad and his companion even though this is the first thing that anyone would think of doing. As long as the footprints led to the cave, they should have looked inside it, but none of them did.

One of them went to urinate, exposing his private parts in the direction of the cave, and therefore Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* said to the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'If one of them even looks beneath his feet, he will see us.'

The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* replied with the wisdom of prophethood 'Were they able to see us, they would not have exposed their private parts in our direction.'⁽¹⁾ This indicates that an Arab did not like to expose his private parts to others, or else, it was a dignifying honour for Muhammad that the private parts of another could not be exposed to him; the reader may take it as he likes. In any case, it was a moment of inspiration for the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. In addition to this, the True Lord made a spider weave its web over the entrance to the cave, and made a dove build a nest there containing eggs, so that Suraqa ibn Malik said, 'Muhammad and his companion could not have entered the cave, or else they would have disturbed the dove's nest and broken the spider's web.

We know that the spider's web is the weakest of houses, as the True Lord says, '...the spider's is the frailest of all houses' (*al-'Ankabut*: 41). The divine miracle emerges here in that Allah held back a group of strong warriors with the frailest of all houses, a spider's house; and Allah's omnipotent power emerged in that He made a spider's web stronger than steel, and likewise the True Lord willed that the dove lay eggs even though it is the meekest of birds and flees at the slightest disturbance. This was succour, and then the third act of succour was psychological and personal: when Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* said to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'If one of them even looks beneath his feet, he will see us', we find that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied with all confidence in his Lord, 'What say you of

(1) *There is some uncertainty as to whether this narration is authentic or not, as stated by Al-Haythami in (Majma' az-zawa'id) (vi. 54), and Al-'Asqalani in (Fath al-Bari) (vii. 11).*

two for whom Allah is the third?’⁽¹⁾ This reply does not seem to be in line with Abu Bakr’s question since Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* feared that if they looked beneath their feet they would see who was in the cave; so the natural response would be to say, ‘They will not see us’. But Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to awaken our faith to the highest of principles, so he said, ‘What say you of two for whom Allah is the third?’, for as long as Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* were in the company of Allah, and Allah cannot be seen by the eye, then all who are in Allah’s company also cannot be seen by the eye.

The word of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which Abu Bakr was accustomed to trusting, was the irrefutable argument for anything he said. When Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said that he was taken to Jerusalem in a single night and raised to Heaven, Abu Bakr said, ‘If he said it, he spoke the truth.’⁽²⁾ So when the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* as He tells us, ‘...do not worry, Allah is with us...’ (*at-Tawba*: 40), the grief was bound to leave Abu Bakr. When he entered the cave, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*⁽³⁾ found holes and worried that they might contain snakes or serpents, so he began to tear pieces from his clothes and fill the holes with them, until he only had enough clothes left to cover his private parts; and then he closed the remaining holes with his hand and his heel.⁽⁴⁾

Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* was willing to sacrifice his own life for Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him*. Simply, if Abu Bakr's life was exposed to danger, he is but one man, but if the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* suffered any fatal incident, the entire mission falls into ruin. The grief of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* was not a reflection of weak faith but a passion overwhelmed with fears lest the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* should face any harm. The Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘...grieve not; verily, Allah is

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (*Sahih*) (4663) and Muslim in his (*Sahih*) (2381)

(2) The details of this narration were given earlier.

(3) The story of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* filling the holes of the cave upon his entrance to it with the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.

(4) The details of this story are narrated by Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi in (*Kanz Al-Ummal*) (iv. 349).

with us. Thereupon, Allah bestowed upon him from on high His [gift of] inner peace and aided him with forces which you could not see.' (*at-Tawba*: 40). The scholars differed⁽¹⁾ whether the words 'upon him' refer to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* or to Abu Bakr, *Allah be pleased with him*? Since the inner peace was sent down, it must have been sent down to a grieved heart. But all other pronouns in the verse refer to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*:

- 'If you do not succour Him.' (i.e. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*).
- 'Then [know that Allah will do so—just as] Allah succoured him.' (i.e. Muhammad *Allah's peace be upon him*).
- 'When those who were bent on denying the truth drove him (Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*) away.'

Then Allah's *Glorified is He* words come, 'Thereupon Allah bestowed upon him from on high His [gift of] inner peace' (*at-Tawba*: 40). The pronoun must refer to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. I observe that the commentators did not pay attention to the fact that the Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'The Prophet said to his Companion, "Grieve not; verily, Allah is with us..."' (*at-Tawba*: 40). The words of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* helped Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* to find inner peace. Evidently, the pronoun refers to Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*. The Lord *Glorified is He* says, '[Allah] aided him with forces which you could not see.' (*at-Tawba*: 40) The disbelievers saw a cave's entrance with a dove's nest and spider's web that were not disturbed which discouraged them from entering it where they would find the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, this is not the only meaning of the verse; Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'with forces which you could not see.' (*at-Tawba*: 40), while the dove and the spider can be seen. First, comes the idea that no one thought to look into the cave, even though the footprints led to it; Allah covered their hearts and kept their thoughts from that idea. There was also Suraqah ibn Malik—a

(1) Al-Qurtubi, Tafsir, 4:3074; Ibn Kathir 2:358; Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*, ibn Al-' Arabi held the opinion that the verse speaks of the Divine Peace given to Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*.

disbeliever who managed to catch up with the Messenger of Allah and Abu Bakr on their way to Medina, but every time he tried to approach them, his horse lost footing in the sand.⁽¹⁾ Truly, the Lord *Glorified is He* emphasizes, ‘with forces which you could not see’ and ‘None can comprehend You Lord's forces save Him alone’ (*al-Muddaththir*: 31). In other words, the powers that Allah sent to support His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* during his migration are known only to Allah. Everything in the universe simply works in accordance with the Will of Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* even subdues the disbelievers to serve the religion. Was not the guide of the Prophet during his migration from Mecca to Medina ‘Abdullah ibn Urayqit—a disbeliever at that time?’⁽²⁾ In this way, a disbeliever serves the faith. Meanwhile, the great reward that Quraysh promised to anyone who would tell about the place of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not tempt this disbelieving guide to betray the Prophet. Allah placed something in the disbeliever's heart to make him faithful to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.

The Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘[Allah] aided him with forces which you could not see, and brought utterly low the cause of those who were bent on denying the truth...’ (*at-Tawba*: 40). The disbelievers wanted to terminate the message by killing the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* driving him far away or imprisoning him.⁽³⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to alert us to the fact that falsehood can never prevail over truth. The truth is always triumphant. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘[He] brought utterly low the cause of those who were bent on denying the truth...’ (*at-Tawba*: 40). Only a high cause can be made low when its highness is like that of the scum on top of water about which the Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘As far as the scum is concerned, it passes away as [does all] dross; but that which is of benefit to man abides on Earth.’ (*ar-Ra‘d*: 17). Allah *Glorified is He* introduces this parable saying, ‘[Whenever]

(1) *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, (3906); *Ahmad, Musnad*, 4:176

(2) *The details of this were narrated by ‘A’isha Allah be pleased with her as narrated by Al-Bukhari* (2263).

(3) In this regard, Allah says, ‘And [remember, O Prophet,] how those who were bent on denying the truth were scheming against you in order to restrain you [from preaching], or to slay you or to drive you away; thus have they [always] schemed; but Allah brought their scheming to nought – for Allah is above all schemers.’ (*al-Anfal*: 30)

He sends down water from the sky, and [once-dry] river-beds are running high according to their measure.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17), i.e. every river-bed takes the amount of water as divinely planned for it 'the stream carries scum on its surface' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17). As seen, whenever a stream runs, we find that it carries dirty floating thing; but do they stay? No, they are cast aside by the force of the current and the water is eventually clean. Then, the Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'In this way does Allah set forth the parable of truth and falsehood: for, as far as the scum is concerned, it passes away as [does all] dross; but that which is of benefit to man abides on Earth' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17). The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us that the vain dominance of disbelievers is like the scum over water. Why did Allah allow disbelief to become high, even only temporarily? The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants that when Islam comes and defeats it, Islam would overcome something high and strong. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* gives the contrast saying, '[He] brought utterly low the cause of those who were bent on denying the truth, whereas Allah's cause remained supreme.' (*at-Tawba*: 40)

The rhetoric of the Quranic performance has its own order, '[He] brought utterly low the cause of those who were bent on denying the truth, whereas Allah's cause remained supreme' (*at-Tawba*: 40) because Allah's cause is always supreme, and is not ever 'made' supreme. There is no time when it was not supreme. So, Allah did not say, '[He] made Allah's cause supreme'. Allah's cause is always supreme. If the disbelievers wanted to kill the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* or banish him to a distant land where he could not deliver his message or imprison him they would never be able to do any because Allah is Mighty and Undefeatable. His Might is built on wisdom. Here, the Lord *Glorified is He* wants to alert the believers to the fact that their reluctance to strive in the battle of Tabuk would not harm the message in any way, for Allah helped His messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* when he was alone and sent invisible powers to support him. Now, if succour needs no more than Allah's word and cannot come save by Allah's Will, then what is the reason for this reluctance?

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَنْفِرُوا خِفَافًا وَثِقَالًا وَجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ فِي
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

So go out, no matter whether you are lightly or heavily armed, and struggle in God's way with your possessions and your persons: this is better for you, if you only knew [41] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 41)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* opens doors wide to have His pleasure. They should rush to aid the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and clear their minds of the fog which clouded them. He opens for them the door leading to Him since they are all His creatures and dependents. Allah *Glorified is He* wants them all to win guidance and help the Message of Truth. Fighting in Allah's cause may seem a source of hardship but it promotes and empowers the message. When Muslims give succour to the Islamic call, they gain forgiveness, repentance and mercy. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Verily, Allah is more pleased with the repentance of His slave than a person who lost their camel in a waterless desert carrying their provision of food and drink, and then finds it.'⁽¹⁾

Furthermore, the Lord *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith, 'The sky said, "O Lord, give me leave to fall in pieces upon the Children of Adam, for they have tasted Your bounties and refused to give You thanks." The seas said, "O Lord, give me leave to drown the Children of Adam, for they have tasted Your bounties and refused to give You thanks." Likewise, the earth said the same. In response, the Lord *Glorified is He* says, "Leave My servants to Me; had you created them, you would have shown mercy to them. If they repent to Me, I am their beloved and if they repent not, I am their doctor.'⁽²⁾ We can see how merciful Allah is with His creatures.

After rebuking Muslims for their idleness regarding the struggle, the Lord *Glorified is He* opens doors wide for them to repent saying, 'Go forth to war.' It is a commandment from Allah by means of which Allah *Glorified is He*

(1) *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, (6309); Muslim, Sahih, (2747)*

(2) *Al-Ghazali recorded a similar narration from an early Muslim predecessor. See, Ihya' 'Ulum Ad-Deen, 4:52.*

awakens faith in hearts of Muslims and meanwhile opens the door for them to repent for their reluctance to go out and fight the battle of Tabuk. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Go forth to war, whether it be easy or difficult [for you]' (*at-Tawba*: 41). *Nafara* is to go out for something with provocation; the word *nafar* i.e. 'separated' such as that which exists between two friends who used to love one another until one of them says or does something provoking the other to break up their relationship, so they became separated. The Lord *Glorified is He* commands, 'Go forth to war' to support Allah's religion and cause. When you support Allah's cause, He opens for you the door to highness and elevation. He says, 'Go forth to war, whether it be easy or difficult [for you]' (*at-Tawba*: 41). *Khifafan* (lightly/easily or heavily) refers to the strong and healthy people who are not tired out or exhausted by travel and movement, whereas *thiqalan* (difficult or heavily) refers to those who are sick or elderly. Allah wants all members to help one another in defence of their community to escape the awful torment and attain His Forgiveness and Satisfaction. A healthy person can take part in fight, but what about the sick person? The sick follows the example of Sa'eed ibn Al-Musayyeb who was sick and they told him, 'Allah excused you from taking part in fight, 'No blame attaches to the blind, nor does blame attach to the lame, nor does blame attach to the sick [for staying away from a war in Allah's cause].' (*al-Fath*: 17)' In response, he said, 'By Allah, I will be with Muslims to appear more and huge in numbers and look after their belongings.'⁽¹⁾ A sick person may be intelligent and clever; their advice may prove useful. The fact that the sick person takes part in the battle will give a role-model to people and provoke them to do the same. The sick and weak person can encourage the strong to go out and fight. When the strong people see the sick taking active part in fight, they will be ashamed to stay behind. The scholars differ⁽²⁾ about the meaning of His words, 'Go forth to war, whether it be easy or difficult...' (*at-Tawba*: 41). Some say that the verse refers to the individuals' weight. Some are light, whereas others are heavy and cannot move easily. Others say that a single person may have

(1) *Al-Qurtubi, Tafseer, 4:3076*

(2) *Al-Qurtubi mentions ten different opinions in his exegesis (4:3075) and declares that the strongest opinion is that all people were commanded to go forth, whether it was easy or difficult for them.*

ardent motives and an enthusiastic spirit to take part or may be low-spirited and suffer disappointment. Allah's words 'Go forth to war' addresses the community generally. The Arabic word *khifafan* is the plural of *khafeef* (light, e.g. avid and enthusiastic) while the word *thiqalan* is the plural of *thaqeel* (heavy, e.g. low-spirited and downhearted). The address comes in plural to encourage individuals to help one another. Every single Muslim must go forth, be they avid and high-spirited or downhearted. For example, when a teacher commands students to bring their books out. Every student must take out their own book. The verse clearly orders every Muslim to actively take part, be they avid or not. Surely, the same act may be light and desirable or heavy and difficult. A Muslim may be physically able to go out and fight but feels it difficult and becomes reluctant to undergo the hardships of war. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Fighting is ordained for you, even though it be hateful to you.' (*al-Baqara*: 216) Undertaking difficult missions⁽¹⁾ for the sake of Allah strengthens the firmness of faith.

The verse clearly is open for several meanings: the first is general. It may be easy for some and difficult for others. The fight itself may be easy and quick in action or difficult. Furthermore, a person who has a horse to mount might find it easy for the mount eases the hardship and covers distances quicker, whilst the one who fights on foot finds it difficult because they must bear the long distance. When the Lord wants to encourage the hearts of the believers, He strongly commands them but He also reveals His Mercy by lightening His commandments. If the commandment was given lightly at the beginning and then was made difficult, this would be difficult for souls to bear. However, it was first made difficult and then lightened to make it easier for souls to undertake.

For example, the Lord *Glorified is He* spoke to His Messenger *peace be upon him* 'O Prophet! Inspire the believers to conquer all fear of death when fighting, [so that,] if there be twenty of you who are patient in adversity, they might overcome two hundred; and [that] if there be one hundred of you, they

(1) In his *Quranic exegesis*, *Al-Qurtubi* says (1:952) that they disliked war for the loss of wealth, departure of home and family, physical harms and impending death. They never hated the Divine Law.

might overcome one thousand of those who are bent on denying the truth.' (*al-Anfal*: 65) The True Lord *Glorified is He* provides the standard measure of the power of believers compared to disbelievers: twenty can defeat two hundred. It is a one-to-ten ratio. Therefore, when this verse was revealed, it meant that one single believer had to fight ten disbelievers but the Lord *Glorified is He* knew that the principle is very difficult for a human soul to fight ten counterparts. Only those of immutable resolve could do it. In consequence, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'For the time being, [however,] Allah has lightened your burden, for He knows that you are weak.' (*al-Anfal*: 66) Weakness entails lighter laws for the believers in battles against the disbelievers. The Lord *Glorified is He* then lightened the proportion from one disbeliever to ten disbelievers from one to two, 'For the time being, [however,] Allah has lightened your burden, for He knows that you are weak; and so, if there be one hundred of you who are patient in adversity, they should [be able to] overcome two hundred; and if there be one thousand of you, they should [be able to] overcome two thousand by Allah's leave; for Allah is with those who are patient in adversity.' (*al-Anfal*: 66) If someone flees from fighting two, he is guilty of deserting the battlefield, but when he flees from three, he is excused⁽¹⁾ because they are more than the number ordained by Allah. In the current verse, the Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Go forth to war, whether it be easy or difficult [for you].' (*at-Tawba*: 41) This commandment includes everyone, no matter their condition; it is a universal commandment to all Muslims. But there is another verse in the chapter of *at-Tawba* excusing certain sincere believers in some conditions; Allah *Glorified is He* say, 'But no blame shall attach to the weak, nor to the sick nor to those who have no means [to equip themselves], provided that they are sincere towards Allah and His Messenger: there is no cause to reproach the doers of good, for Allah is Much-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy. Nor [shall blame attach] to those who, when they came unto you [O Prophet, with the request] that you provide them with mounts, were told by you, "I cannot find anything whereon for you to mount you" – [whereupon] they turned away, their eyes overflowing with tears out of sorrow that they had no means to spend [on their equipment].' (*at-Tawba*: 91-92)

(1) *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu`jam Al-Kabeer, (11151) narrated a prophetic statement on the authority of Ibn `Abbas to that effect. See also, Al-Haythami, 5:328; Sa`eed ibn Mansur, (2538).*

These verses speak of the people excused from blame for not taking part in battle. It was an exception from the general rule requiring every believer to defend the cause of Allah as given in the verse in question, ‘Go forth to war, whether it be easy or difficult [for you] and strive hard in Allah's cause with your possessions and your lives.’ (*at-Tawba*: 41) The possessions must be expended for you to obtain weaponry for war—any army must have weapons and vehicles which are equivalent to the horses used at the time of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. Enough provisions must also be available. That is why the Lord *Glorified is He* mentions possessions first before lives. One who possesses the necessary strength and wealth must strive with them and whoever has either one of them must strive therewith. A weak person must use their wealth to aid the strong fighters by providing equipment, weapons, horses, shields and other necessities of war. Here, the Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘strive hard.’ *Jahada* (to strive), while *qatala* (to fight) implies reciprocity; if a disbeliever fights you, you must do your utmost in fight against him. These two verbs imply two acting parties. When saying ‘Zayd joined’, you need to complete the sentence, e.g., ‘Zayd joined 'Umar’. Likewise, ‘Zayd fought’ entails another party and reciprocity of action. According to another verse, the Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘O you who have attained to faith! Be patient in adversity, and vie in patience with one another, and be ever ready [to do what is right], and remain conscious of Allah, so that you might attain to a happy state!’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 200)

This is a commandment to be patient in war; but suppose that your enemy also has patience as you have. Here, another command comes from the Lord *Glorified is He* ‘Vie in patience with one another...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 200); you must prove more patient than the patient enemies. Likewise, ‘strive hard’ (to beat them in battle) by proving more enduring and steadier than them.

Let us return to the Lord's words, ‘Strive hard in Allah's cause with your possessions’ (*at-Tawba*: 41). Here, ‘Allah's cause’ means the way leading to the goal of Allah's goodly acceptance and Paradise. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘This (*dhalikum*) is for your own good.’ (*at-Tawba*: 41) The word ‘this’ (*dha*) is a demonstrative pronoun which refers to the singular which here is drawn from His words, ‘strive hard in Allah's cause with your

possessions and your lives.' (*at-Tawba*: 41) So 'this' means striving with one's possessions and life, while the addition (*likum*) (for you) indicates the second person, since the Lord *Glorified is He* is speaking to a group of people here.

Some people who do not know Arabic well think that the word *dhalikum* here is a single word consisting of a demonstrative pronoun *dha* (this), and a second-person pronoun, but we say that actually it is two words: a pronoun and an address. The pronoun refers to a single thing, whilst the address is given to a plurality. Another example is found in the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* when the king's wife brought all the women together and brought Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* to them. A group of women were present and Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* was present with them when she said, 'This (*dhalikunna*), then, is he about whom you have been blaming me!' (*Yusuf*: 32) Here, the word *dha* (this) refers to Yusuf (Joseph), and the word *likunna* (for you women) refers to the women whom she was addressing.

Another example is found in the Lord's words, '*Dhanika* (these) then, shall be the two signs from You Lord unto Pharaoh and his great ones.' (*al-Qasas*: 32). The pronoun *dhan* refers to two persons or things. Here, it signifies two miracles given to Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: the staff and the white hand. As for the letter 'k' in *dhani(k)*, it refers to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* who is being addressed in this context. As such, the word 'that' (i.e. *dhalikum*) in the current verse is made of two words: a singular demonstrative pronoun and a second-person plural pronoun of address. When He says, 'This is for your own good' (*at-Tawba*: 41) what good is Allah *Glorified is He* speaking about? If you go forth to war and strive with your possessions and lives, it is good and will be better for you than staying behind and abstaining from striving with your possessions and lives. The word *khayr* (good) has two uses in Arabic: First, it signifies 'good' generally. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'They who shall have done an atom's weight of good, shall behold it. And They who shall have done an atom's weight of evil, shall behold it.' (*az-Zalzala*: 7-8) In this case, it is the opposite of 'evil'. Second, the word *khayr* also means 'better', as in 'this is better than that'. In this case, both alternatives are good, but one of them is

better than the other. An example of this is found in the words of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer and there is good in them both.’⁽¹⁾

If the word *khayr* is not followed by the preposition ‘*min*’ (i.e. than), it means ‘good’ whose opposite is evil. Some linguists maintain that when *khayr* is used as a superlative (i.e. the best), the definite article *al* (e.g. *al-khayr* i.e. the best) shall precede it. However, when it is used in the comparative form, it means that one alternative has more goodness than the other, whilst both share goodness.

For example, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* had Zayd ibn Harithah as his slave whom Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* bought and granted to the Prophet. Zayd's father and uncle knew about his stay in Mecca and came to release him from slavery. In reply, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘You know and see how I love you, so choose between me and them.’ Zayd said, ‘I would never prefer anyone to you’ and decided to remain in Mecca with the Messenger of Allah rather than returning to his family. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to reward him for his decision, so he adopted him by saying, ‘O you who are present, bear witness that Zayd is my son; he shall inherit from me and I from him.’ Adoption was then lawful as per the Arab customs but the Lord wanted to annul all forms of adoption and began with the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* himself. Allah *Glorified is He* forbade adoption saying, ‘Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but is Allah's Messenger.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 40) ‘As for your adopted children, call them by their [real] fathers’ names: this is *aqsatu* (more equitable) in the sight of Allah.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 5)

The Lord did not deny that Muhammad *peace be upon him* had been just. He rather revealed that which is more just. When you see a comparative adjective, know that it implies an extra level of a particular attribute for one while affirming the basic attribute in the other. In the current verse, we have ‘for your own good’ (*at-Tawba*: 41) which means that the contrasting action of abstaining from striving with one's possessions and life is evil. The Lord

(1) Narrated by Muslim (2664), Ahmad (2:370), Ibn Majah (79, 4168), and Al-Humaidi (1114) on the authority of Abu Hurayrah Allah be pleased with him.

Glorified is He says, 'This is for your own good, if you but knew it!' (*at-Tawba*: 41) There are criteria by which we can know what is good and what is evil. When the Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'if you but knew it' it implies that there are certain indications to give them knowledge; if they do not know, Allah will give them knowledge. In other words, the one who does their utmost using their possessions and life is absolutely certain that their defence of the divine cause will admit them to what is better than wealth and mortal life. If killed, their martyrdom will make them a role-model for those who come after them. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stated that those who fight with patient steadfastness and confidence shall enter Paradise,⁽¹⁾ a companion who was chewing dates came to him and said, 'Is there nothing between me and Paradise but to fight and die?' The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* answered in the affirmative, and the companion did not even waste the time in chewing the dates before entering the fray. He cast them from his mouth and fought until he was martyred.⁽²⁾ This shows that he had absolute confidence that martyrdom will give him a reward far greater than that which he left behind. The Lord *Glorified is He* then resumes the discussion with those who were reluctant to strive to pass judgement over the entire affair.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَوْ كَانَ عَرَضًا قَرِيبًا وَسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا لَاتَّبَعُوكَ وَلَكِنْ بَعُدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الشُّقَّةُ وَسَيَحْلِفُونَ
بِاللَّهِ لَوْ أَسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا مَعَكُمْ يُهْلِكُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ

They would certainly have followed you [Prophet] if the benefit was within sight and the journey short, but the distance seemed too great for them. They will swear by God, 'If we could, we certainly would go out [to battle] with you,' but they ruin themselves, for God knows that they are lying [42] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 42)

The word *`arad* (i.e. gain) literally means 'accident' as opposed to 'substance'. 'Substance' means something which is not subject to change: health or sickness are 'accidental cases' because neither of them last indefinitely. To

(1) Abu Dawud (2519) and Al-Hakim in his (*Mustadrak*) (ii. 85)

(2) Al-Bukhari (4046) and Muslim (1899) on the authority of Jabir Allah *be pleased with him*.

sum up, everything that changes is called a temporary accident. It is said, 'The life of this world is a temporary gain, from which both the pious and the impious consume'.⁽¹⁾ The Lord's words 'had there been [a prospect of] immediate gain' (*at-Tawba*: 42) mean, were it a matter of an easily-gained enjoyment with neither hardship of travel nor sacrifice of possessions and lives, they would have rushed to it.

'And *qasid* (an easy) journey' (*at-Tawba*: 42). The word *qasid* literally signifies that which is in the middle; some people are exceedingly lazy and unconcerned with work or making good use of what Allah created for them while others are exceedingly active in their worldly work, rushing around like wild beasts; yet they can gain nothing except that which Allah has apportioned to them. People's temperaments swing between laziness and activity; but the believer must always be active and moderate. The Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Some of them do pursue a right course' (*al-Ma'ida*: 66). Simply, the believer should not fall prey to laziness insomuch that they lose out on the good of the world, nor should they be so frenzied that they forget about their faith. The Lord *Glorified is He* makes it plain to His messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that had it been a matter of worldly gains or travel without hardship and toil, they would have followed you; yet they did not follow you because there were no worldly gains expected. Travel to Tabuk and fight against the Byzantines whose civilisation was as great as that of the Persians constituted a challenging hardship. In addition, the year was very tough and the heat was intense; had things been easy, they would have followed you.

The Lord *Glorified is He* continues, 'But the distance was too great for them' (*at-Tawba*: 42). The distance was very far. Allah says, 'Yet, [after your return, O believers,] they will swear by Allah, "Had we been able to do so, we would certainly have set out with you!"' (*at-Tawba*: 42) They did not follow you, because it was not a case of an immediate gain or an easy journey, but rather, a journey full of risks and sacrifices of possessions and lives. However, when you return from the battle, they will swear that had they been able to, they would have gone out to fight with you. The Lord *Glorified is He*

(1) *Abu Na'im, Al-Hilya, 1: 264; Ibn 'Adiy, Al-Kamel, 3:361; this Hadith's chain of transmission is weak.*

told about their behaviour before they did it. It is a sign of the truth of the prophecy, so the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* could identify the hypocrites from the truly faithful. Allah *Glorified is He* wished to expose the absurdity of the hypocrites. He says, 'They will swear by Allah' using the word 'will' which means that they had not said this yet, but they would say it in the future. Had they been aware of this, they would have refrained from swearing. They might have said, 'The Quran told that we will swear, but we will not'. Allah blinded them and they indeed did swear. In a word, the enemies of Islam did testify to the truth of Islam. This same thing occurred when the prayer-direction was changed from Jerusalem to the Ka'ba. The Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'The weak-minded among people will say, "What has turned them away from the direction of prayer which they have hitherto observed?"' (*al-Baqara*: 142) His words 'will say' mean that they had not said it yet; otherwise the word 'will' would not have been used. This Quranic verse is frequently recited and permanently unchanged until the Day of Resurrection. Despite they could have abstained from that, which would have been a reason to doubt the Quran and might have destroyed the religion as they desired, they went ahead and affirmed what the Quran told, 'What has turned them away from the direction of prayer?' (*al-Baqara*: 142)

Nowadays, some people strangely say that they would only follow the Quran apart from the *Sunnah*. In reply, we ask them how could you determine the units of prayers the dawn, the noon, afternoon, sunset or evening prayers? In reply, they will say that the dawn prayer has two units, the noon prayer has four units, the afternoon prayer has four, the sunset prayer has three and the evening prayer has four. Now, if we ask, 'How do you know the number of units?', they reply that they know it from the *Sunnah*. Consequently, you must follow the *Sunnah* in prayers and you cannot understand how to apply many rulings without recourse to the *Sunnah*.

The Lord *Glorified is He* forces those who attack the *Sunnah* of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and claim that it is unnecessary to acknowledge its indispensable importance. It is a reaffirmation of the truth of what the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Soon there will come a time that a man will be reclining on his pillow and when one of my statements is narrated

he will say, "The Book of Allah is sufficient between us and you. Whatever it states is permissible, we will take as permissible and whatever it states is forbidden, we will take as forbidden." Verily, whatever the Messenger of Allah has forbidden is like that which Allah has forbidden.'⁽¹⁾

They only said that to criticise the *Sunnah* without realising that they confirmed the words of the Messenger of Allah *peace be upon him*. They are not intelligent, because the intelligence that does not lead to faith is a kind of stupidity and blindness. Similarly, those who swore that they were unable to go out and fight while Allah says, 'They will swear by Allah, "Had we been able to do so, we would certainly have set out with you!"' (*at-Tawba*: 42) They did swear and affirm the truth of the Quran. They swore that they were unable to go out to fight, even though they possessed material and physical means. The Lord *Glorified is He* says, '[And by thus falsely swearing] they will be destroying their own selves; for Allah knows indeed that they are lying!' (*at-Tawba*: 42) They swore by Allah in affirmation of their lies and thereby exposed themselves to destruction. They were not content only to refuse to take part in Muslim struggle but they indecently lied and Allah exposed their lies.

The Lord *Glorified is He* then says:

عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ لِمَ أَذْنَتْ لَهُمْ حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَتَعْلَمَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

God forgive 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? [43] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 43)

The word 'pardon' *'afa* literally indicates that a trace is removed, just as the wind blows away the footprints a man leaves in the sand and removes them. In a religious context, it means that Allah effaces the sins of His servants. As long as a person seeks forgiveness for their sins and say, 'I seek forgiveness in Allah, besides whom there is no deity, the Ever-Living, the All-Sustaining, and I repent to Him'!⁽²⁾ No one may bother them any further or make them

(1) *Ahmad, Musnad*, 4:132; *At-Tirmidhi* (2664); *Ibn Majah* (12) and *Ad-Daraqutni* 4:286

(2) *Abu Dawud* (1517) and *At-Tirmidhi* (3577) on the authority of Zayd, the freeman of the Prophet *peace be upon him*

feel bad for their action. Actually, they have sought the forgiveness of Him Who possesses everything and He Alone *Glorified is He* possesses the right to pardon and forgive.⁽¹⁾ No one else should interfere in this matter. No sinner should be made to feel bad once they have sought the forgiveness of the One Who can grant pardon. If one hears someone seeking forgiveness, they should say, 'May Allah pardon you'! No one knows whether Allah has pardoned them or not, so you should help them through prayers. To those who try to make sinners feel bad, we say, have good manners because they did not sin against you but rather against the Lord; if the one who seeks forgiveness for their sin should not be further bothered by people, then what do you think about the pardon of Allah, the only One Who can truly give pardon?

Here, the Lord *Glorified is He* gives pardon to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* who allowed them staying home instead of fighting. The Quran then affirms that it was the right choice for the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to give them permission. Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere in the chapter of *at-Tawba*, 'Had these [hypocrites] set out with you, [O believers,] they would have added nothing to you save the evil of corruption.' (*at-Tawba*: 47) Had they gone out to fight, they would have been a cause of defeat, not victory. The Lord then affirms that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was right in his decision. He *peace be upon him* was infallible. Here, we are faced with an instance of Allah's pardon even though there was no sin. There was only the Messenger's permission for them to stay behind which the Quran affirms it was right. Some people understand the Lord's words, 'Why did you grant them permission?' (*at-Tawba*: 43) as a rhetorical question expressive of censure as though the Lord was saying, 'How could you have allowed them doing this'? The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* is between two probabilities:

First: A pardon for which no sin is specified.

Second: A rhetorical question that some people understand to be critical.

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...for who but Allah could forgive sins?' (*Al-Imran*: 135). He also says, 'Say, "If you were to own all the treasure-houses of my Lord's bounty, lo! you would still try to hold on [to them] tightly for fear of spending [too much]"; for man has always been avaricious whereas Allah is limitless in His bounty.' (*al-Isra*: 100), (were the right to dispense mercy and forgiveness given to men, they would be stingy with it).

The Lord *Glorified is He* supports His messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* when He says, ‘Had these [hypocrites] set out with you, [O believers,] they would have added nothing to you save the evil of corruption.’ (*at-Tawba*: 47) It is as though the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was guided to it by his pure nature and faith. The Quran indicates this to clarify for us that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was infallible and his nature was pure and sound. He had to present—as a role-model— a logical explanation to people so that no ordinary person would come after him and give an opinion on a religious matter, saying, ‘My instinct tells me that such-and-such is right’. Rather, before a person gives an opinion about any matter of religion, they must first consult the Quran and Sunnah. For example, Muslims differed whether to ransom the prisoners captured at the Battle of Badr or not.⁽¹⁾ In response, the Lord revealed, ‘Had it not been for a decree from Allah that had already gone forth, there would indeed have befallen you a tremendous chastisement because all [the captives] that you took.’ (*al-Anfal*: 68)

Allah thereby supports the verdict of His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and upholds it. The Messenger was guided to the right decision by his faithful instinct, but this right is not afforded to anyone but the infallible. The Lord permits giving leave when He said, ‘Hence, when they ask leave of you for some [valid] reason of their own, grant this leave to whomsoever of them you choose [to grant it].’ (*an-Nur*: 62) The verse in question says, ‘May Allah pardon you [O Prophet]! Why did you grant them permission to stay at home? You should not have until it had become obvious to you as to who was speaking the truth, and you came to know who were the liars?’ (*at-Tawba*: 43)

(1) *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, (1763); *Ahmad, Musnad*, (30-31) on the authority of ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab and Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with them... Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him felt that the prisoners should be ransomed because they were the Muslims’ kinsmen and Muslims could use the ransoms to strengthen themselves whilst ‘Umar felt they should be killed for they were the leaders of disbelief. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* followed Abu Bakr’s opinion and ransomed them. Then, Allah revealed His word, ‘It does not behove a prophet to keep captives unless he has battled strenuously on Earth. You may desire the fleeting gains of this world – but Allah desires [for you the good of] the life to come.’ (*al-Anfal*: 67)

Thus, it is made clear to us that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* gave them permission to stay behind based on his prior knowledge, deliberation and instinct. He saw it more proper to allow them staying behind as conforming to the will of the Lord; had they gone out to fight with the Muslim army, they would have added nothing to their cause except evil and corruption. They had no pure intention for taking part in battle. Allah weakened their resolve and dashed their spirits so that they would not go out to fight. The pardon given here is a form of outward tolerance, since the truth of things should have been ascertained before permission was granted. The Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'You should not have until it had become obvious to you as to who was speaking the truth, and you came to know who were the liars?' (*at-Tawba*: 43) That is, had the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* not given them permission to stay behind, they would have been exposed, but the permission proved a cover behind which they concealed their hypocrisy; they had already resolved not to go out to fight and had they done it, they would have been exposed before all Muslims; the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to conceal them.

The Lord *Glorified is He* says:

لَا يَسْتَعِذُّكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ أَنْ
يُجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُنْفِقِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

**Those who have faith in God and the Last Day do not ask you
for exemption from struggle with their possessions and their
persons – God knows exactly who is mindful of Him [44]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 44)**

Allah *Glorified is He* alerts us to the fact that those who requested permission to stay behind exposed themselves. They asked for that permission after the divine command 'Go forth to war, whether it be easy or difficult.' (*at-Tawba*: 41) In such conditions, no one who truly believes in Allah and the Last Day would refrain from striving in Allah's Cause. The true believer would not proffer excuses for staying behind, even if he had valid excuses. Rather, he would attempt to conceal these excuses from the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to go out with him to struggle. Indeed, he would rush to go out and struggle, even if Allah had given him a valid excuse not to do so. This verse, then, is a

rebuke to those who asked for leave to stay behind. Indeed, it is more than this, for the believer who is called to struggle alongside the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* by a command from Allah does not think like an ordinary person thinks. In an ordinary situation, if a person is asked to do something, they think about it and turn it over in their minds before deciding. But if a believer is commanded to struggle in Allah's Cause with the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* by Allah, he does not need to think about the answer and the word 'no' will not even cross his mind, but rather he will set out to join the struggle.

However, how could the command to go out and fight come from Allah to the people who ask for permission to stay behind? The very fact that they asked for that permission proved that the faith in their hearts was shaky; it showed their deliberate intention and decision to stay behind. It is strange that these people asked the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* for permission to stay behind even though the command to fight had been given by Allah Himself—there was no need for the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to give them permission to stay behind; they were merely looking for an excuse to hide behind.

For example, an object of ridicule in our society is the stingy man who does not offer hospitality for his guests, yet acts as though he is ready to honour them. You find that he calls their son and says to him in front of guests, 'Go to the market and find us a sheep to slaughter for the guest. Do not be late. We are waiting for you'. When the guest says, out of good manners, 'No, there is no need for that', you find that the stingy host tells his son not to bother after using the guest's refusal as an excuse not to entertain them. He acts as though he wants to do so, but in reality, we see that he never intends to do it from the beginning. We all know that a person does not seek permission to entertain his guests.

For example, when the angels visited Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* in a human form, he wanted to honour and entertain them. He did not seek their leave to slaughter a calf out of good hospitality. He brought it to them slaughtered and roasted.⁽¹⁾ This is how a person shall behave if he really

(1) 'Indeed, there came unto Ibrahim (Abraham) our [heavenly] messengers, bearing a glad tidings. They bade him peace; [and] he answered, "And peace upon you be!" – and made haste to place before them a roasted calf.' (*Hud*: 69) 'Then he turned quietly to his household and brought forth a fat [roasted] calf.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 26)

wants to entertain the guests; as for the one who wants to find an excuse to escape that, he looks for different ways to act as if he wants to entertain them, whilst, in reality, he does not want to do it. For example, he might say to his guest, 'Would you like some coffee or do you not like it?' He might also say, 'Would you like to eat dinner or have a light meal so you can sleep better?' Or, 'Would you like to stay at my home or at a hotel to be more comfortable?'

Those who asked the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'Should I come out to fight with you or not?' showed their vacillation, whilst faith must be firm and unshakeable. Vacillation means doubt. It means that the one asking the question is uncertain because both options are equal in their eyes. The one who truly believes in Allah would not ask the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* for permission to stay behind after receiving the command to fight. It does not behove the believer to ask for permission to defend the cause of Allah. Allah says, 'Allah has full knowledge as to who is conscious of Him.' (*at-Tawba*: 44) Allah knows whether their hearts are conscious of Him; though they might fool people, they cannot fool Allah. Simply, He sees what their hearts conceal.

Then Allah sends down His judgement concerning these people, saying:

إِنَّمَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَأَرْتَابَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِي رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُونَ

**Only those who do not have faith in God and the Last Day ask
your permission to stay at home: they have doubt in their
hearts and so they waver [45] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 45)**

Accordingly, Allah has issued His judgement concerning those who asked for exemption. As long as a man wavers between going out to strive in the cause of Allah or not, this reveals the shakiness of his faith which means that he doubts what Allah has in store for him in the Hereafter. If he is truly certain that he will enter Paradise without being held to account if he is martyred, he will not hesitate for a single second concerning his striving in the cause of Allah. Since paradise is the goal, the person who has faith will follow any path that leads to it. If a shorter path is available, this will make

the believer rejoice because he wants to leave the misery of this world for the bliss of the Hereafter. If he is living a blissful life in this world, he knows that this bliss is transitory and he wants a permanent bliss which never ends.

The meaning of ‘wavering’ and ‘asking for permission to stay at home’ in this verse indicate that doubt has entered the person’s heart; and doubt means that there are two equal options before you, neither of which seems better to choose than the other. Issues of speech and reason are affected by many different factors. If you make a firm decision about something, there must be a fact which supports it because if you are certain about something which is not based on a fact, this will be considered ignorance. Ignorance means that you believe that something is true, when in fact it is untrue and baseless. For example, if you say, ‘the earth is flat’, and someone has brought to you a picture of the spherical Earth, but you continue to insist that it is flat, this will be considered ignorance. The difference between the ignorant and illiterate is that when the illiterate person who did not know that the earth is spherical, but learns later the truth of the matter, he accepts the truth and believes in it. However, the ignorant person believes in something untrue, so that if you tell him the truth he argues about, he insists that his opinion is correct. Therefore, we find that the real problems are not caused by the illiterate but by the ignorant because the illiterate person only needs a single intellectual endeavour which is to give him the correct information and so he accepts it. However, convincing the ignorant person requires two endeavours: firstly, you must remove the incorrect information and baseless notions from his head, and secondly, you must convince him of the truth.

The facts which can be proven are called knowledge, but if they cannot be proven, this is called dictation. For example, when we teach the young child that Allah is One, but he has not reached yet the age in which you can prove this to him, the child accepts this fact, but he cannot prove it. During this phase, he merely imitates his father, mother or whoever teaches him this until his mind matures and becomes able to prove what he accepted as a child through dictation.

Knowledge requires belief in facts which can be proven by evidence, but if certainty has not been reached, this means that there are two options in one’s mind. If one option has not been given preponderance over the other,

this refers to the state of uncertainty. If a person thinks that one of them is more likely, this is called 'supposition', but if a person chooses the option which is less likely, this is called 'delusion'.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, 'Only those who do not have faith in Allah and the Last Day ...' (*at-Tawba*: 45) who, if their belief in Allah and the Last Day were firm in their hearts, and if they had real belief that that their final return will be to Allah Who will hold them to account for their deeds, and if they considered the sacrifice of their money and lives to be trivial in comparison with the great reward that awaited them in the Hereafter, they would not have asked for permission to stay at home. Since doubt had entered their hearts, this means that they were doubtful concerning the fact that they will meet Allah on the Last Day. Since they doubted this matter, they considered that the sacrifice of their money and lives would be in vain. Therefore, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, '...they have doubt in their hearts...' (*at-Tawba*: 45).

Therefore, doubt resides in the heart, as knowledge does, and both pass through the mind because the mind passes judgement over these issues after the senses receive them. Then it discusses the given facts and results. Once the mind has reflected on all the given facts and has chosen faith, they become firm and steadfast in the heart and the mind does not reflect on them again. Therefore, the Arabs call faith '*aqidah*' (*creed*) because the word '*aqidah*' means tying something firmly so that it cannot be removed from its place.

For example, when a child puts his hand close to a burning object and feels its heat, he knows that fire burns, and does not try to do this again. In addition, his mind never reflects on this matter again and thinks that the fire will not burn him this time. Rather, the matter becomes firm in the child's mind, and moves from being a sensory matter to a matter of conviction which does not need to be subjected to experiment again, and requires no further evidence.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...they have doubt in their hearts...' (*at-Tawba*: 45). In another verse, He says, 'Allah has sealed their hearts...' (*al-Baqara*: 7). This means that the heart is the place which keeps the matters which have gone through the phase of reflection and have become convictions which the mind does not need to reflect on again. Allah's saying, '...they have doubt in their hearts...' (*at-Tawba*: 45) means that their faith

has not reached the level of certainty in which the mind does not need to reflect on the matter again to decide whether to believe or not. There is still some doubt which causes the issue to move from the heart to the mind to ponder them again. Therefore, Allah describes them perfectly accurately by saying, ‘...and so they waver.’ (*at-Tawba*: 45) This means that their faith fluctuates between the heart and the mind, settling into the heart and then going to the mind to be pondered again, then settling into the heart. Thus, their faith wavers and fluctuates between the heart and the mind, never settling anywhere. Accordingly, they have no certainty about the Hereafter and the reward which Allah has prepared there for them. They also doubt that they will meet Allah on the Last Day; all these matters come to their minds, but they never reach the level of certainty.

Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies this further, saying:

وَلَوْ أَرَادُوا الْخُرُوجَ لَأَعَدُّوا لَهُ عُدَّةً وَلَكِنْ كَرِهَ اللَّهُ
أُنْبِعَاثَهُمْ فَثَبَّطَهُمْ وَقِيلَ اقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْقَاعِدِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

If they had really wanted to go out [to battle] with you, they would have made preparations, but God was loath to let them rise up and made them hold back. It was said, ‘Stay with those who stay behind’ [46] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 46)

Their wavering proved that they did not want to go out to join the battle; had they truly resolved to go out, they would have made the necessary preparations for war by preparing their provisions, steeds and weapons. However, they did not do anything of this kind because they lacked the true intention to go out and strive in Allah’s cause with their money and lives.

Someone may say, ‘Is it not possible that they would make all the preparations for war at the last moment?’ We say no, because fighting cannot be prepared for at the last moment; rather, the one who will go out to fight must busy himself with the necessary preparations for war such as weapons, provisions, a mount and so on. If he does not take care of these things early enough before he sets out, making sure that his weapon is suitable for fighting, and that he has enough food and so on, he will not be able to go out

to fight. This matter cannot be delayed to the last moment; rather, their non-preparation for war revealed their real intention not to go out to fight. Allah *Glorified is He* was aware of their intentions and what their hearts hid, so He requited them for what they concealed in their souls. Therefore, Allah says, '...but Allah was loath to let them rise up and made them hold back. It was said, "Stay with those who stay behind."' (*at-Tawba*: 46)

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* has no need for any of His creatures; rather, His creatures are the ones who are in constant need of Him. Therefore, He caused these people to hold back from going out to fight, and was loath to let them go out to fight. The word '*thabbatahum*' (caused them to hold back) which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means that He caused them to stay in their places and was loath to let them prepare for the battle and was averse to cause them to join the battle actively. Aversion is a matter of emotion, whilst holding back is a matter of motivation.

For example – to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection - When you see a flower, your eyes perceive its beauty and if you stretch your hand out to it to pick it, but it is prohibited this because it is a conation to seize something which you do not own. If you wish to have a flower like it, you must either buy or plant it. Therefore, the Sacred Law only intervenes in matters relevant to conation. Allah's aversion to their conation was manifested in holding them back and preventing them from acting, beautifying to them abstaining from fighting with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* intended this for a wise reason which coincided with the permission of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for them to remain behind. We observe in this verse that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, '...it was said, "Stay with those who stay behind."' (*at-Tawba*: 46). If Allah was the One Who held them back, this means that He let them stay behind by the divine will or Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave them permission to stay behind because he noticed their reluctance to fight. Also, Satan might have whispered to them to stay behind. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'In the same way We assigned to each prophet an enemy, evil humans and evil jinn. They suggest alluring words to one another in order to deceive...' (*al-An'am*: 112).

The phrase ‘it was said’ (*at-Tawba*: 46) is in the passive form so that the subject of the verb is not mentioned so that the saying may be made by different speakers. When Allah caused them to hold back, this implies that Allah, Messenger Muhammad and Satan urged them to stay at home or told them to stay at home. Those people might also have encouraged each other to stay at home. Accordingly, a single word ‘*qil*’ (it was said) suggested many meanings, neither of them negates or contradicts with the other, as all of them are suitable to the context.

‘...but Allah was loath to let them rise up and made them hold back. It was said, “Stay with those who stay behind.”’ (*at-Tawba*: 46) ‘Those who stay behind’ in this verse refers to the people who were not obliged to strive in the cause of Allah such as women, children and the old. It seems that by staying behind, they relinquished their manhood which obliged them to perform striving in the cause of Allah. They should not have accepted this matter for themselves. In another verse in the same chapter, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘They prefer to be with those who stay behind. Their hearts have been sealed...’ (*at-Tawba*: 87). Their manhood should have urged them to strive in the cause of Allah, but they were pleased to be levelled with women and children in their weakness.

An Arabian poet who wanted to urge the members of his tribe who were reluctant to fight alongside him, He said to them:

I do not know, nor am I about to know,
If the tribe of Hisn are men or women!⁽¹⁾

The word ‘*qawm*’ which is mentioned in the Arabic version of the line of poetry refers to men only. Allah explains the wisdom of making them hold back. If their remaining at home was something good, then there must have been wisdom in Allah’s action of causing them to hold back and the Messenger’s permission for them to stay behind. If their remaining at home was the result of Satan’s insinuations or self-insinuations, then these insinuations served the cause of faith and helped in fulfilling Allah’s intention. Theirs is the foolishness caused by disbelief. These insinuations beautified to these hypocrites refraining from going out to perform *strive* in the cause of Allah. Had they gone out, they would have done what Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says about them:

(1) The poet’s name is Zuhayr ibn Abu Salma.

لَوْ خَرَجُوا فِيكُمْ مَا زَادُوكُمْ إِلَّا خَبَالًا وَلَأَوْضَعُوا خِلَالَكُمْ
يَبْغُونَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ وَفِيكُمْ سَمَّاعُونَ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

**They would only have given you trouble if they had gone out
[to battle] with you: they would have scurried around, trying
to sow discord among you, and some of you would willingly
have listened to them – God knows exactly who does evil [47]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 47)**

The word '*khabal*' literally means 'mental illness which causes one's thoughts to become disordered'. If someone is described as *makhbul*, this means that he is not able to think clearly or judge matters rationally. Therefore, Allah's saying, '...They would only have given you trouble...' (*at-Tawba*: 47) means that they would have been a source of confusion if they had gone out to fight with the believers, so the believers could not have made correct decisions. Therefore, they would have helped against the believers and would have been a cause of defeat which Allah did not want for the believers. This means that their refraining from going out to fight was a means of repulsing evil. Allah willed that they did not go out to strive in the cause of Allah as a means of protecting the strength of the believers during their fight.

Allah's saying: '...they would have scurried around...' (*at-Tawba*: 47) suggests that they would have caused dissent among the Muslim ranks and sought to sow discord among them. The word '*khilal*' literally means the gap between two things or two people. This means that each one of the hypocrites would enter a group of believers to sow discord between them. Accordingly, they would have dissension among the believers.

But the question is, would they have set out '*ma`ahum*' (with them) or '*fihim*' (among them)? This verse says '*fikum*' which literally means 'in you' or 'among you'. They would have entered among the believers to confuse their thoughts. We say that prepositions in Arabic can substitute each other, so the word '*fikum*' (literally 'in you') implies the existence of an adverb and the noun that follows it. Therefore, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says in another verse that which helps us understand this notion, '...I will crucify you in the trunks of palm trees...' (*Taha*: 71).

Did Pharaoh mean to crucify the sorcerers inside or on the trunks? Although the linguists said that Arabic prepositions may substitute one another, we do not like this answer because although we might accept this for human speech, we cannot accept it where the speech of Allah is concerned. This is because the Arabic preposition '*fi*' (in) is different from the Arabic preposition '*'ala*' (on). Had Allah said, 'I will crucify you in the trunks of palm trees' using the Arabic preposition '*'ala*' (on), this would mean that it would be an ordinary crucifixion. As He says, '...I will crucify you in the trunks of palm trees...' (*Taha*: 71), this indicates that the crucifixion would be done in such a severe way that it would cause parts of the crucified body to actually penetrate the trunks. Accordingly, Pharaoh's soldiers would have hammered the bodies of the sorcerers until they would have entered the trunks of the palm trees, so that the bodies and the trunks would look like one single object. This image is meant to depict the harshness and severity of the crucifixion.

But if we said, 'on trunks of palm-trees' using the word '*ala*' (on), the manner of the crucifixion would have been less harsh. The Noble Quran uses the words which give the most precise meaning so that if even a single preposition were changed, the meaning would be spoiled. In another verse in the Noble Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord...' (*Al-Imran*: 133). This means that if we hasten to do good deeds, this will lead us to forgiveness, so before hastening to do good deeds, we have not gained mercy, but once we do, we attain it.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* also says, '...they used to hasten to increase their good deeds...' (*al-Anbiya*: 90). Allah did not say that '*yusari'un ila al-khayrat*' (hasten to do good deeds), but He said '*yusari'in fil khayrat*' (hasten to increase their good deeds) because their deeds were already good, and then they only would hasten to increase them. Therefore, '*yusari' ila*' something means that these things have not crossed a person's mind before. However, '*sara'ta fil khayr*' indicates that you already do good deeds, but you increase them.

If we ponder Allah's saying, 'they would have scurried around' (*at-Tawba*: 47), we find that the word '*awda'a*' means to move at a pace between swiftness and slowness; if an animal scurries, this means that it moves neither hastily nor slowly. If you consider how those hypocrites would have acted if they had

gone to fight alongside the believers, you will see how they would have made corruption alluring to them and tried to confuse their minds. Such action would have required movement somewhere between slowness and swiftness. They would have required slowness because they would have whispered in the ears of the believers to make falsehood alluring to them. Then one of the hypocrites would have hastened to move to another believer to do the same thing with him. Therefore, slow movement would have been required regarding whispering insinuations, and quick movement would have been required regarding moving from one believer to another. This is the most accurate description which could be applied to what would have happened.

What was the goal of these hypocrites in sowing confusion in the minds of the believers and separating them into factions? The goal was to disrupt their unity and power. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, 'trying to sow discord among you' (*at-Tawba*: 47), The hypocrites wanted to cause mischief among the believers because when an evil person sees other people doing good, the instincts of faith deep inside him make him feel disgusted with himself. Therefore, he tries to belittle the one who does good by mocking his actions and ridiculing him. This takes place clearly in places where intoxicants are served; when the people drinking them perceive the severity of their sin and find someone who does not drink alcohol, they try to tempt him to commit the same sin. If he refuses, they begin to insult and mock him, claiming that he lacks manhood. You also find that a liar tries to make others lie, a thief tries to tempt others to steal and a briber tries to tempt all his colleagues to take bribes. If an honest person appears amid those who commit these kinds of sins, they persecute and mock him.

For example, when a person goes to pray in the presence of people who do not usually pray, they try to mock him in different ways. The Noble Quran draws our attention to this matter for us to be protected by faith, saying, '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. And say, when they saw them, "These people are misguided", though they were not sent to be their keepers. 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*: 29-36)

These verses depict what happens when corruption becomes widespread on earth. Those who mock the believers utter laughs which will most certainly stop sooner or later, and will be followed by torment in the Hereafter. As for the believers, they fear Allah in this worldly life, so Allah will reward them in the Hereafter, and they will be eternally cheerful.

Therefore, Allah's saying, 'trying to sow discord among you' (*at-Tawba*: 47) means that those whose hatred for the believers and their faith is severe, will try to tempt them in their religion to come down to their degraded level, just as the kinds of behaviour we have just described.

Then Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* explains that the believers would not have been completely immune to the hypocrites. Although they did not go out to fight with the believers, some believers would have listened to them. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, '...and some of you would willingly have listened to them – Allah knows exactly who does evil.' (*at-Tawba*: 47) '*Sami't min fulan*' means listening to what someone says or listening to the reports of someone to convey them.

Therefore, the letter '*lam*' gives two meanings. Some believers listened willingly to the hypocrites who caused confusion and dissension, and some of the hypocrites had spies who conveyed the believers' news and worked for them. Some of the believers first would listen to the hypocrites, and once they were confused they would convey reports about the believers to them. Therefore, the Arabic letter (*lam*) can literally suggest both 'listening to someone' and 'listening in the interest of someone'. Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies the matter in His saying, '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 trust.' (*an-Nisa*': 105)

A person may say that this is a warning against disputing with those who betray trust for fear that one may not be able to resist them or that they will commit more sins due to this dispute. We can tell him that he has not understood the meaning; as the meaning is: Do not defend those who betray trust.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...Allah knows exactly who does evil.' (*at-Tawba*: 47) because both, those who would have listened to the hypocrites, and those who

would have listened in the interest of the hypocrites, were evildoers whom Allah knows exactly. Then Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

لَقَدْ ابْتَغَوْا الْفِتْنَةَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفَلَّوْا لَكَ الْأُمُورَ حَتَّى جَاءَ
الْحَقُّ وَظَهَرَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَهُمْ كَرِهُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

Indeed, they had tried before that to stir up discord: they devised plots against you [Prophet] until the truth was exposed and God's will triumphed, much to their disgust [48] (The Quran, at-Tawba: 48)

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* wants to remind the believers of the previous misdeeds committed by the hypocrites and disbelievers against Islam and the Muslims, including plotting against Islam, trying to sow dissension among the Muslims and plotting against the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah's saying, '...they had tried before that to stir up discord...' (at-Tawba: 48) prove the misdeeds that they did before.⁽¹⁾ As for His saying, '...they devised plots against you...' (at-Tawba: 48), the Arabic verb '*qallaba*' (devised plots) literally means turning upside down. We see this in the marketplace when you go to the greengrocer, you find that the best fruits at the top of the pile, but when you buy some fruits from him, he fills the bag with the worst fruits which are hidden at the bottom of the pile. Therefore, he brings you fruits with the lowest quality whose blemish is concealed which you would never have bought had you seen it.⁽²⁾

This is what the hypocrites did when they turned things upside down so that they could afflict the believers with the most possible evil without being harmed.

(1) See Ibn Kathir's exegesis (2, 361). As for Al-Qurtubi, he says in his exegesis (4, 3083), 'They sought to spread discord and confusion before they were exposed and the Revelation announced what they would have done. Ibn Jurayj said that this refers to twelve men of the hypocrites who stood at Al-Wada' mountain during the night of the Pledge of Al-'Aqabah, intending to assassinate Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

(2) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prohibited this act when he happened to pass by a heap of corn. He thrust his hand in that (heap) and his fingers felt wetness. He said to the owner of that heap of corn, 'What is this?' He replied, 'O Messenger of Allah, these have been drenched by rainfall.' He remarked, 'Why did you not place this (the drenched part of the heap) over the corn so that people might see it? He who deceives is not of us.' *Related by Muslim in his Sahih (102); Ahmad in His Musnad (2, 242); At-Tirmidhi in his Sunan (1315) on the authority of Abu Hurayrah. At-Tirmidhi said, 'The Hadith is Hasan/ Sahih.'*

A clear example of this occurred when Quraysh plotted against Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bringing a young man from every tribe to strike him all at once so that all the tribes would share in his murder.

However, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* makes use of these temptations in the interest of the believers, as He says, ‘...until the truth was exposed and Allah’s will triumphed, much to their disgust.’ (*at-Tawba*: 48)

The plots they made against Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and their attempt to murder him were what caused him to immigrate from Mecca. Then Allah caused this incident to expose and give victory to the Truth and spread Islam, as Allah did not send a messenger and then forsook him; since He sent a messenger, He certainly supported him.⁽¹⁾ Therefore, Allah clarified that the discord they stirred before turned against the hypocrites and brought about much good to the believers.

In this regard, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, ‘And Our word has already preceded for Our servants, the messengers. [That] indeed, they would be those given victory. And [that] indeed, our soldiers will be those who overcome.’ (*as-Saffat*: 171-173) Allah’s saying, ‘And [that] indeed, our soldiers will be those who overcome’ (*as-Saffat*: 173) represents a matter relevant to creed; so if you ever see believers engaging in battle with disbelievers and suffering defeat, you should know that they are not truly among Allah’s soldiers, and that they have fallen short of fulfilling one of the conditions of being soldiers of Allah. Therefore, we should hold ourselves to account first.

For example, at the Battle of Uhud when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered the archers to remain at their places at all costs, but they disobeyed him,⁽²⁾ one of the conditions of being soldiers of

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says in this regard, ‘Indeed, We will support Our messengers and those who believe during the life of this world and on the Day when the witnesses will stand.’ (*Ghafir*: 51)

(2) Al-Bara’ ibn `Azib said, ‘We faced the pagans on that day (of the Battle of Uhud) and the Prophet placed a batch of archers (at a special place) and appointed `Abdullah ibn Jubair as their commander and said, "Do not leave this place; if you should see us conquering the enemy, do not leave this place, and if you should see them conquering us, do not (come to) help us," but they disobeyed Prophet Muhammad, so seventy Muslims were killed.’ [*Related by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (4043), and Ahmad in his Musnad (4, 294)*]

Allah was unfulfilled, namely obeying Messenger Muhammad. What would have happened to Islam had those archers disobeyed Messenger Muhammad and yet gained victory? All the orders of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would have seemed unimportant to the believers.

During the Battle of Hunayn, when the believers thought that they would gain victory by their great numbers and not their faith, the result was that they suffered grave defeat at the onset of the battle, for them to learn a lesson in faith. Therefore, if you ever see believers defeated by disbelievers, you should know that one of the conditions of being soldiers of Allah has not been fulfilled. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, ‘And how many a prophet [fought and] with him fought many religious scholars. But they never lost assurance due to what afflicted them in the cause of Allah, nor did they weaken or submit. And Allah loves the steadfast. And their words were not but that they said, “Our Lord, forgive us our sins and the excess [committed] in our affairs and plant firmly our feet and give us victory over the disbelieving people.”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 146-147)

The first thing these warriors did was realising that their sins might cause their defeat, so they sought Allah’s forgiveness, repented to him, went out to fight and Allah gave them victory. If the believers have not gained victory, this means that their faith is deficient in some way because Allah will not let a worldly incident contradict a well-established Quranic principle.

Then Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَقُولُ أَعِزَّنِي وَلَا تَفْتِنِّي أَلَا فِي الْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوا
وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

Some of them said, ‘Give me permission to stay at home: do not trouble me.’ They are already in trouble: Hell will engulf the disbelievers [49] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 49)

Those are the ones who sought permission from Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to stay at home and not go out to strive in the cause of Allah; and some of them uttered the words, ‘Do not put me to trial by refusing to give me permission.’ But what does ‘trial’ mean in this verse? Does it mean

torment, evil or idolatry and disbelief (Allah forbid)? All these, besides other things, are kinds of trial. Allah's saying, 'Give me permission to stay at home; do not put me to trial.' (*at-Tawba*: 49) apparently looks like a command, but in fact it is not because when an imperative statement is issued by a person of lower esteem to a person of higher esteem, it is not called a command; rather, it is a supplication or a plea. If it comes from a person of equal esteem, it is called a request. If it comes from a person of higher esteem to a person of lower esteem, it is called a command. All these are forms of requests for action.

Al-Jadd ibn Qays, a man of the *Ansar*, went to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'Grant me permission [to remain at home], but do not put me to trial.' This is because had Messenger Muhammad not given him permission, he would have fallen into the trial of disobeying Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.⁽¹⁾

It is said that he was not strong enough to tolerate the hardships of war. It was also said that he had a weakness for women and had heard of the beauty of Byzantine women, so he feared that he would be tempted by them, especially when the battle took place on the lands of Byzantium, and the warriors would be likely to capture Byzantine women as captives.

Allah's saying, 'Give me permission to stay at home; do not put me to trial' (*at-Tawba*: 49) already subjected this person to trial as Allah says next, 'They are already put in trial' (*at-Tawba*: 49). This person was corpulent and complained that he was unable to endure the journey because of the long distance and the heat, so the reply came, 'If you flee from heat and cold, it is more proper for you to flee from the Hellfire'. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Hell will engulf the disbelievers.' (*at-Tawba*: 49). And in another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...Say, "The fire of Hell is more intensive in heat" - if they would but understand.' (*at-Tawba*: 81) Therefore, the fire of hell is more intense and hotter than the battle,⁽²⁾ and however hot the weather

(1) See 'Asbab Al-Nuzul (Occasions of the Revelation of the Verses), p. 94; Ibn Kathir in his exegesis. Al-Jadd ibn Qays was one of the leaders of Banu Salamah.

(2) Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Those who remained behind rejoiced in their staying [at home] after [the departure of] the Messenger of Allah and disliked striving with their wealth and their lives in the cause of Allah and said, "Do not go forth in the heat." Say, "The fire of Hell is more intensive in heat" - if they understand.' (*at-Tawba*: 81)

in the worldly life may be, it is much less intense than the fire of the Hereafter which will encompass the disbelievers.

Then Allah says:

إِنْ تُصِيبَكَ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ وَإِنْ تُصِيبَكَ مُصِيبَةٌ يَقُولُوا
 قَدْ أَخَذْنَا أَمْرًا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ فَرِحُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

If you [Prophet] have good fortune, it will grieve them, but if misfortune comes your way, they will say to themselves, ‘We took precautions for this,’ and go away rejoicing [50] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 50)

The verses still tackle the issue of the hypocrites after showing how the hypocrites tried to flee from war by offering various excuses. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* wanted to make the image even clearer by depicting the hatred which the hypocrites bore in their hearts towards the believers. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘If you [Prophet] have good fortune...’ (*at-Tawba*: 50). ‘Good fortune’ means victory in war; for the hypocrites, victory in war simply meant that the believers would gain battle-spoils, a matter which would aggrieve the hypocrites and sadden them because the primary concern of the hypocrites was this worldly life from which they wanted to get as much as they could. Since they did not go out to join the struggle and offered untruthful excuses for evading war, they would be aggrieved to see the believers victorious because they would have no right to share in the spoils. In this case, they would wish to have joined the way so that they would have a share in the spoils.

However, if the believers were defeated, this would sadden every Muslim, but the hypocrites would consider this defeat as good news, and would say to themselves that they were more clever and prudent, as they did not join the war. Therefore, they were saved from what befell the believers. Misfortune in war takes the form of loss of life, men, wealth and weapons, besides bitterness of defeat.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, ‘If you [Prophet] have good fortune, it will grieve them, but if misfortune comes your way, they will say to themselves, “We took precautions for this”, and go away rejoicing.’ (*at-Tawba*: 50). This indicates that they took precautions before the beginning

of the fighting by refusing to join the war. The hypocrites may rejoice if any misfortune or catastrophe befalls the believers. In this verse, misfortune refers defeat in war. They would say, ‘We took precautions for this’ (*at-Tawba*: 50). This means that they safeguarded themselves by refusing to go out to fight, while Muhammad, his Companions and his army did not take precautions. Then they would turn their backs to hide their glee.

Allah says, ‘If you [Prophet] have good fortune, it will grieve them...’ (*at-Tawba*: 50). This clarifies that the victory of the believers deeply aggrieved the hypocrites. This statement has become a verse in the Quran which they heard. If the good fortune which was gained by the believers had not aggrieved them, would this not have motivated them to say that they neither rejoiced nor grieved. When the Quran surprised them by exposing the secrets of their souls, would this not motivate them to be guided? Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew their inner thoughts after Allah disclosed them to him. However, they kept their hypocrisy in their hearts and waited for misfortune to befall Muhammad and his Companions.

Then Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* responds to them saying:

قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا
وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

**Say, ‘Only what God has decreed will happen to us.
He is our Master: let the believers put their trust in
God’[51] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 51)**

‘Say, “Only what Allah has decreed will happen to us.” (*at-Tawba*: 51) refers to what befalls or happens to a person. If he experiences something which brings about benefits to him, he deems this good; and if it afflicts him with misfortune, he deems it bad. Therefore, the word ‘*isabah*’ means that something happens to someone; if it brings benefit it is good, and if it brings evil it is bad. Misfortunes are of two kinds: those which involve an adversary, and those which involve no adversary. If someone hit me, for example, he becomes my adversary, so rancour and rage towards him develop in my heart, and I desire to avenge myself from him. But if I fall ill, for example,

there is no adversary. Allah urges us not to have rancour but to pardon our adversaries, as He says, '...and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 134)

The verse includes three stages: to hold anger in check, to pardon and to do good; thereby, a person will attain the rank of those doers of good whom Allah loves.

In addition, Allah says, 'And whoever is patient and forgives - indeed, that is of the matters [requiring] determination.' (*ash-Shura*: 43) This means those who patiently bear their misfortunes and forgive their adversaries and enemies. Patience and forgiveness require resolution and strength of will for a person to accustom himself to pardon instead of seeking revenge.

As for those misfortunes in which no adversary is involved, they do not require this effort, but require only patience, since no one plays a part in them. We find that Allah says about these kinds of misfortunes, '...and be patient over what befalls you. [All] that is of the matters [requiring] determination.' (*Luqman*: 17) because this case requires less resolution. Therefore, the emphasis added by the Arabic letter '*lam*' in the word '*lamin* *'adhm al-umur*' (indeed, that is of the matters [requiring] determination) is not used in the previous verse, while it is used in the following verse, 'And whoever is patient and forgives - indeed, that is of the matters [requiring] determination.' (*ash-Shura*: 43)

And we must pay attention to Allah's saying regarding human emotions, '...and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 134) This noble verse represents the stages which a person passes through. First, one must hold his anger which means that anger still exists in the heart and is renewed every time the person sees his adversary. Therefore, he needs to hold his anger every time he sees him. Then the believer moves to a more sublime stage urged by faith, namely pardon, in which he removes the anger from his heart and replaces it with pardon. The third stage is, '...and Allah loves the doers of good.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 134)

Allah loves doing good and rewards the people who observe it. A person should treat kindly whoever mistreated him so that he can attain Allah's love. This represents perfection urged by faith because all people are Allah's dependents. For example – and to Allah belongs the utmost example of

perfection - imagine that you go home and find that one of your children has hit another. With whom will you side as the male head of household? You will side with the one who was hit so you will pat him on the shoulder and soothe him, and you might give him some money or buy him something to cheer him up. This means that you will treat him kindly.

Since we are all Allah's dependents, if someone assails and wrongs another, Allah will be on the side of the wronged person. Therefore, the one who mistreats you causes Allah to side with you, so should you not return the favour by being kind to him?

The child at fault sees that his brother, whom he wronged, now enjoys the affection of his father, and perhaps the wronged child has obtained something that he wished for. Therefore, the child at fault wishes that he were the one who was wronged, so that he would get something good in return.

In the verse which we are currently examining, Allah advises us that when misfortunes afflict us, we should respond by saying, 'Say, "Only what Allah has decreed will happen to us..."' (*at-Tawba*: 51), accordingly, everything is referred to the wisdom of the Creator of the universe Who arranges all its affairs. Something that a person dislikes may afflict him although it is good for him. If a person's father disciplines him because he neglects his studies, is this merely a punishment or for his own good? If he considers the future and the success he will attain in life if he studies, this punishment is for his own good. Accordingly, we must view the things which happen to the believers; if they are defeated at a battle, this means that Allah draws their attention to do good and He teaches them that they must be aware of the means that bring about victory which they did not utilise, so they were defeated.

For example - and to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection - when the teacher takes the pupils' notebooks to correct them, sometimes he punishes the pupils who make mistakes to educate them.

Therefore, if misfortune befalls us and you believe that it harms us, you should know that we trust the One Who afflicted us with it. We are also confident that He incurred it to discipline us, and that everything is destined for our good, and the One Who destined it - Allah *the Almighty*- says, 'I will surely win, I and My messengers...' (*al-Mujadala*: 21).

Our faith teaches us that everything that befalls us from Allah is good, and that certain incidents may take place to discipline and reform us so that we do not deviate from the right path. A person only disciplines and reforms the one he loves, and he does not care about rectifying the affairs of the one he does not love; what about the Creator's love for us? If a father finds some children playing cards in the parlour and his son is among them, he will be angry. However, if he only finds the neighbours' children playing cards, he might not pay any attention to them. Accordingly, if the Muslims are afflicted by something which the hypocrites and disbelievers consider as a misfortune that causes them to rejoice, this is foolishness on their part. This is because everything which Allah ordains is for the good of the believers, as it is either as a kind of discipline, a cause for reward or a means of raising one's status in life. Therefore, everything that afflicts the believers is good.⁽¹⁾ Therefore, the following verse, 'Say, "Only what Allah has decreed will happen to us..." (at-Tawba: 51) means that all that Allah decrees for the believers is for their own good.

Then Allah puts further emphasis on this notion, saying, '...He is our protector...' (at-Tawba: 51). Since Allah is the One Who takes care of all the believers' affairs and protects them, He will not mistreat those who seek his support. Then Allah clarifies this meaning further saying, '...let the believers put their trust in Allah.' (at-Tawba: 51) Allah, in whom you believe, is Wise and All-Powerful, so when afflictions befall you, contemplate them; if they occurred as a result of your own misdeeds, then you must blame yourself; and if Allah afflicted you with them, then you must understand that they happened for a wise reason.

Allah gives the disbeliever his life's essential needs, but He gives the believer the essential needs of both his material and his spiritual life. With this notion, we know that if something we dislike has afflicted us, this does not mean that Allah has forsaken us, but He wants to discipline us or draw

(1) Suhayb Ar-Rumi narrated that the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'How wonderful is the case of a believer; there is good for him in everything and this applies only to a believer. If prosperity attends him, he expresses gratitude to Allah and that is good for him; and if adversity befalls him, he endures it patiently and that is better for him.' [Related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2699), Ahmad in his *Musnad* (4. 332, 333), Ad-Darimi in his *Sunan* (2. 318) and Abu Na'im in *Hilyat Al-Waliya* (1. 154)]

our attention to something. If He had not done that, He really would have forsaken us.

The believer should understand this point. Therefore, no one should say that Allah has forsaken us because this saying shows weakness of faith and lack of trust in Allah. When Allah disciplines you, this means that He has not forsaken you. When misfortune afflicts you, you should know that He is still your Protector; since your Protector holds you to account for your misdeeds and rectifies your affairs, be confident and place your trust in Him.

For example, suppose that someone trusts you with some worldly affair, and then you make a mistake in this regard. He will certainly inform you of your mistake and suggest to you a way to rectify the matter in which case you will find yourself filled with trust in this person. What about Allah if we put our trust in Him, and He rectifies our affairs?

However, beware of misunderstanding putting trust in Allah and stopping. It is said, 'The body should work and the heart should trust Allah'. The farmer should plough the land, plant the seeds and water them, acts which are considered physical work which the farmer must undertake. Then he puts his trust in Allah, hoping that the seeds produce a large yield, and that no disaster or meteorological phenomenon, such as a lashing rain or fierce wind takes place destroying what he has done. Therefore, after doing the work carefully, one should supplicate to Allah and ask Him to protect the yields of his labour.

As for those who do not work and claim that they put their trust in Allah, they are considered liars because putting one's trust in Allah is not relevant to physical work, but it is relevant to one's heart.

But in whom do you trust? When you put your trust in the Ever-Living Who never dies, your work will not be in vain; but if you trust in someone, however powerful he may be, his power may turn to weakness and he may coerce or humiliate you. In addition, a catastrophe may befall him causing him to die.

Allah *Glorified is He* tells His Messenger to respond to those who rejoice in the misfortunes of the believers to reveal to them that their rejoicing indicates their foolishness. Allah says:

قُلْ هَلْ تَرَبَّصُونَ بِنَا إِلَّا أَحَدَى الْحُسَيْنَيْنِ^ط وَنَحْنُ نَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمْ أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمُ اللَّهُ
بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ أَوْ بَأْيَدِنَا^ط فَتَرَبَّصُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُّتَرَبَّصُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

Say, 'Do you expect something other than one of the two best things to happen to us? Well, we expect God to inflict punishment on you, either from Himself or at our hands. So wait; we too are waiting'[52] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 52)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* responds to those who grieve if the believers have good fortune and rejoice if misfortune befalls them. He affirms that everything which befalls the believers is for their own good. Therefore, He said, 'Say, "Only what Allah has decreed will happen to us"' (*at-Tawba*: 51). In the Arabic text of the verse, Allah says '*lana*' (to us) which literally implies possession. This indicates that everything that Allah ordains for the believers is either to discipline them and expiate their sins or to direct them towards the Truth after deviating towards falsehood. All of this is for our own good.

Then, Allah says, '...we too are waiting.' (*at-Tawba*: 52) This means that they should wait and see what theirs and the believers' end will be. Their end will be continuous chastisement in this worldly life and the Hereafter. They will receive all the means of chastisement in the worldly life, and will be denied all the means of goodness in the Hereafter. As the disbelievers wait for misfortune to afflict the believers, the believers will see them afflicted with evil, whilst the disbelievers will find the believers receiving goodness. Therefore, the result of the comparison will be in the believers' favour. After Allah has clarified this matter, a question might occur to the believer, 'Have these people not done anything good at all'? Will no good at all come to them? We know that Allah always rewards even for the smallest amount of good.

Allah clarifies the outcome of disbelief (Allah is our refuge); and He showed us that no good deed will be accepted from any disbeliever because unbelief annuls all good deeds. If their works are good for other people and benefit them, Allah will reward them materially in this worldly life, but in the Hereafter, they can receive nothing but Hell.⁽¹⁾ Allah says:

(1) Anas ibn Malik narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah does not wrong a believer a good deed because he is given blessings for it=

قُلْ أَنفِقُوا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا لَّنْ يُتَقَبَلَ مِنْكُمْ إِنَّا كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

Say, ‘Whether you give willingly or unwillingly, what you give will not be accepted, for you are disobedient people’[53] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 53)

Therefore, the condition for Allah’s acceptance of any deed is that it should be performed by a believer, but if a person does not do his deeds for the sake of Allah, He will not be rewarded by Allah.

Therefore, Allah gives an example of the works of the disbelievers in His saying, ‘But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before Him, and He will pay him in full his due; and Allah is swift in account.’ (*an-Nur*: 39) Allah *Glorified is He* gives another example in His saying, ‘The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they are unable [to keep] from what they earned a [single] thing. That is what is extreme error.’ (*Ibrahim*: 18)

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter - We increase for him in his harvest. And whoever desires the harvest of this world - We give him thereof, but there is not for him in the Hereafter any share.’ (*ash-Shura*: 20) This explains what some of the scholars found hard to understand in His saying, ‘So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.’ (*az-Zalzala*: 7-8)

Some of the scholars asked, ‘Will Allah *Glorified is He* reward these disbelievers in the Hereafter or in the worldly life?’ They found it difficult to understand because the meaning of the verse is general. Allah rewards in this life those who work for the sake of this worldly life, and rewards in the Hereafter those who work sincerely for the sake of Allah seeking rewards in the Hereafter. Therefore, those who utilise well the means which Allah has

= in this world and will be rewarded for it in the Hereafter. But the disbeliever is given in the world the reward for good deeds, he has performed for the sake of Allah and when he comes to the Hereafter, there is no good deed for which he can be rewarded.’ [Related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2808) and Ahmad in his *Musnad* (3: 123,125,283)]

created with his Lordly bestowal, succeed in their lives. For example, those who advance (in a worldly sense) in agriculture, selection and taking care of good seeds will be rewarded for their work in this worldly life. Allah will withhold nothing from them, but He also says, 'And We will regard what they have done of deeds and make them as dust dispersed.' (*al-Furqan*: 23) This saying explains what Allah's bestowal in the Hereafter will be; therefore, the good deeds which the disbeliever does will not be rewarded in the Hereafter⁽¹⁾ because his deeds are not for the sake of Allah, so how can he hope to be rewarded by the One in Whom he does not believe?

Allah *Glorified is He* rewards those who believe in Him and work for His sake, but the works of those who disbelieve in Him are all annulled. This is what is expected because as long as the person's deeds are not for the sake of Allah, he should not expect reward from Him. If you act for the sake of humanity, it will reward you; if you act for the sake of society, it will reward you by making statues of you, naming cities and streets after you and founding establishments in your name. Therefore, your name will be immortal in this worldly life which will be your reward. But if you believe in Allah and hope for His reward, you will find on the Day of Resurrection that Allah's rewards for the good that you did.

Allah says in this verse, 'Say, "Whether you give willingly or unwillingly..."' (*at-Tawba*: 53). The Arabic word '*taw'an*' means a deed that you performed without being forced; so how would you not be rewarded for the good deed you performed willingly?

We must make a distinction between the word '*taw'an*' (willingly) and '*ta'i'an*' (obedient), and between the deed which a person does willingly and that which a person does because he is forced to do it. All deeds are either performed willingly and coercively. Had Allah ordered us to spend in

(1) 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her narrated that she said, 'O Messenger of Allah, Ibn Jud'an lived in the pre-Islamic era, and he used to keep his family ties and feed the poor. Will this avail him in the Hereafter?' He said, 'No, it will not avail him, as he never said, "O Lord, forgive me my sins on the Day of Judgment."' [Related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (214), Ahmad in his *Musnad* (4: 93, 120), Al-Hakim in *Al-Mustadrak* (2: 405) from another line of transmission that does not include 'Aisha as a narrator. He said that it is *Sahih*, but he did not relate it, and Ad-Dhahaby acknowledged it.

obedience to His command, He would not have said, ‘...what you give will not be accepted...’ (*at-Tawba*: 53) because obedience indicates that the worshipper yields to the will and command of the One he worships. However, He says ‘willingly’, which means that what they spend freely according to their own will. This applies to the hypocrites during the era of Messenger Muhammad: some of them sent their sons out to strive in the cause of Allah, others offered some of their wealth for the sake of striving in the cause of Allah. They performed these deeds willingly for them to hide true intentions so that their hypocrisy would not be discovered. Some of them might join the front row of the prayer in the mosque willingly out of fear that his hypocrisy would be discovered, not out of obedience to Allah. Obeying Allah means the obedience of a worshipper to the One he worships; as for those kinds of deeds, they are performed willingly for showing off not for the sake of worshipping Allah.

‘Say, “Whether you give willingly or unwillingly...”’ (*at-Tawba*: 53). Is this a command to spend? Does Allah really want them to spend even though Allah *Glorified is He* will not accept it from them? No, this is not a command to spend, but it is a threat and warning. For example, you may say to someone, ‘Just wait’. You are not really asking him to wait, but you threaten him, and the intended meaning is, ‘Just wait and you will see what I will do to you’. This point is clarified by Allah’s saying, ‘...then be patient or impatient...’ (*at-Tur*: 16), and His saying, ‘...Do whatever you will...’ (*Fussilat*: 40). Whether you are patient or not will not affect the retribution you shall receive. Were the words ‘Doing whatever you want...’ (*Fussilat*: 40) meant as a commandment, and then committing a sin would be considered obedience to Allah, if He had commanded to do what you liked. Instead, these words are a threat, meaning, ‘Do what you want, but you shall return to Allah and He will judge you for what you have done, and you will not be able to flee from Him’. Also, ‘give’ is a threat, since their spending is of no avail whether they do it willingly or unwillingly.

The word *karhan* (unwillingly or with compulsion) appears in several chapters of the Quran: *Al-’Imran*, *An-Nisa’*, *at-Tawba*, *Al-Ahqaf*, *Ar-Ra’d*, and *Fussilat*. The short vowel over the first consonant (*kaf*) is a *fatha* reading *karhan* and in some recitation methods it is read *kurhan* with the vowel

damma. Some people think *karhan* and *kurhan* both mean the same thing, but I say they do not. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...His mother carried him *karhan* and gave birth to him *kurhan* with hardship or struggle.’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 15). Here *kurhan* (unwillingly) is not referring to the pregnancy itself nor the delivery. It refers to the hardship which a mother suffers during pregnancy and childbirth. She is not forced to become pregnant although conception occurs without her precise will. For no woman can say to herself, ‘I will conceive tonight’. So, a mother cannot choose the precise moment she conceives, nor can she choose the precise moment she will give birth. Similarly, she cannot say, ‘I will give birth today’, or ‘I will not give birth today’. All of this happens unwillingly. Therefore, *kurhan* with the ‘u’ sound means something unwanted because of the hardship it entails, whilst *karhan* with the ‘a’ sound means something done by coercion from someone else.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Say, “Whether you give willingly or unwillingly, what you give will not be accepted...”’ (*at-Tawba*: 53). Allah will not accept what you give away. But what is the difference? Hypocrites used to pay alms, and the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* would not reject it; he would accept them out of courteousness. Then every performed action passes on to Allah, the One Who sees all from above. One of those people, named Tha`laba, asked the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings upon him* to pray for him to be rich. He supplicated for him and Allah gave him wealth, but then he was too stingy to pay his alms, and tried to evade its payment.⁽¹⁾ Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* revealed, ‘There are some among them who pledged themselves to Allah, saying, “If Allah gives us some of His bounty, we shall certainly give alms and be righteous”, yet when He did give them some of His bounty, they became mean and turned obstinately away. Because they broke their promise to Allah, because of all the lies they told, He made hypocrisy settle in their hearts until the Day they meet Him.’ (*at-Tawba*: 75-77)

When these verses were revealed, Tha`laba offered his alms to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*, but he did not accept them.

(1) The details of this story are narrated by At-Tabarani in his book (*Al-Kabir*) (page 7873), on the authority of Abu Umamah.

After the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* passed away, Tha`laba offered his alms to Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* who also did not accept from him. And after Abu Bakr, he offered its payment to `Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* who did not accept it either. Then Tha`laba died during the caliphate of `Uthman *Allah be pleased with him*.

But there were hypocrites during the time of the Messenger *peace and blessings upon him* whose alms payments were accepted. Allah, nevertheless, did not accept them. So, the verse means that Allah will not accept what these hypocrites spend in good causes, even if people accepted it. Allah *Glorified is He* gives the reason for that, saying, ‘...what you give will not be accepted, for you are a dissipated people.’ (*at-Tawba*: 53). The word *fasiq*, (dissipated) is derived from the verb *fasaqa* (dissipate) commonly used to describe a fresh date when separating from its skin. As in all fruits, the skin is a protective layer, which when peeled off, makes the fruit vulnerable to rotting. Definitions of moral concepts in the Sacred Law are derived from the material world. So, religion can be seen as a protective layer or hedge preventing a person from crossing Allah’s boundaries, and a protection from sins. When one is in dissipation or away from religious teachings, one becomes like a fruit from which the protective skin has been peeled off.

One who drinks alcohol, commits a crime or indulges in adultery will be punished for his specific sins, but a hypocrite will also have any good deed unacceptable due to disbelief in Allah. Suppose someone believes in Allah, but has a weakness towards a certain sin. In this case, the rule is that one thing does not abolish the other. He will be rewarded for his faith, and punished for his sin.

So, in this verse ‘dissipation’ does not mean general lack of obedience, but it is a specific kind of dissipation. A person, who fails to live up to moral responsibilities, is in a limited kind of dissipation. But the worst kind of dissipation is for a person to disbelieve in Allah. So, in the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا مَنَعَهُمْ أَنْ تُقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَلَا يَأْتُونَ
 الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كُسَالَى وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كَرِهُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

The only thing that prevents what they give from being accepted is the fact that they defy God and His Messenger, perform the prayer only lazily, and give only grudgingly [54] (The Quran, at-Tawba: 54)

Dissipation can be of two types, general or specific. Some might say if you commit a sin, then your prayers, your alms-giving and any acts of worship are deemed worthless. No! As long as the basis of religion remains intact, namely the belief in Allah and in His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and acknowledging religious teachings, then every act of worship has its reward, and every sin has its punishment. Allah *Glorified is He* is the Most Just, the Most-Merciful and would not hold someone accountable for all evil.

In this verse Allah *Glorified is He* gives the reason as to why their spending is unacceptable, and specifies the general meaning of dissipation, namely disbelief; not specific dissipation. He points out three attributes that prevent their deeds from being accepted: Disbelief in Allah and His Messenger which is the focal point of disbelief, and then their reluctance towards prayer and stinginess towards spending.

‘The only thing that prevents what they give from being accepted...’ (at-Tawba: 54). The verb ‘prevent’ is to reverse an action or stop it from occurring, such as making someone sit down when they want to stand up, or blocking someone’s hand as they try to hit someone else. In the former, you reversed the intention of sitting into standing, and in the latter, you prevented a person from afflicting someone. Thus, prevention can be applied to the subject or the object. When you stop Zayd from striking at someone, you prevent the subject; and in preventing him from being struck, you prevent the object (his hand). Everything in life is based on prevention which summarises action and reaction: this applies to human beings, time and space.

A human’s life depends on breathing, food and drink, breathing being the most essential. If you do not breathe in, you die and if you do not breathe out, you die. A person dies if air is prevented from entering the lungs, and dies if air is prevented from leaving the lungs.

The motion of the whole world is based on actions and its opposite reaction. If someone is about to hit another, but you hold back his hand and say, 'His sons, or brothers or family will come and beat you', he abstains from this action, fearing the reaction. The whole world will not live in peace except with fear of reaction.⁽¹⁾ Two strong forces fear each other and the possible reaction if one of them transgresses against the other. But when there is only one strong force facing a weak one, it annihilates its opponent.

This is true of the whole universe; it is either still or in motion. Where the universe is in motion, there is a balance of powers living together in peace because each of them fears the reaction of the other. It is a similar case where the world is still. Tall buildings are stable because the air does not only come from one direction, but rather from various directions which balances the pressure over all sides of the building. But if you were to remove the air from one side and make it blow from the other, the building would collapse; just as suddenly removing air from a closed vessel would cause it to break.

First, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'The only thing that prevents what they give from being accepted is the fact that they defy Allah and His Messenger...' (*at-Tawba*: 54). This does not mean that their tongues did not utter the testimony of faith. In fact, hypocrites spoke the words of the testimony, but there is a difference between the speech of the tongue and the conviction in the heart, where faith resides. Hypocrites combined testifying tongues and denying hearts. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* gave them the rights of the tongue's testimony. He did not confront them, detain or kill them and he gave them the same material rights that true believers were given. All out of respect to the words they said, 'There is no deity worthy of worship but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'. Yet because their inner souls are so vile, Allah requites them for what their inner souls conceal, and will punish them. They will gain no reward for what they do and secretly defy. Thus, they are dealt with in a logical and equitable way. They give

(1) In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And prepare for them whatever power and whatever garrisoned horses you can, to (spread) awe thereby into (the hearts) of the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others, apart from them (i.e., besides them) that you do not know...' (*al-Anfal*: 60).

publicly, and Allah gives them public rights; yet because they do not present a good unobservable core, He does not give them the unseen bestowal of His reward and His Paradise, but rather punishes them in His Hell-Fire.

The second reason is in Allah's Words *Glorified is He* '...[they] perform the prayer only lazily...' (*at-Tawba*: 54). Laziness means reluctance to do something. So, they pray only to be seen. When prayer is called for and they are with the believers, they stand to it with reluctance; and where no believers see them, they do not perform the prayer. So, their conduct is full of duplicity and contradiction.

The third reason is, '... [They] give only grudgingly.' (*at-Tawba*: 54). Giving is to donate from what Allah bestowed upon you, be it wealth, knowledge, status or power. This strikes a balance in society. In every society, there are the strong, weak, rich and poor; some educated and others ignorant, some healthy and some diseased. If everyone were to work only to meet their own needs, it would spell ruin for the weak, the sick, the infirm and the poor. Rather, every individual should do their best, and not just live for themselves. One must take from the fruits of his labour that which meets his needs and the needs of his dependants. Then, he should help others with the extra grace that Allah has bestowed upon him, especially those who are incapable of working for themselves. May those with health use their strength to help those who are sick, and those with wealth donate to the poor to help them survive and may the abled aid the disabled. This defines a self-sufficient society, from which everyone can benefit. For it is common that a rich person today becomes poor tomorrow, and someone strong may soon become weak. Individuals living in a self-sustainable society do not worry about such drastic life changing events. This is the real insurance for the healthy and the wealthy, and everyone living in such a society feels assured and supported. Also, a poor person does not live in terror of dying because he knows his dependants would not starve. There is assistance for people if they become poor and health benefits for people who become sick.

Therefore, giving and contributing is a necessity to society. The market is described as *nafiqa* (spending or giving) because it thrives with more commodities being bought and sold and the transactions therein are mutually

supportive. At the marketplace, you either sell or take money in exchange for what you sold, or you pay money for what you buy. In the past, people used to trade goods and since money was invented, people began to buy goods for a price. Whoever gives away money to please Allah *Glorified is He* will send goodness his way.

As for the hypocrites, Allah makes them suffer a hidden torment in this worldly life, and a torment witnessed by everyone in the Hereafter. He warned them that their ‘giving’ will not do them any good, be they willingly or unwillingly.

But people see hypocrites enjoying wealth and children not realizing that wealth and children are in fact tools for a hypocrite’s torment. Someone might object by referring to Allah’s saying *Glorified is He* ‘Wealth and children are the attractions of this worldly life...’ (*al-Kahf*: 46).

Those who say that must be reminded of the rest of the verse, where Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...but lasting good works have a better reward with your Lord and give better grounds for hope.’ (*al-Kahf*: 46). And Allah *Glorified is He* also says, ‘Your wealth and your children are but a trial...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 15).

Then Allah *Glorified is He* addresses His Messenger *peace and blessings upon him* and within that He also addresses all Muslims:

فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي
الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

So [Prophet] do not let their possessions or their children impress you: through these God intends to punish them in this world and for their souls to depart while they disbelieve [55] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 55)

Beware of seeing one of these people who have been given wealth and children by Allah, and then say, ‘How could they be tormented in this worldly life when they possess wealth and children?’ This kind of admiration implies that wealth and children are necessarily a good thing, or that all goodness resides in them. But with deep consideration, wealth and children, and all the vanities of this worldly life deserve no admiration. Never be deceived by

something that might leave you or be a cause of torment to you. Wealth and children often lead to focusing on the blessings and disregarding the Giver of all blessings, then there is no remembrance of Allah, which in turn leads to neglecting His teachings.

Moreover, having wealth and children in this worldly life often leads to worrying about having to die and leave it. If you do not have faith in what Allah has in store for you in the Hereafter, you might worry about losing money or a child. To someone who does not believe in the Last Day, this worldly life is all the time there is; so, missing out on it is disastrous and losing it is devastating. A believer in Allah and the Last Day, however, would say, 'If I am to lose good opportunities in this worldly life, then Allah has something better for me in store'. Allah *Glorified is He* wants to prevent His believers from a deceiving blessing that distracts from the Giver of all blessings. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'So do not let their wealth or their children excite your admiration ...' (*at-Tawba*: 55); this noble verse implies that both wealth and children cause separate admiration: the wealthy admires his belongings, and the one who does not have wealth and has children admires them, too; and when someone has both, the admiration is even greater. By repeating the word '*la*' (no) in Arabic, Allah *Glorified is He* is putting emphasis on letting 'no children' and 'no wealth' excite admiration in our souls. Indeed, the context of the verse warns from admiring the possession of wealth alone, or children alone, 'So do not let (*la*) their wealth or (*la*) their children excite your admiration...' (*at-Tawba*: 55).

Allah *Glorified is He* explains that when He blesses a disbeliever or a hypocrite with wealth and children, it is not an uplifting for them, but rather a means for their torment in this worldly life and in the Hereafter. So, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...through these Allah only intends to (*li*) punish them...' (*at-Tawba*: 55). The letter (*lam*, *li*) added here to the verb 'punish' is called 'the "*lam*" of consequence'. When added at the beginning of a verb, it means that although the action is done for a certain purpose, the consequences of that action turns out to be completely different, or even the opposite of what was intended. An example from the Quran is where Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Pharaoh's household picked him up—[later] to (*li*) become an enemy and a source of grief for them...' (*al-Qasas*: 8).

Did Pharaoh's household pick up Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to become an enemy, or to be a source of joy? Surely, they did so for him to bring joy. But what happened was the opposite of what they intended with the verb 'to pick up'. And instead of Musa (Moses) bringing joy, he became an enemy to Pharaoh, and in fact caused the destruction of his realm. So, (*li*) -the letter (*lam*)- here indicates consequence rather than purpose.

Allah gives some disbelievers wealth and children, which are seemingly an upraise in this world. However, instead of using these blessings to draw nearer to Allah, they distracted them from faith in Him to the extent that Allah punishes them with the blessings. Allah does not intend to punish them; rather, the unlawful investment in wealth or in pleasing their children is what causes their punishment.

'...through these Allah only intends to punish them in this worldly life...' (*at-Tawba*: 55). The first form of this punishment is that these blessings distract them from their Giver and cause them to stray from Allah's way and they become enemies to those who believe in Allah's way, yet they fear to make this enmity public. Therefore, whenever the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* would send a messenger to call for one of the hypocrites or the Jews, they would panic. They would also wonder, 'Has the Messenger discovered the truth about us, or has Allah revealed some of our secrets to him?'⁽¹⁾ They feared that the truth about them would be exposed, and they would then be banished and treated as idolaters.

Secondly, they feared that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* would engage in war. As believers, they would be asked to spend their money in Allah's Cause, and would have to let their older children go out to fight alongside the Muslim army. They would say to themselves in private, 'Why should we spend our money and sacrifice our children to a

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'The hypocrites fear that a chapter will be revealed exposing what is in their hearts— say, "Carry on with your jokes: Allah will bring about what you fear!"' (*at-Tawba*: 64) Mujahid said they would say this to each other, and then they would say, 'Perhaps Allah does not reveal this secret of ours.' Al-Hasan said, 'The Muslims used to call this chapter 'The Digger', because it dug up what was in the hypocrites' hearts and revealed it.' See the exegeses of Ibn Kathir (ii. 366) and Al-Qurtubi (iv. 3121).

cause in which we do not believe'? As such, they differed from Muslims who would answer the call of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* seeking Paradise or victory. That is another form of punishment, which would also manifest itself when one of those hypocrites would go to battle. They would fear being killed, or their families being harmed, or that they or their women would be captured. So, throughout the journey to battle and at the battlefield they were in a constant state of mental torment.

Their punishment takes on a third form. When someone worships money, they do not care if it comes through a lawful or unlawful source. While someone with a lawful income works in life without secrecy, someone with an unlawful income is a thief who always worries of being exposed. They live in constant painful torment from the fear of a day when Allah will let people know that they have been bribed, or have embezzled or have defrauded and deceived. They may fear having done something which makes them subject to a legal charge or which would make people despise them, like being involved in drug-dealing or racketeering, or the like. This fear of being exposed causes them to live in a dilemma and in constant torment.

Let us consider the following example to know the difference between lawful and unlawful possessions. If you tell your neighbour you liked something in his house and he gives it to you, you are not worried of anyone finding out what happened. But if you were to steal it from your neighbour, you would not go by day or when people can see you, but rather, you would go by night while taking all precautions not to be seen. You would not enter from the front door, but you would wait for a left open window through which you could enter without being seen. So, there would be a plan for the theft, and you would enter the house on your tiptoes, trembling. And if, whilst you implement your plan, you hear a sound, you panic and run and hide, grabbing the item and hiding it; and if someone were to see it, you would panic. All this is a torment, which those who earn unlawful money must go through; so, the gathering of unlawful money is, in itself, a torment.

And if someone raises his children with unlawful money, Allah will not bless them. One of them might grow up to be a torment for his father as he raises him, by failing his exams or foolishly wasting money. Then the more

money he gets, the more he needs. This kind of son will not obey his father. For such a father, the suffering might even be worse if the child grew up to be a true believer refusing to eat or wear clothes bought with the father's money or constantly argues with him about the source of his money.

During the time of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* there was a man named Abu `Amir who was an enemy to Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings upon him*. Abu `Amir's son Handhalah⁽¹⁾, however, was a believer. Whenever Abu `Amir saw his son, his heart would seethe with rage. Handhalah had just had intercourse with his bride, when he heard the call to battle.⁽²⁾ He could not wait to take the purifying shower, and rushed to join with the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* in battle where he was martyred. But how did the companions get to know the story of Handhalah, when such matters are private between a man and his wife? Allah *Glorified is He* showed His Messenger *peace and blessings upon him* as angels descended from the sky and bathed Handhalah's body. Unlike any deceased, a martyr is not supposed to be washed⁽³⁾, so the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings upon him* realised that Handhalah's bathing was not due to his death, but that he was being washed to avoid meeting Allah in a state of ritual impurity. When he returned to Medina, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* sent for Handhalah's wife who related to him how her newly wedded

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- (1) *Handhalah was the son of the monk `Abd `Amr ibn Sayfy Al-Awsy known as Abu `Amir. Handhalah was from the people of As-Suffa (The Shaded Corner).*
 - (2) *Al-Hakim relates in his (Mustadrak) (iii. 204) that it was their wedding night, and his wife conceived that night and gave birth to `Abdullah (born in the year 4 AH), who became one of the finest and bravest of the Second Generation of Muslims. `Abdullah was chosen as commander of the army of Medina and fought fiercely against the army of Yazid ibn Mu`awiyah until he was killed in 63 AH. See Az-Zarkali's (Al-A`lam) (iv. 99).*
 - (3) *Jabir ibn `Abdullah relates that the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said about the martyrs of the Battle of Uhud, 'I am a witness in their favour on the Day of Judgement.' And he commanded that they be buried as they are with their blood. They were not washed and the funeral prayers were not performed for them. (narrated by Al-Bukhari no. 1343 of The Authentic; narrated in Sunnan of Abu Dawud no. 3138; At-Tirmidhi no. 1036; Ibn Majah no. 1514; An-Nisa'i v.62... Ahmad narrated in his Musnad, also on the authority of Jabir (iii,299) 'Do not wash them, for every wound or every drop of blood will smell like musk on the Day of Judgement.'*

husband had rushed out to battle unwashed.⁽¹⁾ Look how the angels had come down to wash a martyr whose father was an enemy to Allah and His Messenger, *peace and blessings upon him*, and how this must have enraged his father's heart.

Also, one of the companions, Abdullah, was the son of ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, the leader of the hypocrites in Medina, who turned his back on the Muslims in the Battle of Uhud and took a third of the army with him. Abdullah heard that the companions were asking the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* upon him, for permission to kill his father, ibn Ubayy, for treachery. How much faith did that son possess, to say to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* upon him, 'Messenger of Allah, if you will command anyone to kill my father, then please command me to do it. I do not want anyone else to kill him because I fear to hold any grudges in my heart towards any Muslim.'⁽²⁾ When a father hears that his own son has asked permission to be his killer, will that not torment his heart? Thus, we see that wealth and children, which are meant to be a blessing, could be divine chastisement in this worldly life?

Unfortunately, non-believers do not recognize the Giver of blessings, nor do they fear His requital in the Hereafter. They pay no attention to the wisdom of creation which affirms that man is Allah's vicegerent on earth, nor how Allah has prepared the earth with all its possibilities and goods to serve this vicegerent. Humans have been brought onto a world that is complete in every way, and perfectly prepared in a way that they could never have done themselves.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith, 'I created all things for you, and I created you for myself; so, do not let what is for you distract you from what you are for.' This means: do not let the blessing distract you from its Bestower. If someone attends a huge feast and finds a table filled with all kinds of foods, but does not even greet the host, who is present, but goes straight to the food, then people would agree that this person is being ungrateful to the host. Compare that to a person who greets and praises the host as soon as they enter, giving thanks for the hospitality. While the former

(1) *This incident was narrated by Abu Na'im in (Hilyat al-Awliya') (i. 357), Al-Hakim (iii. 204) and Al-Bayhaqi in (Al-Kubra) (iv. 15).*

(2) *Ibn Kathir relates this in his exegesis on verse al-Munafiqun: 8.*

was only concerned with the blessing, the latter did not allow the blessing to make him or her forget to thank the one who prepared it.

Another example, is that health is one of the most valuable blessings because with it, one can enjoy all of life's blessings. On the other hand, sickness is the most difficult condition to endure, since it makes it hard to feel and appreciate most of life's blessings. Therefore, Allah compensates a diseased person by drawing him or her to His Own company instead of being in the company of the blessing. Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith, 'Son of Adam, I was ill but you did not visit Me.' He will reply, 'My Lord, how could I visit you and you are the Lord of the worlds?' Thereupon Allah would say, 'Did you not know that such and such a slave of mine was ill but you did not visit him? Did you not realize that if you had visited him you would have found me with him?''⁽¹⁾

Tell me, by Allah, why would a diseased person grieve when knowing that while missing the blessing of health, the disease has placed them in the company of the Giver of blessings, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*? No, rather, this should lessen the hardship of sickness; savouring the pleasure of Allah's company should relieve all pain. Sadly, people are not logical with themselves. They do not realize what they were created for and are drawn to what has been created for them. Everything has been created for us, and we have been created to worship Allah. Thus, it would be more logical to pay attention to the purpose of our creation.

If we consider, for example, the logic applied by humans to time, it is said to be either past, present or future; and if we want to expand time to encompass all infinity, we say that time is present, pre-eternal and eternal. 'Pre-eternal' being all past without a beginning, 'eternal' being the future without an end, and the 'present' being what we live in today.

(1) *Narrated by Muslim (2569) on the authority of Abu Hurayra... The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Verily, Allah the Exalted and Glorious, will say on the Day of Resurrection, "Son of Adam, I was ill but you did not visit Me." He will reply, "My Lord, how could I visit You and You are the Lord of the worlds?" Thereupon Allah would say, "Did you not know that such and such a slave of Mine was ill but you did not visit him? Did you not realize that if you had visited him (you would have known that I was aware of your visit to him, for which I would reward you) you would have found Me with him?..."'*

The universe has been created by Allah, The Necessary Being. By His word 'Be!', everything possible came into existence. For everything requires a creator and is thus merely a 'possible being' that must one day cease to exist (see nihil fit ex nihilo or nothing comes from nothing and the Cosmological Argument). As for the being that is required for everything else to exist and itself requires no creator, the Necessary Being, Allah, He is the Eternal Being with neither a beginning nor an end; He is outside the bounds of time as we know it.

Everything except for Allah, all 'possible beings', require a creator, including this worldly life, which some people worship besides Allah. This world is not eternal, since it did not exist before Allah created the heavens and the earth; it had a beginning and it has an end, The Day of Resurrection.

Therefore, a believer's heart cannot contain both the love of Allah and the love of this worldly life together because Allah is Eternal and this worldly life is not eternal. In fact, as far as any individual is concerned, this world is only their lifetime, since the time before birth and the time after death do not concern them. And even if we consider the life of this world in its totality, it still has a beginning and an end. But how can the heart of a believer combine a love for Him Who has neither a beginning nor an end, and a love for that which has a beginning and an end? They cannot coexist.

Az-Zamakhshari⁽¹⁾ said that anything existing is either necessary, or possible: The Necessary Being is Allah alone, and the possible being is all besides Allah, and nothing is eternal except Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*.

It is logically impossible to suggest that something could exist with no beginning, yet has an end because that which has no beginning cannot have an end, it is eternal.

Can a being be endless but have a beginning? This applies to two beings, the Hereafter, and humans. A person has a beginning, the date of his or her creation, but has no end because after death there will be resurrection, either to spend eternity in bliss, or to be chastised a little and then enter Paradise or to spend eternity in hell -Allah forbid. Likewise, the Hereafter has not yet

(1) *Abu Al-Qasem Mahmoud ibn 'Umar Az-Zamakhshari who lived from 467-538 AH. (Al-A'lam by Az-Zarkaly vii.178)*

begun, but once it begins it will have no end because life is eternal in Paradise and in Hell. So, humans and the Hereafter have one thing in common, and we must connect ourselves to the Hereafter. Whoever chooses this worldly life has chosen something which has a beginning and an end; but those who follow Allah's commands and worship Him out of love and free will have chosen He Who is eternal. And whoever works for the reward of the Hereafter is working for that which is endless, and wherein life is real and everlasting.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'The life of this world is merely an amusement and a diversion; the true life is in the Hereafter, if only they knew.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64) This verse emphasises that the true life is that of the Hereafter, not this worldly life. Everything has a set purpose. For example, a chair is made for sitting on it; so, no matter what shape or colour, all chairs have a single purpose which is to be sat on. Similarly, our creation has a set purpose. All of us are members of the same species, so we all must have one single purpose. But what could that purpose be? Health? No, some of us are sick. Is it ability? No, some of us are disabled. Is it to live a long life? No, some of us only live for a few hours.

If we consider everything, we will conclude that we differ in everything except in death. Therefore, from the first moment of our worldly life we must realize that we are doomed to die and meet Allah, and we must prepare for this, since we are all headed towards the same end.

In the verse that we are currently discussing, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'So do not let their wealth or their children excite your admiration: through these Allah only intends to punish them in this worldly life...', and Allah *Glorified is He* has not stopped at that, but rather continues to say, '...and for their souls to depart (*tazhaq*) while they are disbelievers.' (*at-Tawba*: 55)

The word *tazhaq* literally means to exit with difficulty. Why? Because those who worship this worldly life have only devoted all their efforts to it, and did nothing for the Hereafter. So, when death comes, they know that torment awaits them, so they hate to leave the delights of this worldly life for the torment of the Hereafter. But when death comes to someone with good deeds, they rejoice because what awaits them is so much better than what they will leave behind. Like a man who lives in a tiny hut and then moves to a luxurious palace, will he not be happy? As for the one who lives for the sake

of this worldly life, he is like someone who is taken out of a palace and cast into a burning fire, and therefore hates the moment of death.⁽¹⁾

A believer rejoices while leaving this temporary life to the permanent eternal life, and leaving the blessings to be with The Giver of blessings, and leaving the life of causalities to a life with the Creator of causality. In this worldly life, we must follow the rule of causality. For example, to eat you must cook food or have someone prepare it for you, and to wear clothes you need someone to make the material and stitch the clothes. Thus, to every outcome there is a series of causes, like the farmer, or the reaper, or the delivery to the mill or the factory, or the miller of flour or weaver of cloth. In the Hereafter, however, there will be no causality, but as soon as something occurs to your mind, you find it before you. Is this not a life of bliss?

So, at the moment of death, only a believer's face is beaming⁽²⁾, whilst the one who frowns and convulses when the Angel of Death comes is a sinner or a disbeliever because they will transition from the delightful, though only relatively so, to a terrible chastisement.

'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* was asked, 'O 'Ali, I want to know whether I am from the people of this world, or from the people of the Hereafter?' 'Ali replied, 'Allah is more merciful than to let me decide the answer to that, but He lets you decide the answer: If you prefer someone who comes asking you to give them over someone who comes to give you a gift, then you are from the people of the Hereafter.' If you are from the people of the Hereafter, you are aware that the charity you give now in this ephemeral world will earn you

(1) 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* mentioned that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Whoever loves to meet Allah, then Allah loves to meet him. And whoever dislikes meeting Allah, then Allah dislikes meeting him.' She said, 'O Messenger of Allah! All of us dislike death.' He said, 'It is not like that. But when the believer is given the good news of Allah's mercy, His pleasure, and His paradise, then he loves to meet Allah and Allah loves to meet him. Whereas when the disbeliever is given the news of Allah's punishment and His wrath, he dislikes meeting Allah, and Allah dislikes meeting him.' *Narrated by Muslim in his Sahih (2684) and narrated by At-Tirmidhi in his Sunnan (1067) and he said it is a good, authentic Hadith.*

(2) Al-Hasan Al-Basry said, 'There is no comfort for a believer except in meeting Allah. And whoever finds comfort in meeting Allah, then the day he dies is his day of joy, happiness, safety, honour and distinction.' (see Ihya' 'Ulum Ad-Din v.465).

reward in the Hereafter to which you are looking forward. So, you welcome the person asking you for it and gladly give away money. Yet if you prefer a person who comes to give you a gift over the one who comes to ask of you, you are from the people of this world. Because the one who gives you a gift only increases your worldly lot; and if you delight in this more than you delight in what increases your lot in the Hereafter, then you are from the people of this world.

When people see that a person's face is relaxed and brightened up at the moment of death, they say the deceased has been granted a good ending by Allah. This is true because death is a moment of truth when one cannot lie. While suffering from any illness, one might cling on to the hope that a brilliant doctor could find a cure. But it is different at the moment of death because one realises that death is here and there is no escape from it. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'When the soul of a dying man comes up to his throat.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 83) At that moment one clearly sees what was hidden from him in this worldly life and starts to think of his deeds. Then if his life was righteous and full of light, he smiles and his face brightens, and he dies with that expression. But if his life was filled with evil and sin, his face darkens and he frowns, then dies with that expression. This is what we call the '*khatimah*' (end). When one knows for certain that he's dying; like a final exam, where you see a failing student is pale-faced and trembling, whilst a hard-working student is bright-faced and smiling. Now the mind is emptied of everything except the list of one's deeds which settles in one's deepest conscience, that place deep inside, where if a certain feeling is established, it is never forgotten. Say a student finds out just before entering the exam that there will be a question about a certain section of the book. That student immediately opens this section in the book and quickly reads it while thinking of nothing else. And simply reading it once enables him to give an excellent answer on that question because, like a camera, his deepest conscience has taken a picture while his mind was clear. Our deepest conscience can only be occupied with a single thought at any time, so when another thought comes to it, the first thought is expelled.

Therefore, if you memorise something as soon as you hear it, that is a sign that your deep conscience was empty and receptive when you heard it.

Likewise, at the moment of death, the dying person has no thought in his deep conscience other than that of the Hereafter.

‘And for their souls to depart (*tazhaq*) while they are disbelievers.’ (*at-Tawba*: 55) This phrase conveys two meanings: The first is that the blessing will remain with them and continue to distract them from Allah until the time of death; and the second meaning is that the hour of death will be difficult for the disbeliever and the hypocrite because they must leave behind their possessions and children knowing the chastisement that awaits them.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ لَمِنْكُمْ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَفْرُقُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

**They swear by God that they belong with you
[believers], but they do not. They are cowardly [56]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 56)**

Why did Allah place this verse here, after having warned us from admiring their wealth and their children? First, they are not really blessings for them, but Allah’s condemnation. Second, Allah wants to turn us against the hypocrites and have us take all our precautions. He gives an example of them swearing by Allah, which no one would normally do unless someone suspects they are lying. If you say something and people believe you, there is no reason for you to swear about it. But if someone challenges what you said, you swear by Allah to remove their doubts. So, why would the hypocrites swear without any previous challenge?

They constantly hear the Quran as it is revealed against them. And they have a feeling that every Muslim doubts their conduct. So, to make the Muslims believe them, they start their statement with an oath⁽¹⁾. Allah, however, had already made the believers immune due to the faith in their hearts. They would not believe what the hypocrites say without taking precautions and guarding themselves from the evil plans of those hypocrites. Allah warns the believers from trusting what the hypocrites say even if they swore it to be true.

(1) In a similar context, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘They use their oaths as a cover and so bar others from Allah’s way; what they have been doing is truly evil.’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 2)

Had Allah not given the believers this immunity of faith, they would have believed what the hypocrites said because of the sanctity of an oath. And what did the hypocrites swear to? They swore they were believers. Although outward they were doing what believers do, their hearts were void of faith.

So why were they swearing? This is what we call self-contradiction. Believers do not contradict themselves because they believe with their hearts and soul as well as their actions. Their bodies are not in conflict with their souls. Disbelievers, too, do not contradict themselves, since they openly announce disbelief in Allah or His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* upon him. So, their actions do not contradict their souls. They have only one inclination, though corrupt, but they have no contradictions. Hypocrites, however, suffer from an inner conflict; with their tongues, they each utter, ‘I am a believer, and I testify that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’, yet their hearts contradict what they say, and neither believes in Allah’s Oneness nor in the prophethood of Muhammad.

In the chapter of *al-Munafiqun*, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘When the hypocrites come to you [Prophet], they say, “We bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah.” Allah knows that you truly are His Messenger and He bears witness that the hypocrites are liars.’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 1)

How does Allah say, ‘...the hypocrites are liars’, when they have witnessed to the very same thing to which Allah has witnessed, which is that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah? Allah is exposing them, for they have uttered with their tongues what is not in their hearts. He clarifies that their tongues are lying because they are not conveying what is truly in their hearts. So, a hypocrite lives in contradiction with his own soul and is even worse than a disbeliever, who openly announces his enmity to religion and to you, allowing you take precautions against him. A hypocrite, however, pretends to have faith in order to gain your trust, so his ability to betray you is greater and more harm can come from him. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of Hell.’ (*an-Nisa*: 145)

Self-contradiction is truly the most miserable character in the whole world. The poet Al-Mutanabbi elucidates this fact saying:

What spoils the world to a free man is to see

An enemy whom he has no choice except to befriend.

This is the inner conflict that occurs when circumstances force you to treat your enemy as a friend. Another poet says:

We spent the night feeling rancour towards one another,

Yet out of fear we acted as though we praised one another.

A third poet tries to depict the contradiction in society that makes people praise someone they despise, saying:

Enough underestimation of our self-contradictions

When will the statements ever be true to their fearful tongues?

So, hypocrites swear with their tongues that they are among the believers, and they are so only when it comes to outwardly following the Sacred Law. In reality however, they do not belong to you, for in their hearts they are not among you. The picture depicted is completed when Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'They swear by Allah that they belong with you [believers], but they do not. They are cowardly people (*yafraqoon*).' (*at-Tawba*: 56). *Yafraqoon* means fear. They are in a constant state of panic, afraid of being exposed which would lead to their being banished from the Muslim community. Moreover, the Muslim community would then treat them as disbelievers, fight them in war and seize their possessions. They falsely swear out of fear of being exposed. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* tells His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* about them, 'We could even point them out to you [Prophet] if we wished, and then you could identify them by their marks, but you will know them anyway by the tone of their speech....' (*Muhammad*: 30) This is an encouragement to examine what people of hypocrisy say, even if what they say sounds fair⁽¹⁾.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says about hypocrites, 'When you see them, their outward appearance pleases you; when they speak, you listen to what they say.' Al-Kalby says, 'The verse is talking about 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, Jad ibn Qays and Mut'ab ibn Qashir. They all had perfect looks and eloquent speech.'

لَوْ يَحِذُّونَ مَلْجَأًا أَوْ مَغْرَبًا أَوْ مُدْخَلًا لَوَلَّوْا إِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْمَحُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

**If they could find a place of refuge, or a cave, or somewhere to crawl into, they would run there with great haste [57]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 57)**

A refuge is where we go to protect us from harm, such as a fortress, “or a cave” in the mountain. “somewhere to crawl to” could be a tunnel under the ground, entered with difficulty while bending oneself. So, there are three places to which they flee if they are ever found in a battle; all because what they say with their tongues is contrary to what lies in their hearts. They wish they could go to a distant place to revile Islam for the hardship they find in battle. But they cannot do this in front of Muslims, so they search for a place where no one can hear them. ‘If they could find a place of refuge, or a cave or somewhere to crawl into, they would run there with great haste.’ (*at-Tawba*: 57). The verse refers to hypocrites whom Allah had described as violating their treaties, swearing false oaths, and everyone who lives in inner conflict which causes them misery. Each one of them acts in a way which contradicts their true feelings and fears being exposed.

Their lives are the opposite of a believer’s life which is in harmony because the tongue states what is in the heart. In addition, faith makes a believer live in harmony with the universe. The state of a hypocrite similarly differs from that of a disbeliever, who announces the disbelief in his heart with his tongue. Hypocrites harbour resentment towards Allah’s religion while publicly claiming to love it.

When someone is compelled to praise their enemies and act as though they loved them, they are carrying a terrible psychological burden. Thus, hypocrites burden themselves more than they burden society. Like a stingy man trying to act generous, but every time he gives a penny to support this claim, it terribly hurts him. To live in peace, one must first be consistent and make peace with one’s own soul.

So, whenever hypocrites need to vent the hatred in their hearts, they secretly meet away from the eyes and ears of Muslims. They seek out a refuge where they would be safe, or a mountain cave far from the people so

that no one could hear them or a hidden narrow place that is hard to enter; they seek any place to hide from the eyes and ears of the believers and let out the hatred concealed in their hearts. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'If they could find a place of refuge, or a cave, or somewhere to crawl into, they would run there (*wallow*) with great haste (*yajmahun*).'¹ (*at-Tawba*: 57) *Wallow* is to hasten to a place without thinking of anything else. And *yajmahun* literally means to lose control of your horse while riding it and cannot restrain it from bolting off. When this word is used to describe a person, it means he quickly heads to his destination without anyone being able to prevent him; and if anyone gets in his way he pushes them aside and quickly continues.

The verse clearly depicts the hypocrites' behaviour at any battle. As soon as the fighting starts, they avoid the enemy and martyrdom. And they search for a safe place to flee to, or a cave to hide in or a crack in the earth in which they can crawl to spare them the fighting. Then as soon as the battle ends, they come out and join the rows of the Muslims. They do not fight for a religion in which they do not really believe. They were the first to try to flee whenever there was a call to battle in Medina. And they would go to the Prophet *peace and blessings upon him*, to try to get an exemption from fighting; and one of them⁽¹⁾ would say, '...Grant me permission [to remain at home], and do not put me to a test!' (*at-Tawba*: 49)

And with respect to charity, they try to raise doubts about the fairness of its distribution; Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَلْمِزُكَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ فَإِنْ أُعْطُوا مِنْهَا رَضُوا
وَإِنْ لَّمْ يُعْطَوْا مِنْهَا إِذَا هُمْ يَسَخَطُونَ

Some of them find fault with you [Prophet] regarding the distribution of alms: they are content if they are given a share, but angry if not [58] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 58)

When sitting together they criticise the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings upon him* and try to find fault in him, as Allah *Glorified is He* says about

(1) That person was Aljad ibn Qays, whose story has been given while explaining the mentioned verse.

them, ‘There are others who insult the Prophet by saying, “He will listen to anything.” Say, “He listens for your own good; he believes in Allah, trusts the believers and is a mercy for those of you who believe.” An agonizing torment awaits those who insult Allah’s Messenger.’ (*at-Tawba*: 61).

These are some of the hypocrites’ attributes, which Allah reveals to the believers. And He reveals even more of their traits, saying, ‘Some of them find fault (*yalmizu*) with you [Prophet] regarding the distribution of alms: they are content if they are given a share, but angry if not.’ (*at-Tawba*: 58)

We all read Allah’s words, ‘Woe to every fault-finding (*lumaza*) backbiter (*humaza*).’ (*al-Humaza*: 1) So, who is the ‘*humaza*’ (backbiter) and who is the ‘*lumaza*’ (fault-finder)? The *humaza* is one who secretly criticises and mocks a hidden trait of someone else. They do so with a gesture of the eye or a body movement. For example, when a group of people are sitting together and one of them tries to subtly mock another by winking his eye at his neighbour, or whispering in his ears or the like. In conclusion, he points to the person’s fault in a subtle way that most attendees do not notice. On the other hand, the *lumaza* is someone who openly finds fault in others and criticises them in their presence. The one who exposes the fault of another bravely and openly is called *lammaz* in Arabic, whilst the weak one who secretly finds fault in others is called *hammaz*. Also, the word *lumaza* is used to describe someone who often finds fault in people.

The words *humaza* and *lumaza* are in the Arabic hyperbolic form (*fu`ala*), which indicates an action being performed repeatedly. For example, the word *duhaka* means someone who laughs (*dahik*) a lot. So *lumaza* means one who frequently finds fault with others and openly expresses it.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Some of them find fault (*yalmizu*, same root as *lumaza*) with you [Prophet] regarding the distribution of alms...’ (*at-Tawba*: 58). As mentioned, *lamz* means the seeking out of faults, and it is linked here to the distribution of alms. Some of the hypocrites would criticise the notion that the rich should have to work and strive to earn money only for the poor person to take it without effort. Did they find fault in the principle of almsgiving itself, or in the amount of obligatory alms, or in the way Allah

continuously encouraged people to give, or the way in which charity is distributed to the poor in that some are given more than others? They criticised all these aspects, or some of them.

But the event about which this noble verse was revealed centred around the distribution of charity. A man named Harqus ibn Zuhair, also known as Ibn thil-Khuwaysira, leader of the *Kharijite* sect, stood up and said, 'Be just, Muhammad!' The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Woe unto you! Who shall be just if I am not? I shall surely fail and lose out were I not just!' 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Messenger of Allah, give me the permission to strike his neck!' The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Leave him, for he will have companions whose prayer and fasting shall make the prayer and fasting of any of you seem meagre in his own eyes. They shall recite the Quran, yet it shall not go beyond their throats.⁽¹⁾ They will deviate from Islam (as fast and unaffected) as an arrow that pierces its target: its pointed edge, its notch and its shaft, when examined, will be so clean (as if the arrow did not touch the target); neither the contents of the stomach nor any blood has clung to it. Their sign will be a black man, one of whose forearms will be like a woman's breast or a dangling piece of meat. They will emerge at a time when people are divided.'

Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'I testify that I heard this from the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and I testify that 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb fought against them, and I fought alongside him. That man (i.e. the black man mentioned in the aforesaid Hadith) was sought out, found and brought forth, and I saw that he was just as the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* had described him.'⁽²⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* adds further clarity to the description of these people saying, 'Some of them find fault with you [Prophet] regarding the distribution of alms; they are content if they are given a share, but angry if not.' (*at-Tawba*: 58) So, the amount of charity they were given would determine whether they felt angry or contented.

(1) That is, it will not reach their hearts.

(2) Cited by Bukhari (6163, 6963) and Muslim (1064), in the chapter of Zakat (alms), Hadith no. (148), on the authority of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri, the version of Muslim

A similar thing happened at the Battle of Hunayn. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* distributed the spoils among the Muslims of Mecca, yet gave nothing to *Al-Ansar* (the Helpers; Muslims of Medina). Since *Al-Ansar* did not understand why Prophet Muhammad did so, their exclusion was rather hard on their hearts, so the Prophet gathered them and said, ‘Are you not content that people should return with sheep and camels along while you return with the Messenger of Allah? I will live with you and I will die with you (I will not leave you as long as I am alive). Were all the people to go one way and the Helpers another, I would go the way of the Helpers.’⁽¹⁾ Upon this, the Helpers wept; they realised that they would return with what is far greater than any battle spoils; they would return home in the company of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Messenger of Allah gave those who had newly embraced Islam a share of *zakat* (alms) to further attach them to the Islamic religion. A share of the alms may also be given to some to reconcile their hearts and win them to Islam, and the poor whose dignity prevents them from admitting their need are also among the lawful recipients of *zakat*.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had many different things to bear in mind when he distributed alms and battle spoils, which other people might not have been aware of. Muslims obeyed what the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* did because his conduct meant to establish the rule.

The Pact of Al-Hudaybiya is a very good example. When it was concluded between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the disbelievers of Quraysh that neither would transgress against the other for ten years⁽²⁾; this

(1) *This is an authentic Hadith that has been cited before in detail.*

(2) The Pact of Al-Hudaybiya included other terms which the books of Prophet Muhammad’s Biography and Quran exegesis have stated:

1. Prophet Muhammad and his Companions shall return and not enter Mecca to observe ‘*Umrah* (Minor Pilgrimage) that year.
2. They shall be allowed to enter Mecca the following year to observe ‘*Umrah* without any weapons except their swords sheathed in their covers, provided that they shall only stay in Mecca three days then leave it.
3. A truce of ten years shall be held.
4. Whoever of the disbelievers who goes to the believers and declares faith- whether a man or a woman- shall be returned to the disbelievers.
5. Whoever of the believers forsakes Islam and goes to the disbelievers shall not be returned to the Muslims.

truce angered some Muslims. Some of them even said to the Messenger of Allah, 'How can we allow our religion to be demeaned?!' They were astonished Prophet Muhammad made that pledge to the disbelievers who were unjust to them. Even `Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* was so enraged that he said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Are we not in the right, O Messenger of Allah?!' Hence, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* firmly replied to `Umar, 'Know your place, O `Umar! He is the Messenger of Allah!'⁽¹⁾

Later, Muslims realised the wisdom behind the Pact of Al-Hudaybiya when they saw how that truce allowed Islam to spread and gave it power which led to the conquest of Mecca. Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'There has been no greater victory for Islam than the victory of Al-Hudaybiya.'

At the time when the pact was concluded, Muslims did not know what was between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Lord; people are always hasty, but Allah is not hasty as His servants are- Exalted is He above that. He lets matters run according to the course He intends for them.

Allah wanted to soothe the believers, so on their way back to Medina after the Pact of Al-Hudaybiya had been held, He sent down this verse to His Prophet, 'They were the ones who disbelieved, who barred you from the Sacred Mosque and who prevented the offering from reaching its place of sacrifice. If there had not been among them, unknown to you, believing men and women whom you would have trampled underfoot, inadvertently incurring guilt on their account- Allah brings whoever He will into His Mercy- if the believers had been clearly separated, We would have inflicted a painful punishment upon the disbelievers.' (*al-Fath*: 25)

(1) `Umar ibn Al-Khattab said, 'I went to Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, "Are you not truly the Messenger of Allah?" He said, "Indeed I am." I said, "Are we not in the right while our enemy is in the wrong?" He said, "Indeed it is so." I said, "Then why do we allow our religion to be demeaned?" He said, "I am The Messenger of Allah; I would not disobey Him, and He will grant me victory." I said, "Did you not tell us we would go to the Sacred House and circulate (round the *Ka'ba*)?" Then I went to Abu Bakr and said the same to him, so Abu Bakr said to him, "O man, he is the Messenger of Allah; he would not disobey his Lord, and He will grant him victory, so stay by his side and do not disobey him, for indeed he is in the right.'" (*Fath-al-Bari*, 5/332).

That way, Allah let the believers know the reason why He decreed that the Pact of Al-Hudaybiya should be held and the believers should not fight the disbelievers at that time and place. There were believers in Mecca who concealed their faith for fear that the disbelievers would have oppressed them had they known they embraced Islam. If a battle had broken out, this would have led to Muslims killing Muslims, for had the Muslims who came from Medina engaged in fighting against the Meccans, they would have unknowingly killed some of their fellow believers who were living in Mecca. Had all the believers been on one side and all the disbelievers on the other, Allah would have afflicted painful punishment on the disbelievers by the hands of the believers. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew a secret from his Lord, which he did not reveal to the believers until the right moment despite their hastiness.

Similar things take place in our lives. A believer may call upon Allah, but his invocations may not be answered; this believer should not grieve, but he should know that Allah has not answered his prayers for a good reason which is unknown to him. It is out of His Mercy that He withholds from you what can harm you. It is like when you prevent your young son from carrying a weapon for fear that he might brandish it in some dispute and kill someone. Although the weapon is meant to protect him, it is a means of protection that may cause great harm and lead to grave consequences.

Thus, when you call upon Allah and He does not answer your prayers, trust that He is protecting you from yourself, for you do not know what Allah knows. You may implore Him to give something you think is good for you, but He knows it is otherwise. Therefore, the fact that your prayers are not answered sometimes, is the best answer you could have.⁽¹⁾

(1) *Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri narrated that Prophet Muhammad said, 'No Muslim makes a supplication that does not involve a sin or severance of family ties except that Allah rewards him for it in one of three ways. He will answer his prayers right away, save the reward for him in the Hereafter or protect him from an evil equivalent to what he has asked.' They said [to the Prophet], 'In that case, we will ask for much!' He peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Allah has even more.'* Cited by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (3/18), Al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak* (1/493) and At-Tabarani in his *Al-Mu'jam As-Saghir* (2/92)

Allah says, 'Some of them find fault with you [Prophet] regarding the distribution of alms; they are content if they are given a share, but angry if not.' (*at-Tawba*: 58). The Arabic text of the verse uses the word *sakhat* (anger) which denotes discontentment in the heart which is manifested through the tongue. Such was the case with Harqus ibn Zuhair when he said to Prophet Muhammad, 'Be just, O Muhammad!' His heart was discontented which showed in his words.

When Allah draws our attention to an ailment that may endanger the community of the believers, He also gives us the way of treatment to eradicate that ailment. Those mentioned in the verse expressed discontent regarding the distribution of *zakat* (alms), even though when they were given a share, they were contented. That means their standards were inconsistent; they were standards based on whims. The laws set by Allah do not follow or depend on the whims of His servants, but they are firm and unbiased, and we are ordained to abide by them with justice, even with our worst enemies.⁽¹⁾

As for those who were angry with Prophet Muhammad's distribution of *zakat* (alms), they had double standards. Their attitudes differed based on their interests. When they were given a share, they were pleased; otherwise, they were angry. Their standards of judgement were based on their personal interests, far from all notions of justice.

After stating the problem, Allah gives the cure in the following verse:

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَضُوا مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ
سَيُوتِينَا اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَرَسُولُهُ إِنَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ رَاغِبُونَ

If only they would be content with what God and His Messenger have given them, and say, 'God is enough for us – He will give us some of His bounty and so will His Messenger – to God alone we turn in hope'[59] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 59)

Allah says, 'what Allah and His Messenger have given them' (*at-Tawba*: 59). However, they were not given anything, which was the reason why they were

(1) Allah says in this regard, 'But 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]...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71).

angry. Then why does Allah say so? By this, Allah wants to draw our attention that even when He withholds from you a thing you want, this is itself a form of giving and a manifestation of His Bounty, but people do not realise this. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* withheld the spoils from the Helpers after the Battle of Hunayn. However, they gained instead the company of Prophet Muhammad which is far more precious than any spoils. On that occasion, Prophet Muhammad said to them: I will live with you and I will die with you (I will not leave you so long as I am alive). Were all the people to go one way and the Helpers another, I would go the way of the Helpers.⁽¹⁾ They won what was far greater and more valuable than mere battle spoils. Thus, even withholding can be an act of giving.

Allah says, ‘what Allah and His Messenger have given them’ (*at-Tawba*: 59). He *the Exalted and Almighty* is the Lawgiver, and Prophet Muhammad was the one who delivered and implemented His Law. Contentment with what Allah ordains and bestows on us is a deed done by the heart and then expressed by the tongue, ‘If only they would be content with what Allah and His Messenger have given them, and say, “Allah is enough for us...”’ (*at-Tawba*: 59). If they were mindful of Allah, they would know He is the One Who takes care of us and both, His giving and His withholding are good for us. At times of affliction, those who are mindful of Him remember they have a Lord. They have a Protector, so no one may usurp their rights or transgress against them will go unpunished. They know Allah is there for them and will compensate them with more than what they have missed. They know their usurped rights will be the bane of the usurper’s life.

What a believer should strive to preserve is not the blessings given to him, but his relationship with the Giver of blessings. He should know that Allah is Ever-Able to compensate him for anything he has lost. Allah clarifies this image for us when He says, ‘Allah is enough for us– He will give us some of His Bounty’ (*at-Tawba*: 59). That is, He will give us something even better. Allah bestows His favours on each person even before he is able to worship Him, even when he is still in his mother’s womb. When you come to this life, you think with the mind Allah has created for you, and work with the energy

(1) *This is an authentic Hadith that has been cited before in detail.*

He has given you and employ the resources of the earth He has made subservient to you. However, when you were in your mother's womb, you could do nothing, yet He provided for you. Even when you are borne, you find the universe ready for your reception. Even before you develop the ability to work, you find the earth filled with Allah's blessings; you have not created any of its resources. All you do is make use of them as Allah commands. You have not made the earth or the sun. Were rain to stop, you cannot make it come down. Ponder this one blessing of Allah; everything on earth would perish if rain stopped. When drought strikes any part of the world, we see how everything dies: people, animals and plants.

Allah *Glorified is He* has created us in a world so full of vicissitudes. The weak turn strong and vice versa. The sick heal and vice versa. This is in order that we know that whatever powers or strength we possess, are not intrinsically ours but are gifts from Allah that He may take back whenever He wants. He who uses the strength Allah has given him to persecute His servants may well be stripped of this strength and turn in desperate need for a helping hand. Everything in the universe is from Allah and out of His Bounty.

In the verse we are examining, Allah says, '... "Allah is enough for us—He will give us some of His Bounty and so will His Messenger— to Allah alone we are *ragheboon* [we turn in hope]."' (*at-Tawba*: 59) The Arabic verb *ragheba* has several meanings depending on its preposition. *Raghiba fi* means 'to desire', *raghiba `an* (to refrain; turn away from) and *raghiba ila* (which we have in the noble verse) means 'to turn to in hope'. So long as we turn to Allah, then we should not think only of His bestowals in this worldly life, but also of what He prepares for us in the Hereafter. This worldly life is not the goal or the final destination; as long as you turn with hope to Allah, He will give you boundless delight in the Hereafter. With this belief firm in the heart, one would not lament or grieve for the loss of transient delights in this worldly life, so long as we aspire to the Hereafter.

In the following verse, Allah explains the way in which *zakat* (alms) should be distributed so that those who desire the enjoyments of this worldly life would be able to determine whether they deserve a share of it or not. He *the Exalted and Almighty* says:

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَمِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ فُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَرَمِينَ
وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

Alms are meant only for the poor, the needy, those who administer them, those whose hearts need winning over, to free slaves and help those in debt, for God's cause, and for travellers in need. This is ordained by God; God is all knowing and wise[60]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 60)

The Arabic word *innama* (rendered in the verse as 'only') denotes restriction. It means restricting a particular quality to a particular person or group. Therefore, using it in this verse means that *zakat* (alms) is confined only to the lawful recipients stated in the verse.

Allah says, '*As-Sadaqat* (alms) is meant only for...' (*at-Tawba*: 60). Why does Allah use the word *sadaqat* which denotes 'voluntary charity' if He means *zakat* (alms; mandatory charity)? In the verse, Allah specifies the lawful recipients of *as-sadaqat* which proves He means the mandatory *zakat* and not voluntary charity, so why does He use this word?

Do you not see that even in disbelieving and atheistic societies, there are people who establish charitable institutions to care for the poor? One's compassion for his fellow human is something instinctive Allah has created in all of us. In this light, *zakat* is not just an obligation, but also a manifestation of the sound human disposition, hence the word *sadaqat* which recalls compassion and benevolence of humans towards each other. Life events point to the significance of Allah's description of the mandatory *zakat* as *sadaqat* (charity). It is an obligation that agrees with the nature of humans who- be they believers or not- offer help voluntarily to the poor. The able feel happy when they give to the needy; it is an instinct Allah has placed in His servants so they may alleviate the miseries and destitution of one another.

In the noble verse, Allah says, 'Alms are meant only for *al-fuqara*' (roughly 'the poor'), *al-masakeen* (roughly 'the needy')...' (*at-Tawba*: 60). Scholars have differed respecting the meanings of *faqeer* (singular form of *fuqara*) and *miskeen* (singular form of *masakeen*). Some say one who is *faqeer* possesses nothing at all, while a *miskeen* is one who does possess something, but it is by

no means enough to provide for him. This would mean that a *miskeen* is in a better condition than a *faqeer*. Scholars who hold this view seek evidence in this verse, 'As for that boat, it belonged to some *masakeen* who toiled upon the sea...' (*al-Kahf*: 79). If they owned a boat, it obviously means a *miskeen* does own something, but the income they gained from the boat was not enough to meet their needs.

Some other scholars say the case is just the opposite, i.e. a *miskeen* is he who does not own anything at all while a *faqeer* is he who does not have enough. Given this, a *faqeer* is therefore better off than a *miskeen*. I think it is of no use to dwell on this debate any further since Allah has made a share for both. It may be worth mentioning that the word *faqeer* is derived from the same root of *faqarah* (vertebra). A *faqeer* is him whose backbone is worn out by life's toil, so his destitute condition is already obvious and does not need any words to express it. The word *miskeen* is he whose poverty has caused him to be struck by *maskanah* (weakness; wretchedness).

Besides the poor and the needy, 'those who administer them' (*at-Tawba*: 60), are also among the lawful recipients of *zakat* (alms). Those are the employees in charge of collecting *zakat* and placing them in the treasury to be distributed among its lawful recipients. This is a general rule that includes all those who administer *zakat*, whether they need money or not. Some might argue that if he who collects *zakat* (alms) is affluent, then he does not need to be paid for it. This means that his work would be voluntary. Usually, voluntary work may not be undertaken with the same efficiency as paid work. Payment entails responsibility and guarantees efficiency, so why should society be denied an efficient and hard-working collector of *zakat*? An employee who oversees collecting *zakat* (alms) serves- by the job he does- the Islamic state⁽¹⁾. He collects *zakat* and gives it to the ruler or local governor who distributes it among its lawful recipients. He does a service for the entire Muslim society, especially if *zakat* is distributed by the government. This would allow no giver of *zakat* the chance to hold himself superior to those who take it and would spare the latter humiliation. This is meant to maintain dignity of the

(1) 'Islamic state'- not capitalized- generally refers to a regime primarily based on the application of shari'a (Islamic Law); it by no means refers to ISIS! [Reviewer's Note].

believers. When a recipient of *zakat* (alms) takes it directly from its affluent giver, he will suffer from the humility of having to stretch out his hand to others. Besides, improper pride may creep into the heart of the giver. Children of the poor can thus be spared the humiliating scene of their fathers' going to rich families to ask for money, and children of the rich will be saved from the degradation of taunting poor children arrogantly. If a rich man and a poor man quarrel, the former will not have the chance to gibe, 'I give you such-and-such', nor can his children say to the poor man's children, 'Were it not for our father, you would have starved to death'!

Allah has prescribed the system of *zakat* to prevent the tyranny of givers and spare recipients the humiliation of begging. Everyone goes to the treasury, either to deposit or receive money. When the poor go to the treasury to take their shares by the command of the state, there is no shame in this since the state is responsible for all its subjects.

Another category of the lawful recipients of *zakat* (alms) is, 'those whose hearts need winning over' (*at-Tawba*: 60). These are people Muslims want to encourage to think about Islam or prevent from harming its adherents. In the early years of Islam, Muslims were weak and helpless. Later, when Allah granted victory and power to Muslims, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* cancelled out this share. He commanded that no share of *zakat* (alms) would be used for winning over the hearts of any non-Muslims, for the Islamic state was then strong enough that no support was required from those who had no firm faith.⁽¹⁾

This raises a question: Can a heart be won over? Yes, this is possible; acts of kindness can attract the heart of a good person. It can also pacify and unarm an evil one so that he would not harm him who shows kindness to him by a word or deed.

A share of *zakat* (alms) is also prescribed, 'to free slaves' (*at-Tawba*: 60). This refers to slaves who have been captivated during legitimate conflicts. Abolition of slavery is one of the goals of Islam, and therefore one of the shares of *zakat* (alms) is devoted to freeing slaves. Some people claim that Islam

(1) This was also the opinion of Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Ash-She'bi and others. Az-Zuhri said, 'I do not know anything that proves this ruling has been abrogated.' Ibn Al-'Arabi said that this share depends on the power of Muslims and whether they need to win over the hearts of some. (See: Tafsir Al-Qurtubi, 4/3706.)

established slavery and permitted it, but this is quite mistaken. Slavery already existed before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent. Islam established the principle of manumission by making it a means of expiating certain sins⁽¹⁾ as well as devoting a share of *zakat* (alms) to freeing slaves.

The Quran was revealed at a time rife with slavery. It was customary at that time that in case of failing to repay a debt, a creditor would take the debtor or one of his children as a slave. When a crime was committed, the perpetrator would procure pardon from the injured party by giving him one of his children as a slave. In cases of theft, a thief would not be punished, but would give one of his children as a slave in exchange for the stolen item. The strong enslaved the weak by kidnapping their women and children by force and selling them in the slave market. The ways in which people could be enslaved in the world were so many, and there was only one way a slave could be freed, the will of the master. He could free him or keep him as he pleased. Slavery existed in Europe, Asia, Africa and America. It was on the increase before the advent of Islam. It was like a basin filled by several taps, but having only one plughole. One of the manifestations of the wisdom of Islamic Law is that it has introduced cures for problems and ailments through stages to uproot them. An example of this is the prohibition of intoxication. It started with forbidding the believers from observing the prayer while drunk and ended by banning intoxication totally.⁽²⁾

(1) An example of this is manslaughter, '...And upon him who has slain a believer by mistake there is the duty of freeing a believing soul from bondage and paying an indemnity to the victim's relations, unless they forgo it by way of charity...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92). Another example is the expiation of oaths, '...Thus, the breaking of an oath must be atoned for by feeding ten needy persons with more or less the same food as you are wont to give to your own families, or by clothing them or by freeing a human being from bondage...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89).

(2) The stages of banning alcohol were as follows:

1. 'They ask you [Prophet] about intoxicants and gambling: say, "There is great sin in both, and some benefit for people: the sin is greater than the benefit."' (*al-Baqara*: 219).
2. '... Do not come anywhere near the Prayer if you are intoxicated, not until you know what you are saying...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43).
3. 'By means of intoxicants and games of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of Allah and from Prayer. Will you not, then, desist?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 91).

Islam has been keen on freeing humankind from slavery. This began by eradicating the sources of slavery so that the only remaining source is a religious war waged by a Muslim ruler where disbelieving female captives can be taken as slaves under special terms⁽¹⁾. As for all the other ways in which people could be enslaved, such as enslaving someone for committing a crime, for his inability to repay a debt and so on, Islam has brought an end to them by forbidding them. Moreover, Islam has not made the will of the master the only way for a slave to be freed, but has prescribed several other ways. Allah has made freeing slaves as an expiation for sins- as we have explained earlier. Even if one has done none of these sins, Islam encourages freeing slaves as a righteous deed that one is anyway rewarded for.⁽²⁾

Allah says, ‘Yet he has not attempted the steep path. What will explain to you what the steep path is? It is to free a slave.’ (*al-Balad*: 11-13) Thus, Islam has established many ways for slaves to be freed so that slavery would come to an end within a few years. Furthermore, Islam has enjoined certain duties on masters so that even before release from slavery, a slave can still enjoy an acceptable life. So long as a master keeps a slave, he must give him of the same food and clothes he gets from himself and help him with the work he assigns to him.⁽³⁾ This makes the difference between a master and his slave almost disappear.

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- (1) When Allah grants Muslims victory against disbelievers, female captives- who have taken part in the fight- may be distributed among Muslim warriors as slaves. When each warrior is given his share, he has the right to enjoy the intimate relationship with his slave(s) upon certain conditions. She has to be strong enough for intercourse. She must have her menstruation (to ensure she is not pregnant); if she is pregnant, her master must wait until she delivers her baby. Any man other than her master is strictly forbidden from touching her. The relationship between a master and his female slave(s) must be publicly announced, not to let suspicions rise respecting him or her, especially if she conceives. If a slave woman bears her master a child, he has no right to sell her. [Reviewer’s Note]
 - (2) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘If a Muslim frees a Muslim slave, Allah will free a part of his body from the hellfire in return for each part of the body of the slave he has freed, even their private parts.’ [Cited by *Al-Bukhari* (6715) and *Muslim* (1509) on the authority of *Abu Hurayrah* Allah be pleased with him]
 - (3) On the authority of *Abu Dharr*, Prophet Muhammad said, ‘They (slaves) are your brothers whom Allah has placed under your command. Therefore, if any man is given by Allah command over his brother, let him feed him the same food he eats and clothe him with the same clothes he wears. Let him not bid him do more than he is able to; if he bids him do more than he is able to, he must help him.’ [Cited by *Al-Bukhari* in his *Sahih* (6050) and *Muslim* in his *Sahih* (1661)]

When some Muslim states prohibited slavery by law, slaves went to their former masters and said, 'Let us live with you as we used to.' They did this because they led good lives with their masters who were mindful of Allah concerning them. Thus, by abolishing such inequalities slavery entailed, Islam preserved the dignity of slaves even before they were set free.

Given all that, some might wonder why Allah mentions them in the Quran as 'slaves'; 'and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess' (*an-Nisa'*: 36). We need to understand well what Allah really means here. This verse refers only to disbelieving women who take part in a war against Muslims, i.e. who fight alongside disbelieving men and are taken as captives. In this case, every ruling that applies to male captives applies also to female captives. Otherwise, how would she make her living in the land of her enemy? To simply let her have her own way among society would be dangerous both for society and for her. Moreover, she has feelings and she needs protection. Islam therefore permits her master, if he loves this slave-woman, to have a relationship with her just as he would with his wife. If she bears him a child, she becomes a free woman and her children will be free,⁽¹⁾ which also contributes to abolishing slavery.

Back to the verse we are examining, another category of the lawful recipients of *zakat* (alms) are, 'those in debt' (*at-Tawba*: 60). This refers to someone who has incurred a debt for a lawful purpose and fails to repay this debt, so the creditor refuses to give him respite as Allah commands, '...[grant him] a delay until a time of ease...' (*al-Baqara*: 280). At this juncture, the treasury should pay the debt out of the money of *zakat*.

This is meant to help a debtor in two ways. First, through repaying his debt and second, through preventing the affluent growing averse to generosity and loaning. This makes things easier for society by ensuring that those facing hard times can find help. No one will refuse to loan those in distress so long as they know they will restore their money either way: from the debtor or- if

(1) *The name Islam gives to a freed woman in this case is umm walad (literally: mother of one's child). A man is entitled to keep the mother of his child (his freed slave woman) as long as he is alive. Once he dies, she becomes mistress of herself. (See Nayl Al-Awtar, 6/96-99).*

he cannot afford repayment- from the treasury that will cover the loan from the money of *zakat* (alms).

The verse also refers to a person who seeks to make peace between two parties who are disputing over financial issues; for example, he settles the matter by paying the amount disputed over. If that person then goes through hard times- having been driven by pure faith to pay that amount- he may be repaid out of the money of *zakat* (alms). This will guard people against refraining from interference to settle such disputes and help achieve conciliation among each other.

Among the shares of *zakat* (alms) is also one assigned, ‘for Allah’s Cause’ (*at-Tawba*: 60). Most scholars say this refers to armed struggle.⁽¹⁾ No one would give his wealth for Allah’s Cause unless he were sure of the reward. Faith is the motive that can make one give his money and his life for a cause. No one would fight if they did not know that martyrdom will lead to paradise.

Islam is a creed and a way of life. He who struggles in Allah’s Cause is a role model for other believers. Through the example he offers, he strengthens Islam and helps firm up faith in people’s hearts. By giving wealth and life, they teach others the value of sacrifice. They convey the message that for whatever you give, Allah will grant you ample reward that far exceeds what you give.

Scholars also say that ‘for Allah’s Cause’ (*at-Tawba*: 60), also refers to public services. Building mosques, schools, hospitals etc. and the like are also included in this share of *zakat* (alms).⁽²⁾

One more category of the lawful recipients of *zakat* (alms) remains; they are ‘travellers in need’ (*at-Tawba*: 60). The verse uses the Arabic expression

(1) *Al-Qurtubi* says in his exegesis (4/3110), ‘This refers to those who fight battles and army units stationed to protect Muslim territories from external attacks. They must be reimbursed for what they spend in this regard, whether they are rich or poor. This is the opinion of most scholars and the position of the Maliki school of thought. Ibn ‘Umar Allah be pleased with him said, ‘...for Allah’s Cause...’ refers to those who set out to perform hajj (Major Pilgrimage) or ‘umrah (Minor Pilgrimage).

(2) *Az-Zubaydi* says in *Sharh Ihya’ ‘Ulum Ad-Din* (4/250) that this share of *zakat* (alms) covers all the public services which righteous conduct demands. This includes any service which is for the general good of people or animals, even if it is watering a tree almost dying dry. The money of *zakat* (alms) may be used for this purpose, since it is among the good deeds done for the public and intended for the cause of Allah.

ibn as-sabil (he who belongs to the road). Every person belongs to his own homeland. A traveller is a stranger who does not belong to the place he travels to. If he is stuck on the road since his means fall short of affording his journey back home, then he-figuratively-belongs to the road, hence the Arabic expression. We must help such a person who is far from home so that he can get back there. When a wayfarer is sure to find someone to help him if the need arises, the young will be encouraged to travel for work or tourism, to seek new opportunities or accumulate new experiences. A traveller might be rich, but might lose his money because of some unexpected mishap during his journey. Therefore, Allah has prescribed this share of *zakat* (alms) to protect His servants while they are abroad from any sudden event that might put them in difficulty. He wants His servants to travel through the earth and to see His signs and search for provisions. So, the verse includes every stranger who faces difficulties and does not have the means to return home.

After stating the shares and lawful recipients of *zakat* (alms), Allah says, '...this is ordained by Allah...' (*at-Tawba*: 60). This means it is mandatory on the believers to give all those stated in the verse their due shares of *zakat* (alms). *Zakat* is mandatory for the poor, the needy, those in charge of collecting it, those whose hearts need winning over, those overburdened with debt, for Allah's cause and for the wayfarer.

Allah concludes the verse by saying, '...Allah is all Knowing and Wise.' (*at-Tawba*: 60) Allah has existed eternally, with no beginning and no end, and He is the Creator of all things. He has created humankind and honoured them by making them vicegerents on earth. Before the creation of humankind, Allah prepared the universe for their reception. He created the earth, the sun, the moon, the sky, the planets, the stars and everything. We have come to this life to find the earth and all that is in it made for our service. None of the things Allah has created for us refuses to serve us. The earth does not refuse to give crops when it is sown. The animals Allah has subdued to our will do not rebel against us. A donkey would not refuse to be loaded with manure, nor would it object if you take him as a mount to carry you from place to place!

Since Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who has created all things and people, He knows His creatures best and knows best what is good or bad for

them. Nothing is like Him and He is above all comparison. Still, let me give you an example to illustrate. An engineer who creates a simple machine is the one who sets the rules for its operation and maintenance, so what about the Creator of humankind, with all the complexity of the latter? The creation of humankind and disposition of their affairs require knowledge and wisdom as well. One might have knowledge, but he does not put this knowledge into action. He might know the rule, but thinks it more beneficial to ignore it and act his own way. Therefore, knowledge must necessarily be accompanied by wisdom so that one can put everything in place. Hence Allah, ‘...is all Knowing and Wise.’ (*at-Tawba*: 60)

The obligation of *zakat* (alms) means there is a giver, a recipient and the amount given. These are three components. This might call some to think, ‘Why has Allah made some people strong and others weak, some able and others helpless so that one has to give *zakat* and the other receive it? Why has He not simply made us all equally affluent and able?’

Allah has created variation, for the differences inherent in things make them complementary. For example, there is the night and the day. Are they opponents? Do they conflict, or complement one another? Were they not created together, the world would have been unbalanced. Allah says, ‘Say [Prophet], “Just think, if Allah were to cast perpetual night over you until the Day of Resurrection, what deity other than He could bring you light? Do you not listen?”’ Say, “Just think, if Allah were to cast perpetual day over you until the Day of Resurrection, what deity other than He could give you night in which to rest? Do you not see?”’ (*al-Qasas*: 71-72)

We need the light and vigour of the day to move and work, and we also need the dark and stillness of the night to sleep. If we had no time for rest and sleep, we would not be able to work and struggle. Thus, we see that the difference between the day and night makes them complementary, not conflicting. Also take the example of the creation of man and woman. They are complementary, too. Some do not see this fact, so they want men and women to be exactly equal in every respect. They do not see that men and women are the same creature but made in two types for each to perform a distinct mission in life. They are equally honoured by Allah and their roles equally essential, but their

different natures make each appropriate for their role. Let us ponder these verses of the chapter of *al-Layl*, 'By the enshrouding night, by the radiant day, by His creation of male and female!' (*al-Layl*: 1-3) Mentioning the male and female after the day and night implies a subtle similarity between the creation of each pair. Just as the day and night complement each other, men and women support and complement each another. Their differences are by no means intended to make them enemies, but rather look at how they complement one another perfectly, not despite these differences, but because of these differences! Such is a fact Allah alludes to in His words, 'The ways you take differ greatly' (*al-Layl*: 4). Each has a different purpose in life, hence the difference in their creation. Allah is the All-Wise. Out of His Wisdom, He made countless things in the earth for the service of humankind. Inanimate objects serve us, as do plants and animals. This is to help us perform the mission of worshiping Allah, which He has created us for. On the other, Allah's Wisdom manifests itself in the fact that He has also created things, which do not obey humankind. This is for us to know that whatever in this world is subdued to our will is the outcome of Allah's making it so; we do not subdue Allah's creatures by our own powers. Only Allah, out of His Power and Wisdom, has made them subservient to us. This should make us humble. Otherwise, arrogance would overwhelm us, as Allah says, 'But man exceeds all bounds when he thinks he is self-sufficient.' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7)

A camel, as huge as it is, would well obey a young child, while a snake, despite its relatively diminutive size, would scare an adult. This is to let us know that the powers and strength we have are not intrinsically possessed by us but are bestowed on us by Allah, *Exalted is He*. For the same reason, Allah has created some people weak or poor, for the strong and the rich to realise that it is Him Who has endowed them with strength or wealth and He can strip them of all that whenever He wills. Were these intrinsic traits of humankind, then no one would be weak or poor. The less weak and the poor teach the strong and the rich an important lesson; your powers are a gift from Allah that He can deprive you from and make you just like us.

The weak man who cannot work, the blind and the handicapped all exist in the world to show the healthy and strong that health and strength are from

Allah. This is to guard them against arrogance and deviation and call their attention to the Creator, for just as He gives, He may strip one of what He has given him.

Among the manifestation of His Wisdom, too, is the way He distributes provisions among His servants. If people were all affluent, who would sweep streets? Who would clear drains and sewers? Who would carry bricks and cement on his shoulders for building? If we were all wealthy, none of us would assent to do such menial and strenuous jobs. Allah has created people different in social status and made those jobs a means of earning a living so some people must do them to provide for themselves and their children.

Does the situation always remain the same with the different people and classes? No, time changes the fortunes of people. In every life, there is spring and there is winter. There is prosperity and there is decline. Days may come when humble labours yield the highest incomes and most abundant provisions that even exceed what university graduates can earn through their more prestigious jobs.

The world requires different talents that complement one another. For a house to be built, an architect, a contractor, a carpenter, a blacksmith, a builder and so on are all necessary. No one can possess all these talents at the same time, so they are all equally needed and must all perform their complementary roles. What makes people do their jobs with diligence is that they are the means of earning livelihood. A common Egyptian proverb says, 'The carpenter's door needs repair!' One of the allusions of this proverb is that one invests his talents mainly for earning his living. Therefore, when a job has nothing to do with earning, one may be reluctant to do it. A carpenter who repairs countless doors may not bother to repair his own door.

The existence of humankind is not an essential part of the universe. The universe is already a complete whole irrespective of our existence and we have only been placed in it as a vicegerent. Corruption often stems from human arrogance, when we think that our powers are inherent and we are independent of and superior to everything. We and everything else belong to Allah alone. A person who gives has no superiority over him who is given, nor is the latter superior in any way to the former. Rather, both are equal, for

faith manifests itself in two main aspects, gratitude and patience. A believer shows gratitude at times of prosperity and patience at times of afflictions and hardships. A wealthy person is tested through prosperity and abundance so Allah would see whether he would show gratitude to Him or life's finery would make him slide into heedlessness. Besides gratitude, Allah would not deprive him from a chance to show patience too, so He enjoins on him to give a prescribed portion of his wealth, which he earns through hard work and strain, to the destitute who do not have enough to provide for themselves. A poor person is also given a chance to show both gratitude and patience. He mainly needs to show patience for his poverty. He also has the chance to show gratitude for the money and provisions he receives effortlessly through his share of *zakat* (alms) Allah has prescribed for his wellbeing. Thus, if both the rich and the poor abide by Allah's religion, they will each receive their reward amply both for their patience and their gratefulness.

Let the poor and needy rejoice at the Mercy of Allah and His blessings. Let them guard their hearts against sorrow and discontent, for they have a Bountiful Lord Who gives them provisions they do not need to work for. He has ordained the rich to give them a prescribed portion of their wealth; you would find a rich person eagerly reaching out to the lawful recipients of *zakat* (alms) to pay them the due share Allah has made mandatory on him. A person may be well off, but then a crisis would befall him, so we find his friends hurry to help him even without his asking for help. For those who do, Allah has prepared a generous reward, 'Who will give Allah a good loan, which He will increase for him many times over? It is Allah Who withholds and Allah Who gives abundantly, and it is to Him that you will return.' (*al-Baqara*: 245) Even though everything belongs to Him, Allah respects the work that man does to earn his wealth. He honours the effort of those who struggle so much that He describes whatever they give to the poor as a 'loan' given to Him *the Exalted and Almighty!* Allah is far elevated above all comparison, but this is only an illustrative example. A child may give his savings to help his father who is going through distress. Even though his child's savings are only some of the pocket money he gives him, the father appreciates what his child does and thanks him for his help as if the money were originally his. The money originally belongs to Allah, yet He is the All-Generous Who respects the

effort and devotion of His servants; He counts the money they give to the poor and needy as if it were a loan given to Allah that he recompenses them for many times more. This does not only honour the rich, but in this is an honour to the poor as well; Allah, for their sake, takes a loan from the rich to answer their needs and meanwhile preserve their dignity.

Allah has made *zakat* (alms) one of the tenets of Islam for the benefit of the poor. By this ruling, faith of the rich cannot be complete unless they devote part of their riches to the poor. On the other hand, the poor have no such duty towards the rich, nor is their faith dependent in any way on any kind of devotion to them. This honours the poor and does not constitute any injustice against the rich; the prescribed portion of *zakat* (alms) is taken out of the money excessive to the need of the giver. It is an extra amount he is already in no need of. Allah is in no need of the whole universe and all it contains. I contend, therefore, that it is as though Allah has given the rich a share in one of His Attributes; for He is the Rich, the Self-Sufficient Who provides for His servants and is free from any need.

Money is not in itself useful, but it is only useful to the extent that it can bring useful things to the possession of its owner. Let me give you an example I always prefer to use in illustrating this point. Suppose someone owned a whole mountain of gold gets lost in the desert where there is not even a single slice of bread or a sip of water. What is the benefit of his mountain of gold then? It is worthless. Money is valuable only as much as it is a means that leads to an end, but it is not in itself an end. When a rich person withholds his money from the poor, he thus falls into the mistake of making money a goal rather than a means which may well cause his money to be effaced and the benefit desired of it to be prevented. By giving to the poor, money is thus used in the proper way it is created for, which is to be one of the means of life. Since money is useful only when it helps us reach our goals, so let us use it to serve our ultimate goal; winning the good pleasure and reward of Allah.

Allah respects His servants who work and appreciates their efforts. This is meant to encourage everyone to work as much as he can, not only as much as he needs. If people only worked as much as they need, there would be no extra wealth to be given as *zakat* (alms).

Allah has decreed that everyone has a claim to what he earns in this worldly life. The outcomes of everyone's work belong to him, and this should urge everyone to work as much as he can since whatever he earns is his. It is in the nature of humankind that everyone would love to keep the fruits of his efforts to himself. When you have more wealth than you need, you do not love to lose this extra wealth. Therefore, when Allah commands the rich to give some of their wealth to the poor, He encourages them to do by promising them His reward in return for their sacrifice of wealth. Allah gives them a goal to reach for as they give their money; namely, His abundant reward in the Hereafter. It is like a bargain: you give a prescribed portion of the wealth you have in excess to pave the way for the Hereafter. The poor, on the other hand, needs this portion to provide for themselves. Thus, each of us is in need of the other. Since Allah respects human labour, He allows for everyone the greater share of what he earns and prescribes for the poor the lesser share.

That is why the less the effort made, the more the prescribed share of *zakat* (alms) is. If a man finds a buried treasure, the amount he should give as *zakat* is 20%⁽¹⁾ whereas the share of *zakat* due on a farmer who sows the land, waters it and harvests the crop is 10%⁽²⁾. As for a man who earns his livelihood from daily labour such as trade, the prescribes amount of *zakat* he should pay is only 2.5%. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* wants to encourage us to work. Society benefits from the work of everyone, even if that individual does not mean it.

Take this example. A business person who establishes residential buildings offers many job opportunities. He employs workers who carry sand, bricks, cement and iron. He employs drivers who transport these materials to the

(1) *Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'A fifth of unearthed treasure is due as zakat (Alms).'* [Cited by Al- Bukhari (2255) and Muslim (1710) on the authority of Abu Hurayrah]

(2) The amount of *zakat* (Alms) due on crops differs according to the method of irrigation. When a crop is irrigated without any machines- as by rain- only 10% is due. When a farmer irrigates his land using machines, or if he needs to buy water for the purpose, only 5% is due as *zakat*. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The amount of *zakat* (alms) due on what is irrigated by rain, from springs, or any natural means is a tenth, and half a tenth is due on what is irrigated [by unnatural means, like sprinkling].'

building site. He contracts with manufacturers for safety and electrical equipment, and so on. Benefit thus extends to many others, and the owner of the building himself may not benefit from his property due to death, for example.

Some people think that work alone brings wealth, forgetting that work is only a means and success and wealth come only from Allah. A crisis may happen and ruin crops, squandering the labour of those who ploughed, sowed and watered the land. By such events, Allah directs our attention to the fact that everything occurs by His Will, not by material means alone.

It is worthy of mention that even when such crises befall some, Allah makes a way for them. If the wheat crop, for example, is destroyed in one land, Allah makes up for such a loss by causing the wheat crop of another land to be in surplus. The one who has incurred loss may buy wheat from the other, or the land with a high yield may send some of its surplus crop to the afflicted land as an aid. This is how Allah makes life balanced.

We must always remember that all might and power belong to Allah alone. He is the One Who grants us whatever powers we have and none but Him can do that. Allah possesses Absolute Power; He sends down to His creatures some of the effects of His Power so they would help one another in carrying the burdens of life. All what a mortal can do is help others by means of the power he is endowed with, but none of us can create power in another. Only Allah *Glorified is He* gives power to whomever He wills.

Wealth is beneficial only to the extent that it helps one get his needs. Its value is confined to its ability to purchase food, clothes, a car or anything else you need. If such needs are unavailable, what is the use of money if it cannot buy them? Since money is the means to get one's needs, everyone holds it valuable. Children who receive their pocket money on a monthly basis would be keen to meet their father at the beginning of every month, even though they might not pay him any attention for the rest of the month. If he gives them their pocket money on daily basis, they would be keen to see their father every day.

Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* is the Creator of the human soul, and He knows what is in the hearts of people. That is why He urges the affluent to be there for those who are too weak to earn. We live in a world of vicissitudes.

He who is strong today may become weak tomorrow. This should fill the strong and the rich with concern when they see the weak and the poor. This should remind them how Allah has blessed them with His favours so they would show gratitude by hastening to help the weak and the poor. Knowing that he may turn the one in need one day, a rich person should be glad to offer his help so Allah would send him help if he needs it later.

Allah says, 'Take alms from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it...' (*at-Tawba*: 103). Giving *zakat* (alms) cleanses the giver from heedlessness that might afflict him at times and causes his heart to increase in purity. Even though giving *zakat* seems to be a loss and a decrease of one's money, it brings increase and abundance since Allah blesses the money it is taken out of. *Riba* (usury), on the other hand, seems a means of increasing money, yet in fact its effect is just the opposite since Allah effaces the money it is added to. One hundred pounds⁽¹⁾ become ninety-seven and a half pounds after *zakat* (alms) has been paid, whereas they may become two hundred after usurious interests have been added. Usury seems on the surface to be a gain, but in reality, it obliterates all the good that can be gained from money. *Zakat* (alms) seems on the surface to be a loss, but in reality, it is a gain. It is an increase of purity, wholesomeness and blessedness.

Money secures the basic as well as the secondary needs of life, so possessing it makes one feel reassured about his present and his future. However, even supposing that your wealth may last your whole life, this life is too short. The day will surely come when you pass away and leave this wealth behind. At this moment, all the money you have saved will pass on to your heirs and you will take none of it with you except that which you had spent in Allah's cause. This is the only portion of your wealth that will remain with you in the eternal life, and Allah has willed to multiply the reward for His believing servants who spend money in His cause.

(1) This is just an example and does not mean that any *zakat* (alms) is due for such a small sum as a hundred pounds. The minimum taxable amount for which *zakat* is due is the equivalent of 85 grams of gold and it must remain with its owner for one full year without his needing it.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘A son of Adam would say, “My wealth, my wealth!” Still, have you any wealth, O son of Adam, except that which you spend on the food you consume or the clothes you wear out, or that which you preserve by giving as charity?’⁽¹⁾

Let whoever loves to keep his wealth therefore spend out of it on the poor. This is what preserves wealth beyond the life of this world and makes it accompany you to the eternal life of the Hereafter.

We have an excellent example in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He once received a sheep as a gift, and said to 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* ‘Give its meat as charity.’ 'Aisha knew that the Messenger of Allah liked the meat of the shoulder, so she gave all the sheep's meat as charity except for a piece of the shoulder which she kept for the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. When the Messenger of Allah returned home, he asked her what she had done with the meat of the sheep, and 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* said, ‘I gave it all as charity and kept the shoulder.’ The Messenger of Allah replied, ‘But say you have kept it all except the shoulder!’⁽²⁾ The part of the sheep that has actually remained is that which 'Aisha gave as charity since its reward will remain. As for the shoulder she kept, this is the part that has actually been given away. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called things by their true names.

Allah blesses the money of the giver in this life and gives him the best reward in the Hereafter. A man asked `Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* ‘How can I know if my heart is attached more to the life of this world or the Afterlife?’ `Ali said, ‘You have the answer, not I. If someone comes to ask you for money and another comes to give you money, who of them do you welcome more gladly? If you are happier with him who comes to ask for your help, then your heart attached more to the Afterlife. If you are happier with him who comes to give you money, then your heart attached more to the life of this world. He who asks for your help causes you to be rewarded in the

(1) *This is an authentic Hadith cited by Muslim (2958), Ahmad (4/24, 26) At-Tirmidhi (2342), and An-Nisa`i (6/238), on the authority of Abdullah ibn Ash-Shikhir.*

(2) *This is an authentic Hadith cited by 'Ahmad (6/50), At-Tirmidhi (2470), and Abu Na`im (5/23), on the authority of Aisha Allah be pleased with her.*

Hereafter, yet he who gives you money only increases your worldly lot and adds nothing to your Hereafter.'

The life of this world is not our ultimate end. Your fortunes in it last only as long as you live in it. As for the Hereafter, your life there will never end. Thus, give some of your wealth as charity and it will be good for you in the Hereafter.

Allah concludes the verse by saying, '... Allah is all Knowing and Wise.' (*at-Tawba*: 60). He puts everything in its right place through His Knowledge and Wisdom, as He says, 'Does He not know who created? And He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware.' (*al-Mulk*: 14) Through His wisdom, Allah manages the lives and affairs of all people. All of them are His servants, and there is no difference between the rich and the poor in His Sight. Allah has willed that such differences occur only in this worldly life because the world does not need individuals who are all the same in every respect. Life would not go properly if we were all doctors, engineers or if we were all judges. Allah has chosen to distribute talents among people in a way that best answers the essential needs of life. Each one of us excels in something. Everyone has a skill in a certain field, but he does not know about the other fields. This means that I am in need of the work of others and they are in need of my work. Based on our varied talents and skills, we exchange knowledge and services for our common good. Allah has thus made us all almost equally dependent on each other so no one would withhold what he has from the rest, nor would it depend on one's voluntary kindness to offer his services to others.

Allah's wisdom demanded that He distributes talents amongst mankind appropriate for man to perform his duties as a vicegerent on earth. Allah gave one person an exceptional skill, and another person a different one. All these different skills combine collaboratively to form a society. We said before, that the combined aspects of one man are equal to the combined aspects of another; but people only consider wealth, and they do not pay attention to those things which are more important than wealth such as health, character, contentment, happiness and success of children, the blessing of one's provision etc. For example, if you give a mark out of ten for each of these aspects, eventually, the total of every person's talents will be equal to the total of anyone else's. There is no superiority except by piety. What will a helpless person who

watches wealthy people refrain from paying the poor-due or any charity? He will certainly hope that these people lose this bounty. But, when the fortune enjoyed by the rich is passed on to the poor and helpless, the poor will wish the rich continuous wealth and prosperity. That is because if the rich lose their power, the poor will be deprived of their dutiful share. Thus, the helpless will pray to Allah to adorn the rich's wealth with His blessing. When Allah blesses the rich person's wealth, a portion of it will be passed on to the poor.

When the poor and helpless do not receive any charity from the rich, they might take it unlawfully by conspiring to steal or pilfer from them, or their hatred and jealousy might even drive them to murder them, or plot to cause their death.

So, paying *zakat* (alms) in a society wards off many evils from those who give it. It is one of the essential needs of life. Therefore, we have seen that even the rich people in societies which do not believe in any religion voluntarily establish social institutions to look after the poor to ward off potential harms which they might cause society. That is why we see that in most of the world's nations there are people who try to devote funds to look after the incapacitated and the unemployed so that they can meet their needs. This protects society from the evil they might otherwise do.

The True Lord's words, 'Alms are meant only for the poor, the needy, those who administer them, those whose hearts need winning over, to free slaves and help those in debt, for Allah's cause and for travellers in need. This is ordained by Allah; Allah is All Knowing and Wise.' (*at-Tawba*: 60) mean that charitable offerings must obligatorily be given to these people, and the True Lord Himself is the One Who made this obligatory when He says, 'This is ordained by Allah...' (*at-Tawba*: 60).

Charitable offerings might be obliged on people as a public tax or the like to protect society from evils. This only happens after grave incidents occur which cause the able to suffer at the hands of the weak so that someone emerges and says, 'In order to be safe from their evil, we must give them their needs so that things will settle down'.

Thus, we find that man-made laws are only made after society suffers for a long time because of a particular situation; but the True Lord, out of mercy for His vicegerent on earth, established His laws when He first created them

and even before He created them, to give man a happy life free of misery. Therefore, He established religion and arranged the sequence by which the religion's laws were sent down to mankind to guide them and protect them from grievous ills before they occur.

The True Lord wanted to make the chapter of *at-Tawba* a means of exposing the hypocrites. Another name for this chapter is 'The Digger' or 'Unearthing'; this is so because the hypocrite might conceal his disbelief, but Allah reveals this by unearthing it to bring it out, just as – Allah is beyond compare – a man digs in the earth to find what is buried there. This chapter mentions many of the hypocrites' attributes. He says: 'Some of them said, "Give me permission to stay..."' (*at-Tawba*: 49) And He also says: 'Some among them who pledged themselves to Allah...' (*at-Tawba*: 75) He adds saying: 'Some of them find fault with you [Prophet] regarding the distribution of alms...' (*at-Tawba*: 58).

Therefore, they call these phrases 'some-of-them' from the chapter of *at-Tawba*. Then, the True Lord informs of another characteristic of the hypocrites and their behaviour saying:

وَمِنْهُمْ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ النَّبِيَّ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ أَذْنٌ قُلْ أَذْنٌ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ
لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَرَحْمَةً لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾

There are others who insult the Prophet by saying, 'He will listen to anything.' Say, 'He listens for your own good: he believes in God, trusts the believers, and is a mercy for those of you who believe.' An agonizing torment awaits those who insult God's Messenger [61] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 61)

We know that abusing the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* only took place after his prophetic mission had started. Some of the disbelievers would say, as the Quran tells us, '...Allah, if this really is the truth from You, then rain stones on us from the heavens, or send us some other painful punishment.' (*al-Anfal*: 32)

This is a prayer of someone who has no intelligence, for had they been intelligent they would have said, 'If this indeed be the truth from you, then

guide us to it or make us believe in it'! But because of their excessive hatred and misguidance, they would have rather been made to suffer than to believe in the truth. This shows us how petty-minded the disbelievers were.

The True Lord says, 'some of them abuse the Prophet...' (*at-Tawba*: 61). The ones who abused the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* were the leaders, the people of influence who feared that this Prophet's teachings would take from them their influence, their riches and all that they had unlawfully seized from the weak. The weak, as we know, were the first people to embrace Islam because they felt that this religion would protect them from the tyranny, exploitation and influence of the rich. The True Lord willed to replace the fear of the weak with strength and security, and He willed that several rich and powerful join the faith such as Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab, and others *Allah be pleased with them* so that the powerful men of Quraysh would not say the same thing which the people of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* said to him, '...and it is clear to see that only the vilest among us follow you...' (*Hud*: 27).

So, abusing the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* started after the onset of his mission, whereas, before the mission, he was known by everyone to be honest, trustworthy and reliable. It is amazing that, before the revelation, they did not trust anyone as much as they trusted Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If the disbelievers had anything valuable, they would go to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to keep it for them. This contradiction can only be explained by the trust they had in His morality. Despite this, they were enraged and aggrieved that the Quran had been revealed to him. The True Lord tells us that they said, 'And they said, "Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

Thus, their own words acknowledged the greatness of the Quran, after their actions had proved the trustworthiness of Muhammad, but they objected to the True Lord's choosing of him, and wished that this Quran had been sent down to one of their own people. The True Lord responded to them, 'Are they the ones who share out your Lord's grace? We are the ones who give them their share of livelihood in this world...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32). This was a call for them to mind their manners with Allah, for He did not authorize them to

choose those upon whom *the Almighty* sends down His Mercy and the revelation. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who chooses and the One who distributes the means of people's livelihood in this worldly life. If anyone enjoys any kind of bounty like wealth, position, honour or anything else, this is not the result of man's powers or their intrinsic worth, but rather, it is a bounty granted by Allah.

The True Lord says, 'some of them abuse the Prophet...' (*at-Tawba*: 61). The cause of this abuse was that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to them with a call to goodness; and no messenger comes with a call to goodness unless evil has first become prevalent in society. When evil becomes prevalent in society, there are those who benefit from it. Therefore, when a messenger is sent by Allah with goodness, the forces of evil are quick to malign the one who brings the message of good; it is natural then for a prophet to have enemies. The True Lord says, 'In the same way, we assigned to each prophet an enemy, evil humans and evil jinn. They suggest alluring words to one another in order to deceive (them)...' (*al-An'am*: 112).

Indeed, it can be said for every scholar who bears the message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the following generations that if he does not have enemies, this detracts from his share of the Prophetic inheritance. To everyone who has enemies who oppose how he guides people to Allah's way, we say: Do not worry, and be at ease because the very existence of those who oppose you means that you bear one of the vestiges of prophethood.

The hypocrites abused the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* in several ways; one of which was, 'He is an ear.' As we know, man has several means of perception: the ear is a means of perception, as are the eyes and all the body parts. Every person has many faculties, perceptive and psychological; the perceptive faculties are the ones by which one senses things such as hearing, sight, smell and taste, whilst the psychological faculties are those by which people may be described. For example, we call the spy an 'eye' because he spies and conveys what he sees to others; and we call the man who hears everything an 'ear'; and we say that the thief, who takes the things of others, has 'a long arm', and so on.

So, every part has a sense. Sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste are all among the means of sensory perception from which abstract notions are

formed after which they become convictions. These means of perception receive from the physical world things which give them information which they then store to base them on their future actions, and their combined total comprises all that a person knows. Therefore, we find that the True Lord reminds His creatures of how He blessed them by saying, 'It is Allah who brought you out of your mothers' wombs knowing nothing, and gave you hearing and sight and minds, so that you might be thankful.' (*an-Nahl*: 78)

Gratitude is only felt and shown when there are bounties. So, it is as though these means of perception which allow you to hear, or see with your eyes, or perceive with your mind are all blessings of Allah for which we must thank Him because they gave us tangible knowledge when, formerly, we had known nothing at all.

If a person is named after any of his body parts, then this means that this body part is the basis of his character. The hypocrites said about Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'He is an ear', as though they meant this as a criticism of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is as though they were saying, 'Beware lest any of this reaches the ear of Muhammad so that your hypocrisy will be exposed to your detriment', since in their view, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* believed everything he was told. They wanted to accuse Him of not investigating the things he was told, and of believing everything he heard, just as we say in our dialect, 'So-and-so is all ear' meaning that he gives credence to everything he hears.

Allah replies to them, 'It is an ear for your own good' (*at-Tawba*: 61) because Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* listened to the teachings of Allah and conveyed them to mankind so that the people would be guided. Thus, he was goodness for all people. Even if we take their words to mean that the Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* believed them when they lied to him, this was good for them, since the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* did not harm them. He was '...an ear for your own good' (*at-Tawba*: 61) because he only listened to what Allah sent him through revelation. Therefore, we said before that the wisdom behind the illiteracy of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was that he did not listen to an equal of his, but rather, all his knowledge came directly from Allah. If to be unlettered is a shortcoming for

us, it was a total perfection for Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because he learned from none but his Creator; and he was 'an ear' for goodness because he was the ear which listened to the final message which came down from Allah.

The hypocrites said, 'He is an ear' (*at-Tawba: 61*), and Allah says, 'It is an ear for your own good' (*at-Tawba: 61*) and his goodness has benefited the whole of mankind. He is an ear but not in the way you meant; he might listen to your abuse, and then listen to your excuses and pardon you instead of harming you. Since this is what Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does, then why do you abuse him and weary him?

Linguistically, there is an affirmative response, wherein someone says something to you and you answer 'Yes'. You can express this in a different way. If a person visits his friend often and says to him, 'I have overburdened you', his friend might reply, 'you have overburdened me with your generosity', that is, you have done me many favours. Yet, someone might say, 'I have kept you too long', so his friend replies, 'No, you have prolonged (extended) your favours', that is, you have done me a favour by spending time with me. Although he agrees with what he says, he responds with the opposite.

They criticised the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* for being an ear, as though his ear governed all his actions and he reacted to whatever he heard, and if he heard something which disturbed him his attitude would change from one extreme to another. They tried to claim that he believed everything he heard without carefully considering those who conveyed the information. They said that he was 'an ear' and the True Lord responds, 'It is an ear for your own good...' (*at-Tawba: 61*). Of course, the True Lord's words were not congruent with what they said, since what they meant by 'an ear' was not the same 'an ear' that Allah affirmed.

A superficial person might say that when the hypocrites said that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was 'an ear', they meant that he believed everything he heard, and that he did not have the wisdom to discern and choose; but we should pay attention to the fact that the True Lord says, 'It is an ear for your own good...' (*at-Tawba: 61*) because Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* listened only to Allah, and he obeyed and implemented all

that he received from Him. As for what he heard from people, he assessed it according to Allah's teachings, and if it agreed with these teachings he followed it, whilst if it contradicted these teachings he rejected it. In this way, he was an ear to what was good, listening to none but Allah; and his message brought nothing but good to those who followed it.

But why did the True Lord not say, 'he is an ear to what is good for the believers', but rather said, 'It is an ear for your own good...' (*at-Tawba*: 61)? It is because the goodness of the Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was passed on to all people: to the believers, the disbelievers and to the hypocrites. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never exposed any hypocrite unless Allah exposed them in the Quran. For example, the hypocrites would go to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* offer excuses to avoid participating in fighting for Allah's Cause and seek leave to stay behind, and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would give them leave to do so. When the hypocrites went to the Noble Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and swore to him false oaths by Allah, he would believe them – or rather, he would not expose their lies to the people. So, the goodness in Him was passed on even to the hypocrites because his noble morality was above exposing them to people.

As for the disbelievers, they also benefitted from his goodness because calling them to Islam relentlessly made some of the disbelievers embrace Islam and find faith. Thus, they greatly benefitted from being guided to the religion of truth. So, when the True Lord says, 'It is an ear for your own good...' (*at-Tawba*: 61), this means all mankind.

In this way, the True Lord makes a clear distinction between what they meant and what Allah meant. They meant to say that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* listened to everything he heard, whilst Allah meant that he listened to what was good. As we said, this is what they call an 'affirmative response' in the sense that you agree with what your rival says, but you change what he says from something bad to something good. Another example of this can be found when the True Lord tells us that the hypocrites said, 'They say, "If we return to Medina, the more honourable will surely drive out the meaner therefrom"' (*al-Munafiqun*: 8). By this, they meant that

they were mighty and that the believers were lowlier. The True Lord acknowledges what they said, 'indeed the more honourable would drive out the meaner'; but He wants to clarify to them who is honourable and who is lowlier, so He says, '...but power belongs to Allah, to His Messenger, and to the believers...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 8).

It is as though the True Lord confirmed to them that the most honourable would indeed drive out the most contemptible, but they believed themselves to be the most honourable, so He said to them, '...but power belongs to Allah, to His Messenger, and to the believers...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 8). This is what is called an 'affirmative response'; that is, you agree with what the person has said, although he intended to say something bad, but you change the meaning of what he said to make it something good. The reason you do this is to humiliate the speaker; you make him think that you agree with him so that he smiles and feels happy, then, you contradict what he said so that he feels humiliated. It is as though a guard comes to a prisoner who is thirsty and begging for water and says to him, 'I will bring you a cup of water', and then he really goes and fills a cup with ice-cold water; and the prisoner rejoices and thinks that he will get what he wants; but the guard brings the cup right to the prisoners lips and then pours it onto the ground, so his torment is worse than it would have been had the guard simply refused his request for water to begin with.

In this way, the True Lord wanted to increase the humiliation of the hypocrites, so He agreed with them that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is an ear, then contradicted what they meant by saying, 'Say, "It is an ear for your own good; he believes in Allah, trusts the believers, and is a mercy for those of you who believe..."' (*at-Tawba*: 61). He believed in Allah, he took his teachings from Allah, he trusted the believers and was a means of mercy for those who believed.

So, we have here three proofs of the goodness of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He believed in Allah and followed His way, he trusted the believers and he was a mercy for those who believed. We may notice that there is a difference between His words *yu`minu billlah* (he believes in Allah) and His words *yu`minu lil-mu`minin* (trusts the believers), where the same verb *yu`minu* (to have faith or to trust) is used both times, in the case of

‘believes in Allah’ being followed by the preposition *bi* (in or with), and in the case of ‘trusts the believers’ being followed by the preposition *li* (for or to). Some people say that the word has the same meaning both times, because ‘believes in Allah’ means to believe in His existence, whilst the hypocrites did not believe in Allah, and ‘trusts the believers’ means to believe what the believers say, whilst He knew that the hypocrites were liars, so he did not trust them; although he did not expose them to the people lest they thereby be prevented from repenting and embracing true faith. Had he exposed them to the people, their dignity would have been completely lost, and had one of them then thought of abandoning hypocrisy and becoming a true believer, he would have found this very difficult because no one would believe him. Instead, the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to conceal their fault from the people and leave the door to faith open for them because He only came forth as a mercy to all the worlds, and so he endeavoured to keep the door of repentance and faith open for them always by preserving their honour.

The True Lord’s words ‘trusts the believer’ mean that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* believed them; and the word *iman* (faith in, belief in or trust) is used in many verses of the Quran to refer to human beings, such as when the sorcerers announced that they had found faith in the Lord of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and fell in prostration before Him, so Pharaoh said to them, ‘... “How dare you believe in him before I have given you permission? This must be your master, the man who taught you witchcraft...”’ (*Taha*: 71). The meaning of *amantum lahu* is ‘believe in him’; but what is the difference between the use of the preposition (*bi*) and the preposition (*li*)? When you say ‘*amanna bi llah*’ (we believe in Allah), you announce that you believe in the Essence and all His attributes of perfection; and when you say ‘*amantu lilmu`menin* (I believe in what the believers say), this means that you believe them because they are believers.

The meanings of the root word *iman* and its verb *amanna* (to have faith) all revolve around *amn* (security and peace of mind), but sometimes the verb takes an indirect object, whilst at other times it takes a direct object such as when you say, for example, ‘I deem the road to be safe’ *amantu at-tariq*, that is, I feel assured that no evil will befall me thereon. An example of this can be when Ya`qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* said to his sons, ‘... “Am I to entrust

him to you as I did his brother before? Allah is the best guardian and the Most Merciful of the merciful.” (*Yusuf*: 64) Ya`qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* said, ‘*hal amanukum alaih* (Am I to entrust him to you?)? That is, the precedent here is that he trusted them with Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*, but they did not live up to his trust, so he no longer trusted them with Yusuf’s (Joseph’s) brother. The verb *amana* (trust) is intransitive here; as for its transitive sense, this occurs when the security refers to more than one thing, as is the case when Allah says, ‘...provide them with safety that word off fear.’ (*Quraysh*: 4) He says, *amanahum* (provide them with safety). Fear has many forms: there is the fear of darkness, for example, the fear of foes and the fear of the road’s perils. So, safety encompasses many things, and The True Lord made them safe and secure from many things.

His words ‘he believes in Allah’ mean belief in the Essence and in the Attributes, belief in the Way and belief which encompasses the entire community to which Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is sent. It is as though the belief here has many aspects. As for the faith in the believers, it means to trust them; and this is the second aspect of Muhammad’s goodness. Allah says, ‘...and is a mercy for those of you who believe...’ (*at-Tawba*: 61) because He will be their intercessor on the Day of Resurrection and will say, ‘my followers, my followers!’⁽¹⁾ He is a mercy for them in this world as well because he leads them to goodness which in turn leads them to happiness in this world and then to paradise in the Hereafter, and keeps them away from evil and hell. So, he is a source of mercy which wards off harm and brings goodness; for mercy is attained by protection from harm.

Allah says, ‘We send down the Quran as healing and mercy to those who believe....’ (*al-Isra*’: 82) Healing means that there is an illness and then the person is cured of it, whilst ‘mercy’ means not to fall ill in the first place. It is

(1) This is mentioned in the long Hadith about intercession narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (*Sahih*) (4712) and Muslim in his (*Sahih*) (194) on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him, wherein it is mentioned that, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will come before The Throne and fall down in prostration, and he will praise Allah, by His grace, such as none has ever praised Allah before, and then it will be said, ‘O Muhammad! Raise your head, and ask and you shall be given, and intercede and it shall be granted’, so he will lift his head and say, “O Lord, my followers, my followers!”

as though Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brings glad tidings with his teachings that if people follow him and believe in him, they will be protected from evil in this world and hell in the Hereafter.

Some people ask, ‘The True Lord says, “...and is a mercy for those of you who believe...,”’ (*at-Tawba*: 61) and the hypocrites only believed with their tongues, then, what does this have to do with them?’ We say that because the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was a mercy, he respected their words and gave them credence before the people; as for the True Lord, He will send them to hell. Then Allah says, ‘...An agonizing torment awaits those who abuse Allah's Messenger.’ (*at-Tawba*: 61)

The hypocrites did not abuse Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by confronting him because they had claimed to have faith. Rather, the hypocrites abused Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in their hearts and in their private gatherings. Therefore, their abuse was not at all direct; but the verses here affirm that they abused him in various ways, such as finding fault in the way he distributed the offerings, saying that he was ‘an ear’, swearing false oaths to him to try and mislead him and all the other things they did.

The True Lord then gives us another example of the hypocrites by saying:

يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ لِيَرْضَوْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ
أَحَقُّ أَنْ يَرْضَوْهُ إِنْ كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ

**They swear by God in order to please you [believers]:
if they were true believers it would be more fitting for
them to please God and His Messenger [62]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 62)**

It is remarkable how many times the chapter of *at-Tawba* contains the phrase ‘they swear’, whilst this phrase occurs only once in the chapter of *al-Ma`ida*, once in the chapter of *an-Nisa`*, and three times in the chapter of *al-Mujadala* (also, the chapter of *al-Qalam* containing the word ‘swearer’); it occurs seven times in the chapter of *at-Tawba*. Because of this, the chapter of *at-Tawba* has also been known as the ‘they swear’ chapter as it contains the phrase ‘they swear’ more than any other chapter in the Noble Quran.

The True Lord says, 'They [the hypocrites] swear by Allah to you in order to please you [believers]' (*at-Tawba*: 62). This shows how the hypocrites repeatedly swore false oaths, and illustrates their foolishness and lack of sagacity. The True Lord also says, 'When you return to them, they will swear to you by Allah in order to make you leave them alone...' (*at-Tawba*: 95).

The True Lord's use of the word 'will' here means they had not yet sworn this, but they would swear it in the future; that is, this noble verse was revealed at a time when they had not yet sworn this, but they would swear after the verse was revealed. Had they possessed even the slightest intelligence, they would not have sworn and would have then said, 'The Quran said we would swear, but we did not'. But even though the verse had been revealed, they confirmed the truth of the Quran, and affirmed the faith by swearing. The word *halaf* (swear) means to vow or make an oath; and if we look carefully at the Quran, we find that the word *halaf* is only used for false oaths, whilst the word *qasam* is used to refer to both truthful and false oaths. For example, we read in the chapter of *al-Ma'ida*, 'This shall be the atonement for your oaths whenever you have sworn...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89). He says: *halaftum* (you have sworn).

Since there is atonement, this means that the oath was false, since only false oaths need to be atoned for. If we go on to examine every use of the word *halaf* in the Quran, we will find that it always refers to a false oath. Therefore, the True Lord says in the chapter of *al-Qalam*, 'Do not yield to any contemptible swearer.' (*al-Qalam*: 10) He says *halaf* (swearer). So, *halaf*, here means a false oath.

However, if the True Lord uses the word *aqsam*, this might mean either a truthful oath or a false oath. The True Lord says, 'They [the hypocrites] swear by Allah to you in order to please you [believers]...' (*at-Tawba*: 62). That is, the goal of their false oath is to please the believers so that they trust the hypocrites and expect no evil from them. Then, the True Lord declares the truth of the matter, '...Allah and His Messenger are more worthy for them to please...' (*at-Tawba*: 62). So, they swear oaths to please you, but the true believer only takes oaths to please Allah; for a man might fool other men, and he might evade justice on earth, but you can never fool Allah or evade His Justice.

One of the essentials of faith is that one must be aware of Allah whenever he interacts with other people, and seeks His pleasure and fear His wrath; this is the true believer. We notice that the True Lord says, ‘...Allah and His Messenger are more worthy for them to please’ (*at-Tawba*: 62), using the Arabic word *yurduhu* which literally means ‘to please him’, whilst it might be thought, if we judge by human standards, that He would say *turduhuma* ‘please them’ since this refers to both Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. But the True Lord chose to say *yurduhu* ‘please him’ using the singular pronoun because the pleasure of Allah and the pleasure of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* constitute one single pleasure as the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* did not invent the Quran, but rather it was a revelation from Allah. Thus, to seek the pleasure of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* means to follow the way which pleases Allah. Therefore, the True Lord says, ‘Those who pledge loyalty to you [Prophet] are actually pledging loyalty to Allah Himself...’ (*al-Fath*: 10). Allah also says, ‘Say, ‘if you love Allah, follow me, and Allah will love you...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 31). Allah also says: ‘Whoever obeys the Messenger obeys Allah. If some pay no heed, We have not sent you to be their keeper...’ (*an-Nisa*: 80).

There is no separate obedience to Allah and another to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* or a separate way to please Allah and another to please His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* because obeying Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is out of obedience to Allah.

The True Lord’s words, ‘...Allah and His Messenger are more worthy for them to please...’ (*at-Tawba*: 62) indicate that Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* are pleased by the same things; whatever pleases Allah pleases the Messenger, and whatever angers Allah angers the Messenger.⁽¹⁾

Otherwise, it might be that the True Lord wants us to be polite with Him in that even if something refers to Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* we should not place anyone alongside Allah, but rather, we should

(1) *Abu Hurayra narrated that the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, ‘Whosoever obeys me thereby obeys Allah, and whosoever disobeys me thereby disobeys Allah.’ Narrated by Al-Bukhari (7137) and Muslim (1835) in their Sahih collections.*

refer to Him Alone. Therefore, when a man⁽¹⁾ committed a sin and they said to him, 'Announce your repentance before Muhammad', the man said, 'I repent to Allah but I do not repent to Muhammad.' Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'You have spoken well.'⁽²⁾ Look at the greatness of the Noble Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* who praised a man who said before him, 'I do not repent to Muhammad, I repent to Allah.'

The True Lord's words, '...if they were true believers.' (*at-Tawba*: 62) mean that if their faith is real, and not merely hypocrisy. Therefore, we do not seek to please Allah's creatures; rather, we seek to please Allah *Glorified is He* and the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* who delivered His message as the same thing. That is why Allah says, '...Allah and His Messenger are more worthy for them to please.' (*at-Tawba*: 62) using the singular pronoun – at the end of the verb- *yurduhu* which literally means 'to please him' and not 'to please them'. The True Lord then says:

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ مَن يُحَادِدِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَأَنَّ لَهُ نَارَ
جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا ذَلِكَ الْخِزْيُ الْعَظِيمُ

**Do they not know that whoever opposes God and His
Messenger will go to the Fire of Hell and stay there? That is
the supreme disgrace [63] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 63)**

When you hear the words 'Do they not know', this indicates disapproval, as though all the means of knowledge are there, so that they should know. If you say to someone, 'Do you not know that such-and-such happened?' this means that this incident has been announced several times, yet he still does not know about it and this is disapproval of the person's lack of knowledge. Here, the True Lord disapproves of the hypocrite's lack of knowledge about something which Allah has announced over and over again, which they should have known, and which indeed should never have left their minds. We said

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- (1) The story of the man who sinned and was asked to repent in front of the Prophet to which he said, 'I shall repent to Allah and not to the Prophet.'
- (2) *Al-Aswad ibn Sari` narrated that a prisoner of war was brought to the Prophet and said, 'O Allah, I repent to You, and I repent not to Muhammad.' The Prophet said, 'He gave the right to its proper Owner.'* Narrated by Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (iii. 435).

before that the words ‘do they not’ are both a question and a negation. The ‘do’ is a question, and the ‘not’ is a negation, which together produce disapproval. If you say to someone, ‘Did I not treat you generously?’ this means that you were generous to him time and again, but he acts as though you did not.

The True Lord’s words ‘Do they not know’ are meant to give an argument for something which has already been established; for they might have said, ‘We have not heard about this’. So, the True Lord clarifies to them: Indeed you did hear about it, and I told you of it time and again.

‘Do they not know that whoever opposes Allah’ (*at-Tawba*: 63). What does *yuhadid* (opposes) mean? In the countryside, we find that the people make signs made of *hadid* (iron) which mark property boundaries, and the name for a boundary which separates one property from another is called a *hadd* in Arabic. Those who oppose Allah are the ones who put Allah on one side and themselves on another, and thereby do not live in the company of Allah, enjoy the blessings of faith in Him, or follow His way, but rather, they place a boundary between themselves and that which Allah ordains.

When the scholars sought to explain this, they said that ‘opposes’ means ‘shows enmity to’, and that it means ‘splits away from’, i.e. one places himself on one side, and places Allah, His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and His religion on the other. Otherwise, it might mean that he wages war against Allah’s religion so that he is on one side of the conflict and Allah’s religion is on the other.

There is a link between the word ‘to wage war’ *yuharib* and the word *hadd*, since the *hadd* of a sword means its cutting edge which divides an object into two pieces. It is as though the one who ‘opposes’ is the one who wages war against Allah’s way and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. He does not only deny the existence of Allah, but he takes up arms to force Allah’s creatures to disbelieve as well.

The True Lord wants the believers to be always on the side of faith, and not to place any boundaries between themselves and faith in Him. The rulings of the Sacred Law are also called *hudud* (plural form of *hadd*) because every ruling establishes one of Allah’s boundaries by which rights and commandments are preserved.

Allah's way of guidance is composed of commandments and prohibitions, because the way of religion is all based on 'Do' and 'Do not do'; and the True Lord assigns punishments to those who transgress His boundaries, as He says, '...these are the bounds set by Allah, so do not go near them...' (*al-Baqara*: 187). Allah also says, '...These are the bounds set by Allah; do not overstep them...' (*al-Baqara*: 229).

Some people ask, what is the difference between the expressions 'do not transgress them' (*al-Baqara*: 229) and 'do not go near them' (*al-Baqara*: 187)? We say that if they are commandments, then do not transgress them; and if they are prohibitions, then do not go near them (*la taqrabuha*, literally means 'do not approach them').

We may observe that when the True Lord prohibited Adam and Hawwa' (Eve) *peace be upon them*, from eating from the forbidden tree, He did not say, 'Do not eat from the tree', but rather, He says, '...Both of you eat whatever you like, but do not go near this tree or you will become wrongdoers....' (*al-A'raf*: 19). By this, He gave them permission to eat all the fruits of the garden, but He commanded them 'but do not go near this tree' (*al-A'raf*: 19) because to approach this tree would tempt them to sin, for it might look pleasing to them, and its scent might attract them, and its colour might fascinate them; but as long as they did not go near these tempting things, they would protect themselves from sin.

When the True Lord speaks about alcohol, He says, 'You who believe, intoxicants and gambling, idolatrous practices and [divining with] farrows are repugnant acts— Satan's doing- shun them so that you may prosper....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 90) The True Lord did not say, 'Do not drink alcohol', but rather, the command is to shun alcohol, i.e. do not go to any place where there is alcohol⁽¹⁾; for the presence of a man in a place where there is alcohol might

(1) *Ibn `Umar Allah be pleased with him narrated that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said, 'May Allah curse wine, and the one who drinks it, the one who pours it, the one who sells it, the one who buys it, the one who brews it, the one who has it brewed, the one who carries it and the one to whom it is carried.'* Narrated by Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (ii. 97), Abu Dawud in his (*Sunnan*) (3674), Al-Hakim in his (*Mustadrak*) and At-Tabarani in (*As-Saghir*) (i. 266)

tempt him to drink it, and the people sitting there might try to convince those who do not drink to take a sip. So, the True Lord wants to protect the believer's soul from being tempted into sinning.

Allah says about the spiritual retreat, 'Do not lie with them during the nights of your devotional retreat in the mosques...' (*al-Baqara*: 187). What is forbidden here is to lie with them; that is, if a woman is with her husband in the mosque, this is not a sin as long as the husband does not lie with his wife.

Then, the True Lord says, 'these are the bounds set by Allah' (*al-Baqara*: 187), and does not say, 'So do not do these things', but rather says, '...so do not go near them...' (*al-Baqara*: 187). If Allah forbids something, the Muslim must not go anywhere near it. That is, do not be in the same place as the thing which Allah has forbidden, but rather stay away from such a place; for sins have their temptations, and so long as you keep far from these temptations you protect yourself; if you go near them, however, you might fall into them and commit the sin.

As for the case of commandments, the True Lord says, 'do not transgress them.' For example, if a husband and wife are estranged and all efforts to reconcile them fail, the True Lord says, '...if you [arbiters] suspect that the couple may not be able to do this, then there will be no blame on either of them if the woman opts to give something for her release. These are the bounds set by Allah; do not overstep them...' (*al-Baqara*: 229).

In the case of commandments, the True Lord says, 'do not transgress them' (*al-Baqara*: 229), and for prohibitions He says, 'do not go near them.' (*al-Baqara*: 187) In the verse we are currently examining, the True Lord warns those who set themselves against Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'Do they not know that whoever opposes Allah and His Messenger will go to the Fire of Hell, wherein he will abide eternally? That is the supreme disgrace.' (*at-Tawba*: 63) The warning here is embodied by how He makes it clear to them that what awaits them is not only physical torment, but also a torment of disgrace and humiliation. Some people can bear pain and tolerate it so that their enemies cannot gloat over their pain. Therefore, the torment which Allah has prepared for them in the Hereafter is not only painful, but it also imparts disgrace and humility. The disgrace is

manifested in that the one who was arrogant in this world, will be brought forth in the Hereafter and humiliated in front of all mankind; and it will be enough disgrace that he will enter hell, whilst the believers above whom he held himself to be superior in the worldly life will live in the bliss of Paradise; for him this will be a woe beyond all woes.

The True Lord then further exposes the hypocrites by saying:

يَحْذَرُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ أَنْ تُنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُورَةٌ تُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ قُلِ اسْتَخِرُوا إِيَّائِيَ اللَّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا تَحْذَرُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

The hypocrites fear that a sura will be revealed exposing what is in their hearts – say, ‘Carry on with your jokes: God will bring about what you fear!’ [64] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 64)

Hadhar (dread) means to prepare to defend oneself against anticipated danger or harm. For example, it is said to a person who wishes to travel on a road filled with perils, ‘*kudh hidhrak* (take caution) when you follow this road’. The traveller might then decide to take a companion with him, or a weapon to defend himself if he is beset by a gang of highway men. If the chapter would be sent down from Allah to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* then, how could they take caution and prepare for the descending of such a chapter? We say that this is meant to deride them because they claimed to be believers whilst secretly harbouring unbelief, and because verses had already been revealed to expose what they concealed in their souls, so they always feared that a new verse would come down and expose them to the Muslims.

The True Lord wants them to know that He knows what is in their hearts, and make them fear that these verses are revealed to expose them. They feared that the disbelief they concealed in their hearts would come into the open, whilst for the time being it was unknown to the believers. The *ghayb* (the unknown or unseen), as we know, is veiled by time and by place; the unknown matters of time are veiled by the past or the future, so if something happened in the past which you did not see, it is unknown to you as long as you do not learn it from a history book. Likewise, if something will happen in the future and has not happened yet, it is veiled by the future. As for the veil

of place, it is the veil of the present moment. For example, if we are in Cairo now, we do not know what is happening in Alexandria. Allah disclosed all these veils in the Noble Quran. The True Lord disclosed the veil of the past on many occasions when He informed His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* of it such as His words, ‘You [Muhammad] were not present on the western side of the mountain when We gave Our command to Musa (Moses); you were not there’ (*al-Qasas*: 44). He also says, ‘...you did not live among the people of Madyan or recite Our Revelation to them. We have always sent messengers to people.’ (*al-Qasas*: 45)

It is as though the True Lord revealed things to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* from behind the veils of the past which no one knew, as He says, ‘These accounts are part of what was beyond your knowledge [Muhammad]. We revealed them to you. Neither you nor your people knew them before now, so be patient, the future belongs to those who are aware of Allah.’ (*Hud*: 49)

Allah also revealed things to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* from behind the veil of the future, saying, ‘The foolish people will say, “What has turned them away from the prayer direction they used to face?”’ (*al-Baqara*: 142) These weak-minded people heard this verse before they asked about the changing of the prayer-direction, yet despite this they still went ahead and asked about it. Another example of the True Lord’s exposing of the veil of the future is found in His words, ‘Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee.’ (*al-Qamar*: 45) This verse was revealed when the Muslims were undergoing grave persecution at the hands of the disbelievers such that ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘What forces are these?’⁽¹⁾

When the Battle of Badr took place, ‘Umar said, ‘My Lord spoke the truth, ‘Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee.’ (*al-Qamar*: 45)

(1) ‘Akrama narrated that when the verse ‘(Yet) the hosts (of those who deny the truth) shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs (in flight)’ (*al-Qamar*:45) was revealed, ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said ‘What hosts are these? What hosts are meant here?’ ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* later said, ‘The day I saw the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* striding in his battle-array saying, “the hosts shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs”, I understood what it meant.’ Narrated by Ibn Kathir in his *exegesis* (iv. 266)

The True Lord also revealed what lays behind the veil of the future to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* when He says, ‘The Byzantines have been defeated. In a nearby land. They will reverse their defeat with a victory. In a few years' time — Allah is in command, first and last. On that day, the believers will rejoice. By Allah’s help. He helps whoever He pleases: He is the Mighty, the Merciful. (*ar-Rum*: 2-5) That is, Allah stated what the result of the battle between the Byzantines and the Persians would be years before it took place, and affirmed that the Byzantines would be victorious.

Likewise, the True Lord informed Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of what went on in the depths of men’s souls and what their hearts concealed; and when He rendered the veil of the soul asunder, it is as though He said to every person: Your innermost secrets are known to Allah. For example, the True Lord says, ‘...and say inwardly, “Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?”’ (*al-Mujadala*: 8) They said this to themselves, and had they not said it, they would have objected to what Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told them of what they said to themselves, and they would have announced that it was untrue. But they did not give the lie to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* concerning what he conveyed from Allah, and this shows that the hypocrites felt dread, and that they were very much aware of the truthfulness of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Here, the True Lord says, ‘The hypocrites fear that a chapter will be revealed exposing what is in their hearts— say, “Carry on with your jokes, surely Allah will bring about what you fear!”’ (*at-Tawba*: 64) If some of them spoke mockingly and said, ‘There is no need for us to speak, lest the Quran say something about us’, the True Lord instructed His Messenger to respond, ‘Say, “Carry on with your jokes, surely Allah will bring about what you fear!”’ (*at-Tawba*: 64) What you dread, O hypocrites shall be revealed by Allah and His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the believers.

The True Lord then says:

وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّمَا كُنَّا نَخُوضُ وَنَلْعَبُ قُلْ
 أَيُّ اللَّهِ وَءَايَاتِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

Yet if you were to question them, they would be sure to say, ‘We were just chatting, just amusing ourselves.’ Say, ‘Were you making jokes about God, His Revelations, and His Messenger? [65] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 65)

If you were to ask them, O Muhammad ‘Have you spoken badly about Islam and criticised it in your private gatherings?’ they would say, ‘If this happened, then we were only engaging in vain and playful talk, and there is no value to what we say in our gatherings’.⁽¹⁾

The word *khawd* (chatting) means literally to ‘plunge’, that is, to immerse oneself in liquid such as the one who plunges into water or mud. The word originally meant any kind of plunging, and then became used specifically to mean indulging in false talk, i.e. something which is not serious, but only fun and games.

Allah says to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘...Say, “Were you making jokes about Allah, His Revelations and His Messenger?”’ (*at-Tawba*: 65) That is, if they say to you that this talk was only fun and play, and play is something which has no benefit except to kill time, then say, ‘Have you no better way to spend your time than to mock Allah’s messages and His Messenger and the rulings of Islam? Are these kinds of things fit subjects for chatting and play?’

Allah then gives them His verdict:

(1) One of the hypocrites said, before the battle of Tabuk, ‘Never have I seen, compared with these companions of ours, any who were more fearful, nor more dishonest, nor more cowardly in battle’, meaning Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his companions. ‘Nay’, said ‘Awf ibn Malik, ‘You lie, and are a hypocrite, and I shall tell the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.’ So he went to tell him, but he found that the Quran had already beaten him to it. The man went to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* after he had set off and mounted his camel and said, ‘O Muhammad, we were only engaging in vain talk and playing, and speaking words to pass the time and lighten the woes of travel.’ See Wahidi’s (*Asbab An-Nuzul*) p. 144.

لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ إِنَّ نَعْفَ عَنْ طَائِفَةٍ مِنْكُمْ
نُعَذِّبُ طَائِفَةً بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

Do not try to justify yourselves; you have gone from belief to disbelief.' We may forgive some of you, but We will punish others: they are evildoers [66] (The Quran, at-Tawba: 66)

Did the hypocrites really believe before, then disbelieve? No, but rather, His words 'you have gone from belief to disbelief...' (*at-Tawba: 66*) mean that you hypocrites have exposed yourselves because you only professed to have faith, and then the True Lord made it known that your faith is a mere matter of words, not true convictions.

The True Lord then says, '...We may forgive some of you, but We will punish others; they are evildoers.' (*at-Tawba: 66*) Look at Allah's mercy, and how He does not close the door of repentance on them after having revealed what was in their souls. The True Lord says that those of them who would repent sincerely and refrain from indulging in this idle talk would be forgiven by Allah; as for those who persisted in their hypocrisy and sin – and the word used for 'sin' here is *ijram* which literally means 'to cut' just as a fruit is cut, and this word was applied to sin because sin splits truth from falsehood by cutting. This means that those who cut themselves off from faith in their hearts and their conduct – those who persisted in this would be chastised by the True Lord *Glorified is He*.

الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ
بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ
نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

The hypocrites, both men and women, are all the same: they order what is wrong and forbid what is right; they are tight-fisted. They have ignored God, so He has ignored them. The hypocrites are the disobedient ones [67] (The Quran, at-Tawba: 67)

Allah, then, returns to the subject of the rulings and these rulings are usually given by Allah to man in the masculine form. Women are only

explicitly mentioned in a few verses, such as when He says, ‘Believers, no one group of men should jeer at another, who may after all be better than them; no one group of women should jeer at another, who may after all be better than them...’ (*al-Hujurat*: 11). He also says, ‘To whoever, male or female, does good deeds and has faith...’ (*an-Nahl*: 97).

The rest of the rulings were issued to males; females were implicitly included in them, since the feminine is implicitly included in the masculine in the Arabic language; but here, it was necessary that both the male and female hypocrites be mentioned explicitly because men have their gatherings and women have theirs, and each of them have actions and words which differ from the other. Therefore, it was necessary that there be an explicit wording referring to female hypocrites.

The True Lord says that they ‘are all the same.’ (*at-Tawba*: 67) That is, the male and female hypocrites do not differ from one another in their baseness, vileness and scandalous behaviour, and Allah defines their attributes by saying, ‘...they enjoin what is wrong and forbid what is right; they withhold their hands [from doing good].’ (*at-Tawba*: 67) If the people do what is right, the hypocrites forbid it. They even encourage them to do what is wrong, and they never spend in Allah’s cause unless they are asked to do so.

The True Lord then says, ‘...They were oblivious of Allah, and so He was oblivious of them...’ (*at-Tawba*: 67). Could the True Lord possibly be forgotten by natural disposition? No, but what this means is that they were oblivious of Allah’s demands and obligations, so Allah was oblivious of them, i.e. He ignored them. If someone distances himself from Allah, Allah distances him even further, as He says, ‘There is a disease in their hearts, to which Allah has added more; agonizing torment awaits them for their persistent lying...’ (*al-Baqara*: 10). If you are happy to forget Allah, He will let your forgetfulness increase and set a seal on your heart so that disbelief will never leave it.

The True Lord then gives His verdict, ‘...The hypocrites are the disobedient ones.’ (*at-Tawba*: 67) The word *munafiq* (hypocrite) is derived from the word *nafaq* (tunnel) of the jerboa, a mouse-like animal which lives in the desert and digs tunnels under the ground which have two entrances, so that if one of them is blocked with sand it can exit from the other. Likewise, we see that the

hypocrite has two faces. *Fusuq* (iniquity) means to stray from the way of obedience; the Arabic word is derived from the verb *fasaqa* which describes the way a date breaks free of its skin. The skin is meant to protect the fruit, and if it breaks away from it the fruit is lost; and if a man falls into iniquity, he breaks away from obedience to Allah.

Allah then tells us what He has in store for the hypocrites saying,

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْكُفَّارَ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا هِيَ حَسْبُهُمْ وَلَعْنَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾

Allah promises the Fire of Hell as a permanent home for the hypocrites, both men and women, and the disbelievers: this is enough for them. God rejects them and a lasting punishment awaits them [68] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 68)

Wa'd (promise) means something good, whilst *wa'eed* (warning) means something bad. The Arabic verb *aw'ada* means 'to warn' and sometimes 'to promise' (*wa'ada*) is used instead of 'to warn' so that when the listener hears it, he expects something good, and then when the punishment is proclaimed, it will be painful for the soul. This is a way of deriding the hypocrites and disbelievers; similar to Allah's words, '...If they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like molten metal, scalding their faces...' (*al-Kahf*: 29). It is as though Allah gives them a promise that if they ask for water they will be given water, and then He turns it around for them and makes it water which boils and scalds their faces – we seek refuge with Allah from this! We may observe here that the True Lord mentions the hypocrites, men and women before the disbelievers, which is supported by what He says elsewhere, 'Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of Hell, and you will find no one to help them.' (*an-Nisa'*: 145) The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Allah has promised the hypocrites, men and women – as well as the [outright] deniers of the truth – the fire of hell, therein to abide; this shall be their allotted portion. For Allah has rejected them, and long-lasting suffering awaits them.' (*at-Tawba*: 68)

Thus, we see that the hypocrites will be in the lowest level of hell, whilst the disbelievers will be on a higher level. Someone might ask how can this be? The disbeliever because of his open disbelief, gave us a means of protecting

ourselves: since he made his disbelief public, we are always cautious of him, so he can only harm us in a limited way. As for the hypocrite, he acts as though he is a believer so we trust him, and therefore he can inflict terrible evil on us because, since he has our trust, he can find out our secrets and weak points; and the blow he strikes us might be fatal. The hidden enemy, as we know, is worse than the open enemy because we are cautious of the open enemy but not of the hidden enemy. He knows my personal details and my movements, and he can betray me at any time without me expecting it.

Therefore, when people want to plot against Islam without embracing Islam, their plots fail, since as disbelievers, they find that the believers protect themselves by refusing to listen to them. But if they contrive to strike Islam from within, they can rally those whose faith is weak to their cause and use them to attack the religion; and the attack of those who are Muslims by name alone will be fatal and devastating.

Here we may observe that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘...the fire of hell, therein to abide...’ (*at-Tawba*: 68), and the True Lord does not speak of eternity in hell using the phrase ‘beyond the count of time’ (*abadan*) except in three verses of the Noble Quran. It occurs in His words, ‘but the road that leads to hell, therein to abide beyond the count of time, and this is indeed easy for Allah.’ (*an-Nisa*: 169), ‘Indeed, Allah has cursed the disbelievers and prepared for them a blaze, abiding therein forever, they will not find a protector or a helper.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 64-65), and ‘...Now as for him who rebels against Allah and His Apostle – verily, the fire of hell awaits him, therein to abide beyond the count of time.’ (*al-Jinn*: 23)

But the eternity of Paradise is mentioned many times.⁽¹⁾ We say that Paradise is a glad tiding and a joy for the believers, and the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to attract His creatures to the bliss that awaits them. As for hell, it is an abode of suffering, and Allah, the All-Merciful Creator is too merciful to His servants to mention the notion of hell enduring beyond ‘beyond the count of time’ (*abadan*) in more than three verses, which he did in order to make sure that the disbelievers did not imagine that when Allah *Glorified is He* says,

(1) It is mentioned eight times, as follows: (*an-Nisa*: 57, 122), (*al-Ma’ida*: 119), (*at-Tawba*: 12, 100), (*at-Taghabun*: 9), (*at-Talaq*: 11) and (*al-Bayyina*: 8).

‘therein to abide’ without adding the phrase ‘beyond the count of time’, this means that they will abide only temporarily in hell; to avoid this, He tells them explicitly that it will be an abiding beyond the count of time. Yet at the same time, Allah *Glorified is He* was too merciful to mention it in every single verse which talks about hell so that the door of repentance and mercy would remain open to every sinner that perhaps he might repent and come back to Allah.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* also says, ‘Now as for those who [by their deeds] will have brought wretchedness upon themselves, [they shall live] in the fire, where they will have [nothing but] moans and sobs [to relieve their pain], therein to abide as long as the heavens and the earth endure – unless thy Lord wills it otherwise. For, verily, thy Lord is a sovereign doer of whatever He wills. But as for those who [by virtue of their past deeds] will have been blest with happiness, [they shall live] in paradise, therein to abide as long as the heavens and the earth endure – unless thy Lord wills it otherwise – as a gift unceasing.’ (*Hud*: 106-108) The orientalists discussed this much, saying: how can the True Lord *Glorified is He* say that hell and Paradise will last forever beyond the count of time, and then say in both verses ‘...unless thy Lord wills it otherwise...’ (*Hud*: 108) exempting thereby both the disbelievers and the believers? We say that the ones who raised this objection understood neither the Quran nor the teachings of the religion. Those who will enter hell are of two kinds: one group who had faith but disobeyed and committed sins, who will be punished in hell for as long as the magnitude of their sins dictates, after which Allah will take them out of hell and place them in Paradise because they are believers; and the other kind are those who were disbelievers or hypocrites. Both groups will enter hell, but the former group – the sinful believers – will only be punished according to the magnitude of their sins, whilst the latter group will remain there forever because they were disbelievers or hypocrites. So, the sinful believer will not remain in hell forever, which is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘...unless thy Lord wills it otherwise...’ (*Hud*: 108) as he will only remain in hell until his sins are expiated; it is as though his stay in hell will have only been temporary from the outset, and he will never have been destined to remain there beyond the count of time; the will of Allah *Glorified is He* will take him from hell to Paradise. As for the disbeliever and the hypocrite, they will abide in hell and never come out of it.

It is as though there are some who will not abide in hell beyond the count of time, namely the sinful believers, and then there are those who will enter hell and remain there forever, namely the disbeliever and hypocrites.

And when we come to paradise, there are those who will enter it and abide there forever, from the moment of the Reckoning until eternity. These are the believers whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds so that the True Lord *Glorified is He* places them in paradise. But there are also those who will enter paradise but will abide there for less time, namely the sinful believers because they will only enter paradise after first being requited for their sins in hell.

The sinful believer's stay in hell will be curtailed because he will not stay there forever; and likewise, he will not enter paradise the moment the Reckoning is finished because he will not enter it directly after the Reckoning but rather will enter hell first to expiate his sins. Therefore, the True Lord's words, '...unless thy Lord wills it otherwise...' (*Hud*: 108) apply to the sinful believers who will first have to be punished to expiate their sins before entering paradise.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says that the hypocrites' abiding in hell will be 'their allotted portion' (*at-Tawba*: 68), which is *hasbuhum* (it will suffice them). It is as though there is an evil man and you want to chastise him, and then a strong man comes to you and says, 'Leave him to me, I will take care of him', so you say to him, 'That is enough for him', i.e. that will be sufficient to impart to him the required chastisement. The same is true of hell. Allah *Glorified is He* wants to alert us to the fact that it will suffice them; that is, the pain and suffering they will endure therein will be quite enough to require them for the evil they have done.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says, 'For Allah has rejected them.' (*at-Tawba*: 68). That is, He has excluded them from His Mercy, so no repentance or contrition will be accepted from them because the place of repentance is this lower world, whilst after death in the Hereafter there is no further opportunity to repent because the time for this will have passed. Therefore, the chastisement of those who do not repent in this worldly life will be a long-lasting chastisement in the Hereafter: '...And long-lasting suffering awaits them.' (*at-Tawba*: 68) The True Lord *Glorified is He* sometimes calls the

suffering of hell 'grievous', sometimes 'shameful', and sometimes 'long-lasting'. This is because He wants us to know that every manner of suffering will befall the denizens of hell. If a person is thick-skinned and able to endure severe pain without showing his agony because of his pride, his suffering will not only be grievously painful but will also be shameful. To shame means to inflict pain on the soul; if the man is prideful and thick-skinned, he will be dragged on his face and shamed. Some people might be able to endure pain, but they cannot endure being humiliated in such a way that their souls are made to suffer worse than their bodies. You might come to a leader and humiliate him in front of his followers, or humiliate a father in front of his children; this hurts his soul more than it would hurt his body.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'long-lasting suffering' (*at-Tawba*: 68), this means eternal suffering. So if it is painful, this pain will retain in its severity and never be lessened and if it is shameful, this shame will continue and never come to an end. Either way, the suffering will continue and remain without end.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then addresses the disbelievers and hypocrites saying to those who refuse to follow His way:

كَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْكُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرَ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَدًا
فَاسْتَمْتَعُوا بِخَلْقِهِمْ فَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِخَلْقِكُمْ كَمَا اسْتَمْتَعَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ
بِخَلْقِهِمْ وَخُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِي خَاضُوا أُولَئِكَ حِطَّتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

‘You are like those who lived before you: they were even stronger than you, with more wealth and children; they enjoyed their share in this life as you have enjoyed yours; like them, you have indulged in idle talk.’ Their deeds go to waste in this world and the next; it is they who will lose all in the life to come [69] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 69)

Allah *the Exalted* reminds them of the bands of disbelievers encountered by all the previous messengers; these successive messengers encountered both disbelievers and hypocrites, and whenever Allah sent a messenger He aided him against them.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants us to remember what happened to the previous nations who had even more power, wealth and children than the disbelievers and hypocrites who opposed the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. Let us read what the True Lord *the Exalted* says of them, ‘By the daybreak and the ten nights. And the even and the odd. And by the night as it runs its course. Is there [not] in [all] that an oath [sufficient] for one of perception? Art thou not aware of how thy Lord has dealt with [the tribe of] ‘Ad, the people of Aram the many-pillared, the like of whom has never been reared in all the land? –And with the tribe of Thamud, who hollowed out rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh of the [many] tent-poles? It was they who transgressed all bounds of equity all over their lands, and brought about great corruption therein and therefore thy Lord let loose upon them a scourge of suffering, for verily, thy Lord is ever watching.’ (*al-Fajr*: 1-14) We have not witnessed any remnants of the people of Aram, whom the True Lord *Glorified is He* described by saying, ‘The like of whom has never been seen in the land.’ (*al-Fajr*: 8), but the Quran confirms that they reached a level of civilisation that no one else had ever reached. Someone might ask how can ‘Aram the many-pillared’ be compared to the civilisations of the present day? Allah has secrets in His universe which He divulged to some of His creatures but did not divulge to anyone else even to this day.

If we consider Pharaoh, for example, we find that the True Lord *Glorified is He* described them in the Quran by saying, ‘And [with] Pharaoh, owner of the stakes.’ (*al-Fajr*: 10) The pyramids are like poles or stakes, and the obelisks are like poles, and the sciences of the Pharaonic civilisation are still not known to man to this very day, and there are certain elements of this civilisation which still elude our capabilities, such as the secrets of mummification and the building of the pyramids. These huge blocks of stone which were raised and hold on to each other without any adhesive continues to baffle science, as technological advancements are unable to reproduce building a pyramid using the same method of the ancient Egyptians without using some type of adhesive. Yet despite their power and their civilisation, those Pharaohs were not able to conquer the world, but rather, Allah took them to task as only *the Almighty*

Determiner can, and sand came and buried their civilisation. Then Allah willed that we discover a small part of it, and this small part dazzled the whole world, and the whole world came to see the Pharaonic civilisation and marvel at this art and this advanced science. If this was the civilisation of the Pharaohs, what do you imagine the civilisation of Iram, the many-pillared, the like of whom has never been seen in the land, was like?

Thus, we know that a part of the civilisation of Iram, the many-pillared, is still hidden today, unbeknown to anyone, and lies buried somewhere under the ground. Perhaps Allah *Glorified is He* might have preserved it to be discovered at some future time when people are even further from religion; for the more man advances materially, the further he gets from religion because he feels as though he has mastered the universe and gained sway over it. At such a time, the True Lord *Glorified is He* might allow the civilisation of Iram, the many-pillared' to be discovered so that people can see that what they have achieved is nothing compared to what Allah revealed to those people.

If someone asks where the civilisation of 'Aram, the many-pillared' was located, we answer that it was in *Al-Ahqaf*⁽¹⁾ (the Valley of the Wind-Curved Sand-dunes) where a single gust of wind can bury an entire caravan in sand. That is, if the wind blows, the sand does not only cover the road, but it covers the caravan as well; so just imagine how many sand-storms must have blown over the place where Aram resided, thereby concealing their civilisation. It would therefore take a great deal of digging to uncover this civilisation; for as we know, all archaeological discoveries must be dug up because sand builds up over the relics. Indeed, we may observe that even in the case of old houses in villages, you must take one or two steps down to enter them through the door because natural processes, paving and so on have caused the road to rise. If this is the result of natural weathering over a short period of time, then what do you think great storms would do over the ages?

And if you travel and leave all the windows of your house closed tightly and then return after a month, you will find the furniture covered with a layer of dust; and if you are away for a year, you will find a great quantity of dust.

(1) In present-day Yemen

This is in the case of a house which is tightly sealed, so what do you think would happen to a civilisation which lies open to all these natural phenomena and is covered every month by a new layer of thick dust?

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Greater than you were they in power.’ (*at-Tawba*: 69) That is, their civilisation was greater than ours because the more advanced a civilisation is, the stronger its people are and the more primitive a civilisation is, the weaker its people are.

So those who lived before us had a greater civilisation and were richer in wealth and children than us. Someone might ask, ‘How can they have had more children when the world population increases every year, and how can they have had more wealth when we discover more and more treasures of wealth every generation?’ Do not assume that this richness is a matter of number, but rather, it is a matter of relativity. If you take a hundred people and place them in one room, they are said to be a large group; but if you take each one of them and place him far from the others, the number is therefore small. In the past, the world was only settled in certain places, which is borne out of the fact that we have discovered villages and places which were not known to anyone.

So, the word ‘richer’ here is relative to the environment. In the environment in which they lived they were a large number, and the wealth they possessed, given their small numbers, was greater than the wealth you possess given your great numbers; that is, every individual’s share was greater, and the same is true in the case of children.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says, ‘and they enjoyed their share’ (*at-Tawba*: 69). A *khalaq* (share) means a portion or a part of any enjoyable thing which a person gets. Allah *the Exalted* says elsewhere, ‘...For there are people who [merely] pray, “O our Lord! Give us in this world” – and such shall not partake in the blessings of the life to come.’ (*al-Baqara*: 200), *Ma lahu min khalaq* (literally ‘he has no share’). That is, he will be allotted no portion of Allah’s blessings in the Hereafter. Those who work solely for this worldly life without having Allah in mind will not be denied, by the True Lord’s Justice *Glorified is He* the fruit of their labours, and therefore He will

give it to them in their worldly lives; but for those who work with Allah on their minds, Allah will reward them in this life and in the Hereafter.

We find that some believers ask, 'How can the disbelievers enjoy a more advanced material civilisation than the believers, and why are the disbelievers able to take enough of the good things of the earth to suffice them and more, to the extent that in some countries they throw the surplus into the sea, whilst we find that the Muslims live in basic material civilisations and have to import all that they eat?'

We must bear in mind the simple fact which I always repeat to every Muslim: Never forget that there is 'lordly bestowal', and 'divine bestowal'. The Lord gives to all because the Lord is the One Who creates and sustains, and provides us with our sustenance. Allah *the Exalted* is not only the Lord of the believers, but is the Lord of the believers and the disbelievers alike. Therefore, if the believer or the disbeliever utilises the proper means, Allah will give him. The earth gives forth a good yield to the one who farms it well and gives it its proper nutrients and takes care of it, and it does not make a difference whether the disbeliever or the believer does this; and the universe divulges its secrets to those who look for them and strive after them, whether they are disbelievers or believers. This is the meaning of 'lordly bestowal'.

As for divine bestowal, this is what Allah *Glorified is He* gives solely to His believing servants who follow His way. This is the bestowal of worship for which one is rewarded in the Hereafter. The fortunate one is the one who can earn both bestowals. He earns lordly bestowal by utilising the means of life so that Allah gives him good things in this worldly life, and then he earns divine bestowal by living his life in accordance with Allah's way so that Allah gives him bliss in the Hereafter.

The means of this worldly life do not distinguish between the believer and the disbeliever. The sun rises above the believer and the disbeliever, and the rain falls on the righteous and the sinner, because this is lordly bestowal; the one who utilises it well will be given, whether he is righteous or sinful.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'For we shall have turned towards all the [supposedly good] deeds they ever wrought, and shall have transformed

them into scattered dust.’ (*al-Furqan*: 23) Why? Because you worked for the sake of this worldly life alone, and you worked to be called an inventor or a discoverer, or to earn wealth or awards or to attain prestige or influence in this worldly life; but you did not work with Allah on your mind.

Some people come and say to you, ‘Was the one who discovered the cure for a microbe which caused man misery, or discovered electricity, or discovered something which brought happiness to all mankind – was such a person a disbeliever who deserved to suffer in hell?’ We say to him, ‘Yes’, because he did all this without Allah in mind. He only did it to attain prestige, wealth and influence on earth, and therefore Allah gave him what he worked for, and he attained an enduring legacy, and his story was taught in schools, and they gave him awards and named streets and towns after him.

As long as he worked for this world, Allah *Glorified is He* gave him his reward in this world. The one who works with Allah in mind takes from the world by utilising its means, but in the Hereafter, he takes directly from the Creator of means. Man might advance in his civilisation, such that in some developed countries you only need to push a button to get tea or coffee, and another to get food. But we say that this is all enjoyment of material means. Before you pressed the button, there were people who made this tea or this coffee for you, and the machine transported it to you.

But however far man develops technologically, the day will never come when the moment you think of something, you will find it in front of you except in Paradise, as soon as something comes into your mind will you find it before you.⁽¹⁾ This is because the bestowal of this world is based on means, whilst the bestowal of the Hereafter takes place without any means.

Allah *Glorified is He* gave us free will and the ability to utilise means in this worldly life, but in the Hereafter things will come to you without you having to work for them, and they will taste and smell different from how they do in this world.

(1) Ibn Mas’ud *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘You shall look upon a bird in Paradise and desire it, and it shall come to your hands, roasted.’ Narrated by Al-Bazzar in *Kashf Al-Asrar* (3532)

So the one who only has the means in mind when he works is given in this worldly life, and the one who has the Creator in mind when he works is given in both lives; the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'But as for those who are bent on denying the truth, their [good] deeds are like a mirage in the desert, which the thirsty supposes to be water – until, when he approaches it, he finds that it was nothing: instead, he finds [that] Allah [has always been present] with him...' (*an-Nur*: 39).

When you arrive at the mirage which you walk towards, imagining it to be water, you find that nothing is there. This is what will happen to the disbeliever on the Day of Resurrection. He will be astonished to find that Allah exists; he will find Allah *Glorified is He* in whom he did not believe, and he will ask reward of Allah, but it will be said to him, 'Your reward must come from those for whom you worked; and as long as you did not work for Allah, you will find no reward in the Hereafter since Allah is the One Who rewards in the Hereafter'.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, '...and they enjoyed their share [of happiness]. And you have been enjoying your share – just as those who preceded you enjoyed their share...' (*at-Tawba*: 69). That is, they took their share of this worldly life, but they have no share of the Hereafter; for the share of the Hereafter is earned by means of 'do' and 'do not' of religious responsibility, and if you adhere to both, you will advance. This is proved by the fact that Muslim civilisation lasted for a thousand years, whilst they utilised the means without forgetting the Creator of all means; rather, they safeguarded the means by adhering to the morals of the Creator which were imparted by 'do' and 'do not'. Therefore, they ruled the world for a thousand years, and no other civilisation lasted so long. And if the political aspects of Islamic civilisation declined, the religion remained in the people's souls; and you cannot find any civilisation whose principles remained in people's souls after its civilisation declined except that of Islam. Despite the political weakness of the Muslims, there remains a beacon of guidance.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, '...and they enjoyed their share [of happiness]. And you have been enjoying your share – just as those who preceded you enjoyed their share...' (*at-Tawba*: 69). That is, take your share

of this worldly life by utilising the means, but remember that this enjoyment is temporary and no man can retain possession of it; for an individual's time in this world does not last as long as the world lasts, but only as long as his own life lasts. The world belongs to you, and to those who will come after you, and your life within it is limited and you do not know how long it will last: will it be a month, a year, ten years or one hundred years? So, your stay in this world is only presumed and temporary. Therefore, the work you do with the world's means is limited, and only lasts as long as you remain alive in the world. And even supposing your life is long and you become one of those who live the longest – your life will still inevitably end.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘...just as those who preceded you enjoyed their share...’ (*at-Tawba*: 69). You emulated them and followed in their footsteps: whenever they sinned you sinned, and they indulged in scurrilous talk about the prophets, and you did the same. So, you are the associates of those people who came before you in that you took your share and portion of this worldly life and left nothing for the Hereafter, so you have a share in what they did. That is one aspect; a second is that you exchanged the truth for falsehood. So, you did the same things they did at the onset, and so you were led to the same results as they were. ‘...It is they whose works have come to nought in this world and in the life to come.’ (*at-Tawba*: 69) That is your works in this world have failed and been lost, just as the worldly works of those who came before you came to naught. They were of two kinds: some of them waged war against the call to goodness until they were killed, and therefore gained nothing; and others were not killed, so they escaped with their worldly possessions, but they left this world without having done anything for their Hereafter and so will gain nothing therein.

Those whose works came to naught in this world are those who were killed or captured and taken prisoner, and whose wealth was seized as battle-spoils by the believers; it is as though they lost out on this worldly life and gained none of its trinkets, and they also lost out on the Hereafter; and this is the most grievous loss, to lose out on both aspects of time, this world and the Hereafter.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says:

اللَّهُ يَأْتِيهِمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَقَوْمِ
 إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَأَصْحَابِ مَدْيَنَ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَاتِ أَنَّهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ
 ﴿٧٠﴾ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

**Have they never heard the stories about their predecessors,
 the peoples of Noah, 'Ad, Thamud, Abraham, Midian, and
 the ruined cities? Their messengers came to them with clear
 evidence of the truth: God would not deceive them; they
 deceived themselves [70] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 70)**

In the previous verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentioned this matter in a general way by saying, 'just as those who preceded you enjoyed their share'; and in this verse, He mentions the specific people involved namely the messengers and those who opposed them. He says, 'Have, then, the stories of those who preceded them never come within the ken of these hypocrites and deniers of the truth?' When He says, 'have the stories never come within their ken...' (*at-Tawba*: 70), we have a question 'have' and a negative 'never'. The question negates this negative word, so what this means is that indeed these stories did come to them. When a negative is negated, the intention is to affirm the matter; and you only ask rhetorical questions when you are certain that the person you are asking will have to answer 'Yes'. When you say to someone, 'You abandoned me in my time of need' and he replies, 'Did I not visit you on such-and-such day? Did I not give you such-and-such? Did I not do such-and-such for your son?' he is certain that you will not be able to deny any of these things because they really did happen.

We may notice here that the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses the third person pronoun here, saying, 'Have, then, the stories...never come within the ken of these...' (*at-Tawba*: 70). Allah *the Exalted* first spoke to them directly to appeal to them, and then He spoke about them as though they were absent. It is as though this was also an expression of the Prophet's increased concern for them in their absence, as he *peace and blessings be upon him* was eager that they be guided.

'Have, then, the stories (*naba`*) of those who preceded them never come within the ken of these hypocrites and deniers of the truth?' (*at-Tawba*: 70)

The word *naba`* (stories or tidings) means important information. We do not call every piece of information *naba`*, but only important pieces of information. The word *naba`* comes from the same root as *nubuwwa* (prophethood), and prophethood is plain and clear, and is not ambiguous; and therefore, every event which is important and manifest may be called *naba`*. In this regard, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘About what do they [most often] ask one another? About the awesome tiding (*naba`*) [of resurrection], on which they [so utterly] disagree.’ (*an-Naba`*: 1-3) And there is no tiding more awesome than that of the Day of Resurrection.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* mentioned the first matter which was general, by speaking in a direct address, and He mentioned the second matter which was specific, by speaking in the third person.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then specifies who is meant by ‘those who preceded them’, namely the people of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* whom Allah drowned with a flood. Whenever Nuh’s (Noah’s) people passed him by as he was making the Ark they mocked him, and the True Lord *Glorified is He* said about this as a reply to those who mocked Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* ‘If you are scoffing at us – behold, we are scoffing at you [and your ignorance], just as you are scoffing at us.’ (*Hud*: 38). That is, you who mocked Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* are ignorant of the unseen. But Allah had informed Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* and his people of what would ensue, and therefore the ones who were truly deserving of mockery were those who refused to believe, not knowing what Allah had in store for them.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then mentions ‘Ad, Thamud, the people of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the people of Midyan and ‘*al-mu`tafikat*’ (the cities that were overthrown; the people of Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him*) who were literally ‘overthrown’ because Allah turned them over so that their highest part became their lowest, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘Just as He thrust into perdition those cities that were overthrown and then covered them from sight forever.’ (*an-Najm*: 53-54)

That is, they were lofty and then He reduced them to rubble. The word *ifk*, from which *mu`tafikat* is derived, means to turn away from the truth, as they said to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* ‘... “Have you come to delude us

away from our gods? Then bring us what you promise us, if you should be of the truthful.” (al-Ahqaf: 22) That is, to turn us away from them.

What is the story of those prophets and their peoples? The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘...To all of them their apostles had come with all evidence of the truth, but they rejected them, and so it was not Allah who wronged them by His punishment, but it was they who wronged themselves.’ (at-Tawba: 70) That is, the peoples of Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon them*, and so on were sent messages from Allah; and not only messages of the divine way came to them, but also miracles which proved that the messengers were truly sent by their Lord. It is as though they had no good argument for avoiding Allah’s message of guidance or denying it because every message is aided by a miracle which proves that the messenger who brings it is truthful. These messengers continued to come to mankind one by one to guide them to the message of Allah and show them the way of truth. The reason that many messengers were needed at the beginning is that the people of the world were separated from one another such that different peoples could live on earth at the same time in different places without knowing anything about one another. But now the people of the world are connected, such that if an event occurs in one place we can see it via satellite broadcasting in mere seconds, or even the instant it is happening if it has been prepared for beforehand; the whole world saw the first man to walk on the moon at the very instant it took place.

When the people of the world lived in separation from one another, every environment within it had its own forms of sin and corruption; so their messenger would come to fight that particular form of sin and corruption that existed in a particular place, and did not exist in other places.

But when the problems of the world became homogenous, such that if a problem emerges in America, for example, it will soon spread to Europe or Egypt, a single messenger had to come because the problems had become unified and therefore the solution had to be unified. That is why the message of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was a universal message for all times and all places.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...To all of them their apostles had come with all evidence of the truth’ (*at-Tawba*: 70), ‘evidence of the truth’ means that which shows you what is true. The miracles which accompanied the divine messages showed and confirmed that the messenger was truly sent by his Lord, and the miracle would always be completely clear so that the people would see it and know what it meant; therefore, every messenger would bring something which all could agree was a miracle. You might do something amazing, but the people might not all agree that it is a miracle. When the magic lantern was invented, some people said, ‘This is incredible’, whilst other people said, ‘It is just an optical illusion.’ But the miracles of the prophets must be conceivable to all mentalities, both the educated person and the person who has never read a single word in his life. This is because religion is a matter of natural disposition which addresses the greatest and most learned of minds, as well as the nomad who lives all his life in the desert and has never experienced civilisation or been educated.

So, miracles must be clearly intelligible to all minds, so that no one has any excuse. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘...and so it was not Allah who wronged them...’ (*at-Tawba*: 70). This indicates that the True Lord *Glorified is He* will reckon them according to their comprehension of the miracle; it is as though every mind understands and is certain that a miracle has occurred. Those who met the miracle with disbelief wronged their own selves in doing so because after they comprehended the miracle and became sure that it broke the natural law of the universe, and that no one could have performed it but Allah *Glorified is He*, they nevertheless refused to believe.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says of them, ‘...and so it was not Allah who wronged them by His punishment, but it was they who wronged themselves.’ (*at-Tawba*: 70). Wrongdoing means to take a truth and turn it into falsehood; but truths differ, so which truth was it that they turned into falsehood? It was the truth of the Greatest Being in whom all must believe and whom all must worship.

And how does a person wrong himself? He wrongs himself when his soul finds a sinful passion alluring so he indulges it to obtain instant gratification, thereby denying his soul eternal bliss. There are those who wrong themselves by wronging others, such as the one who gives false testimony – the one who

helps a man to wrongfully usurp the right of another. The one who gives false testimony even goes down in the estimation of the one for whose benefit he testifies; and if he ever testifies anything to him, he will not accept his testimony and will hold him in contempt. Anyone who is asked by someone to give false testimony ought to strike the one who asks him because he wants to cause him to fall in the estimation of the people and even in the estimation of the one for whose benefit he testifies. When the giver of false witness aids someone against their adversary, everyone holds this witness in contempt.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ
وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٧١﴾

The believers, both men and women, support each other; they order what is right and forbid what is wrong; they keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; they obey God and His Messenger. God will give His mercy to such people: God is almighty and wise[71] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 71)

This verse comes shortly after another verse in which the hypocrites were described, 'The hypocrites, both men and women, are all of a kind...' (*at-Tawba*: 67). It was therefore appropriate that the contrasting state of the believers, men and women, be mentioned; this is the complementary juxtaposition of opposites, for when opposites are compared they are both made clearer. An example is found in the poet's words, praising his beloved:

A face as white as dawn,

Hair as black as night:

Two opposites which go well together;

For one opposite shows the beauty of the other.

After mentioning the scandals and vices of the hypocrites, and how they swore false oaths and broke their covenants, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to give a contrast between them and the believing men and women.

But the contrast here differs slightly in that Allah *the Exalted* said of the hypocrites, ‘The hypocrites, both men and women, are all of a kind...’ (*at-Tawba*: 67), but when He spoke about the believers He said, ‘And [as for] the believers, both men and women – they are close unto one another...’ (*at-Tawba*: 71). So the True Lord *Glorified is He* described the hypocrites, both men and women, as being ‘all of a kind’; that is, they are all alike and their conduct is based on imitation and emulation; they imitate one another. And since their belief is based on evil, they are all evil, and there is no one among them to advise them to do what is right, or try to make them renounce their hypocrisy. Rather, they continue in their evil to the greatest extent possible.

As for the believer, his belief is based on conviction and goodness, and if there is evil in a believer, the believers who are close to him will guide him away from evil and back to the way of goodness. The human soul is subject to many vicissitudes, and not every believer adheres perfectly to Allah’s way of guidance in all aspects, but rather, there are weak points in every human soul. So, if a believer has a weakness, the believers who are close to him will show his weak point to him and give him guidance and advice, and help him to combat his weakness; and the believer will also guide and advise others. Thus, we find that in the believing society, believers help one another to combat their weak points, and they all counsel one another, so that the combined faith of all is self-completing. If one person is remiss in some aspect, someone who is close to him will fill this gap in his conduct.

As for the hypocrites, the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes them as being ‘all of a kind’ meaning that they are all alike so that they do not counsel one another to desist from the evil they do, nor does any of them advise the others.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘And [as for] the believers, both men and women – they are close unto one another...’ (*at-Tawba*: 71), He does not specify who is active in this relationship of closeness (*walaya*) and who is passive; for every believer is both active and passive in this relationship, since the word *walaya* is derived from the verb *yali*, which means ‘to be close’, and its opposite is *‘ada* (to have enmity), which means ‘to be far’ and ‘to abandon’. So ‘closeness’ is the opposite of ‘enmity’, and the benefit of this closeness is that each believer helps his fellow believer to resist those things for which he has a weakness.

If I have a weak point, my fellow believer will help me with it; and as long as my fellow believer helps me in some way, if he becomes weak in any way, I will help him in return. Our relationship is therefore complementary and mutual, and we are each, both active and passive in our closeness. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'By time. Verily, man is bound to lose himself unless he be of those who attain to faith, do good works, enjoin upon one another the keeping to truth and enjoin upon one another patience.' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3) Were it 'enjoin' only, this would mean that there are some who advise and others who are advised; but the True Lord *Glorified is He* said, 'enjoin upon one another' which means that every believer must advise his fellow believer. If I have a weakness, you advise me and say, 'Refrain from this and do not do it, for you are a believer!' And if you have a weakness, I say the same to you. So, each one of us both gives and receives advice, and the same is the case with our relationship of closeness: you are close to me, i.e. you stick with me and help me to combat my weakness; and I am close to you, i.e. I stick with you and help you to combat your weakness. For we are all subject to vicissitudes, and we all have our own weaknesses which are different from the weaknesses of others.

This closeness also applies to the truth. I might incline towards falsehood in some matter, so my fellow believer says to me, 'Come back to the truth'; and he might incline towards falsehood, so I say the same to him. In this way faith is self-completing, and therefore we find that the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks about *walaya* meaning closeness and succour, in His own right when He says, 'For thus it is, all protective power (*walaya*) belongs to Allah alone, The True One....' (*al-Kahf*: 44) That is, true succour and true closeness belong to Allah; for we live in a world of vicissitudes, and you might seek succour from me when my own strength is gone, or my money is all spent or my influence has waned; but the True Lord *Glorified is He* alone is always Strong, and always Rich. He causes change, but never changes Himself. And when Allah succours you, this is the true eternal succour, not the succour of vicissitude.

And we find that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Oh, verily, they who are close to Allah – no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.' (*Yunus*: 62) This means that Allah *Glorified is He* has made certain people close to Himself.

Allah *the Exalted* also says, ‘Allah is near unto those who have faith...’ (*al-Baqara*: 257). The True Lord *Glorified is He* is sometimes close to people, and other times they are close to Him. If you draw near to Allah by obeying Him, Allah *the Exalted* draws near to you by supporting you, as He says, ‘If you help [the cause of] Allah, He will help you, and will make firm your steps.’ (*Muhammad*: 7) That is, if you draw near to Allah by obeying Him and helping the cause of His way, He will draw near to you in your times of dire need and help you, and make your feet firm.

So, the word *walaya* means nearness and mutual succour; and as long as there is mutual succour, this means that one believer has a particular weakness and another believer has strength; but who will always be weak, or always strong? No one. Therefore, everyone supports and everyone is supported. Since True Lord *Glorified is He* said, ‘close unto one another’ (*at-Tawba*: 71), and did not specify the relationship any further, this means that everyone has the possibility of helping and of being helped.

To make this clearer, consider the True Lord’s words *Glorified is He* ‘And they say, too, “Why was not this Quran bestowed from above on some great man of the two cities?”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) The disbelievers acknowledged the truth of the Quran and its miraculous nature, yet they did not believe simply because the Quran was revealed to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and not to one of the leaders of Quraysh. Allah *Glorified is He* answered them, ‘But is it they who distribute your Lord’s grace? Nay, as it is we who distribute their means of livelihood among them in the life of this world, and raise some of them by degrees above others, to the end that they might avail themselves of one another’s help...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* willed to make some of you masters and others slaves and some of you rich and others poor. This is the case where worldly affairs are concerned, so if you want to distribute religious affairs according to your own whims, then first distribute your livelihoods in this way; for the True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One Who distributed them among you, and your lives in this world obey the laws of causality, so it should be easy for you to distribute it, instead of presuming to distribute Allah’s Mercy, which is the right of Allah *Glorified is He Alone*.

We may observe that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, '...[We] raise some of them by degrees above others...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32); this means that some are raised above and others are left below. As long as the word 'some' is ambiguous, this means that all of us are raised above some people, yet left below others, at the same time. No human being is raised above all the rest of mankind such that he alone possesses every possible talent, but rather, each one of us is gifted in one thing and not gifted in other things. This means that the complementarity of life is essential and not merely voluntary. If a believer sees that others are raised above him in some aspect, he must ask himself, 'In what aspect have I been raised above others, and in which aspects are others better than me?' You excel in a particular occupation, and thus you have been raised therein. So, in those things I do not do well, others have been raised above me; and in the things which I do well, I have been raised above others. Therefore, you find that everyone in Allah's creation is raised in some things and left below in others, and this is the meaning of, '...[We] raise some of them by degrees above others...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32).

But our problem is that we only pay attention to one aspect of raising, which is that one person is rich, whilst another is poor. We do not consider health, knowledge, children, a good spouse, a blessed life and many other aspects, for if one of us is given a high degree in one aspect, he will have no share of another aspect. In the end, the total of one man is equal to the total of any other man, and the only superiority is that of piety. If you see that someone is ahead of you in one aspect, beware of envying him; rather, ask yourself in what aspect are you ahead of him and you will find that there are other aspects and facets of life in which you are ahead of others.

So, we are both raised above and left below at the same time, and we must understand that everyone who possesses a talent benefits society with his talent and perhaps he might benefit society with his talent more than he benefits himself. Consider the carpenter, for example, you find that he makes excellent doors and windows for people, whilst he does not offer the same standard of work for himself. Why? Because the door he makes for himself is the one door for which he will not be paid.

We gave the example before of the left hand and the right hand. Most people are right-handed whilst their left hands are clumsy and cumbersome. If

you want to cut your fingernails, for example, you take the nail clippers in your right hand and clip the nails of the left hand easily; and then you take the nail clippers in your left hand and clip the nails of your right hand clumsily.

Thus, we see that no man possesses every talent, but rather, he does some things well and others poorly; but the total talents of any one person are equal to the total talents of any other person. Divine justice intervenes in this, so we find for example that a rich man eats bread made with fine white flour, and then a time comes when he is only able to eat wholemeal or granary bread. And you find that the one who eats too much will inevitably come to a day when doctors will forbid him from eating food because he took more than his fair share of food before, and his health necessitates that he now stops eating. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has established a natural order in which all support one another in order that they are mutually complementary. You need me for what I do well and I need you for what you do well; and in this way people support one another, and society is sound.

Therefore, it is said that people will live well and long as they differ; for if they do not differ and become possessors of the same single gift or the same single job, then the world will be ruined. If we were all judges, for example, then who would treat the sick? And who would dig the earth? And who would carry the bricks? And who would clean the street? If we all had the same talent, wealth or work, then none of us would do these jobs, since if we were all doctors, engineers, chemists, judges or politicians, we would not be able to live. Rather, it is necessary that we differ so that I need you and you need me, and in this way the elements of society cling together, and the world's needs are met because of necessity, not simply because people volunteer to meet them.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* describes the believer as being, 'close unto one another' (*at-Tawba*: 71), so if a believer does what is wrong, his fellow believer will tell him to stop doing it; and if he fails to do what is right his fellow believer will enjoin him to do it. So, all of us will both forbid wrongdoing and be forbidden from wrongdoing.

You cannot enjoin what is right while simultaneously doing the opposite or being far from it. You cannot hold a glass of wine in your hand and then tell someone else to cast aside the glass of wine he is holding. You cannot

forbid an evil deed while doing it yourself; the one who enjoins a good deed must do it himself, and the one who forbids an evil act must abstain from it himself.⁽¹⁾ Every believer both enjoins what is good and is enjoined to do it, and forbids evil and is forbidden from doing it.⁽²⁾

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then adds to His description of the believers, '...and [they] are constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues...' (*at-Tawba*: 71). To perform the prayer is to announce one's loyalty to *the Almighty* Creator, He who is eternal and infinite. The believers are close to one another, but who is close to all of them? Allah *Glorified is He* is and therefore they must adhere to the way of Him who is closest to all of them, and whom none of them can do without.

When Allah *Glorified is He* described the believers as being close to one another, He also said, '...If you help [the cause of] Allah, He will help you...' (*Muhammad*: 7). We must all turn towards *the Almighty* Protector, for He is beyond all our means and beyond our strength and He succours us. If the protection the believers afford one another is not enough, we seek refuge in the Almighty Protector. As long as all protective power (*walaya*) belongs to Allah, the True Lord *Glorified is He* we must constantly renew our allegiance (*wala`*) to Him *Glorified is He* and the only way to do this is to pray. Then you hear the *mudhin* (the caller for prayer) say, 'Allah is Greatest', you go directly to the prayer. Why? Because Allah *Glorified is He* – your Lord, Maker and Protector – has called you to pray, so you must answer the call.

And if you want to pray more besides the five daily prayers and be with Allah all the time, then do so, after you fulfil what Allah *the Exalted* has obliged you to do by praying the five daily prayers. If a product is shown to its manufacturer five times every day, this is good for it; and if you take any device and have the engineer who made it inspect it five times a day, it will never break down.

(1) *Usama ibn Zayd* narrated that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said, 'A man shall be brought forth on the Day of Resurrection and cast into hell, and his intestines shall be spilled and he shall turn about them as a donkey turns about a mill-stone. The denizens of hell will gather around him and say, "O so-and-so, what is wrong with you? Did you not use to enjoin good and forbid evil?" He will say, "Indeed, I used to enjoin good yet not do it, and I used to forbid evil yet do it."' Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* (3267) and *Muslim* (2989)

(2) *Elucidation of translator*

The same goes for man, who Allah has created. If he presents himself to Allah five times a day, his soul will never break down. When you present a device to a human manufacturer, he fixes it with material means, whether by finding a fault in the electrical wiring or a broken component; material is fixed with material means. But Allah *Glorified is He* is unseen, so He repairs us by unseen means. You do not know what He does with you when you stand before Him in prayer, but you definitely feel that something has been fixed.

Therefore, whenever the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was concerned about something – that is, this thing was beyond his power – he would go and pray⁽¹⁾; for he was not able to accomplish anything with the means available to him, so He would turn to the Creator of all means and stand before Him, for Allah *the Exalted* is the One Who has the solution for everything. That is why the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say to Billal *Allah be pleased with him* ‘Give us peace with it (the prayer), O Billal!’⁽²⁾ as though it was a source of peace; that is, ‘Bring harmony to our faculties by calling for the prayer’. Therefore, it was inevitable that the True Lord *Glorified is He* would say, ‘...and [they] are constant in prayer...’ (*at-Tawba*: 71), for prayer is a constant pledge of allegiance to Allah, and the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants us to be connected to Him *Glorified is He* and this connection is made by praying the five obligatory daily prayers; and Allah *the Exalted* left the door open for you to offer more voluntary prayers besides this so that you do not miss out on any opportunity to stand in the presence of Allah.

To know the difference between Allah’s authority and human authority, consider this: if you do not have the means at your disposal to deal with something, you ask to meet with someone who has a higher status than you and has the means at his disposal to meet your need. When you ask to meet with him he might say yes, or he might say no; and if he says yes, he will ask you what you want to speak to him about, and once you tell him what you wish to speak about he will set the time, date and place of the meeting. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not do any of this; you can go to Him at any

(1) Hudha said, ‘Whenever something concerned the Prophet, he would pray.’ Narrated by Imam Ahmad (v. 388) and Abu Dawud (1319)

(2) Narrated by Imam Ahmad (v. 364) and Abu Dawud (4985) on the authority of a Companion.

time you like, and any place you like, and speak to Him about whatever you like; and Allah *the Exalted* never brings the meeting to an end, but rather, you are the one who ends the meeting with your Lord. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah does not lose interest until you lose interest.'⁽¹⁾ The True Lord *the Exalted* cannot be distracted by one thing from another, and therefore He can meet with all His servants at the same time, and listen to them all at the same time, and answer their requests all at the same time.

Allah *the Exalted* says, '...and are constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues...' (*at-Tawba*: 71). Prayer is always mentioned alongside the poor-due because the prayer is a constant pledge of allegiance to Allah, the Giver, and the poor-due is a means of preserving the life of those who deserve to be given it; you give to them in order to preserve their lives, and so he keeps his allegiance to Allah alongside you, since there can be no allegiance without life, and you help him to preserve this life. And because the poor-due means to give money to the poor, and money is earned by work, and work requires time, you therefore sacrifice part of your time to give charity, just as to offer the prayer means to sacrifice specific portions of your time.

And during the time you work, you can also pledge your constant allegiance to Allah by offering a part of the earnings of this time as poor-due. Therefore, not all your time is devoted to work, but rather, it is devoted to both work and worship. When you devote a part of the money which you earn by working to the poor, you have thereby purified your time by praying, and purified your wealth by giving.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And (they) are constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and obey Allah and His Apostle.' (*at-Tawba*: 71) Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned enjoining the good, forbidding the evil, offering prayers and giving the purifying charity to the people in need. These are all acts of obedience to Allah *Glorified is He* in that they are among the Pillars of Islam. So why did Allah then say, '...and obey Allah and His Apostle.' (*at-Tawba*: 71)?

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari (43) and Muslim (785) on the authority of 'Aisha may Allah be pleased with her

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us that there are five pillars of Islam. These are the testimony of faith (that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger), performing the obligatory prayers, paying the *zakat* (charity), fasting the month of *Ramadan* and performing *Hajj* (the pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque for those who can afford it). Yet, these pillars do not constitute the entirety of Islam, but are the foundations upon which Islam is built. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Islam was built on five pillars.’⁽¹⁾ So, these five pillars are the foundations upon which Islam was built, but Islam itself is every action which improves life and does not corrupt it. It is made up of all the actions that bring happiness and not misery, and therefore Allah *Glorified is He* and wants us to understand that Islam does not only consist of its foundations. In addition to these five foundations, we must obey Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger in every aspect of life’s motion for which He gave us instructions.

The motions of life are all complementary. The tools which benefit your life are the result of a series of improvements achieved by many generations of mankind. How did we determine the simplest of utilities such as the use of yeast to make bread? There are people who were inspired by Allah, by means of a chance occurrence or a mistake, when they discovered that putting yeast in dough made the bread taste better. Most of life’s discoveries occurred by chance or as results of mistakes. Penicillin, for example, was discovered as the result of a mistake. Archimedes’ principle of buoyancy and displacement was inspired by an unexpected observation which Allah inspired Archimedes to realize. Whenever a new secret is discovered by mankind, we know that Allah *Glorified is He* guided His creatures to it.

What made us understand that meat tastes better when cooked or roasted? What makes you cook some kinds of vegetables but not others? Allah *Glorified is He* guided us to all of this. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘who creates (everything), and thereupon forms it in accordance with what it is meant to be, and who determines the nature (of all that exists), and thereupon guides it (towards its fulfilment).’ (*al-A‘la*: 2-3)

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* (8) and *Muslim* (16) on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar

Many of the concepts we benefit from in life were passed down to us from the previous generations. Some people wrongly choose to do nothing in their lives but pray and fast, using the verse in the Quran in which Allah said, 'And (tell them that) I have only created the jinn and the men to worship Me,' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 56). However, if they devote themselves solely to prayer and fasting, how will they get the food that gives them strength and power to pray.

Suppose that you will only need a single slice of bread, you will still need to purchase it from the bakery. The bakery gets the flour from the mill. The mill gets the wheat from the grain silo and the grain silo gets the grain from the farmers. Still, the farmers will have to rely on factories to get the tools necessary for ploughing and irrigation.

Therefore, people cannot solely devote themselves to acts of worship because all people need the work of other craftsmen. Every action wherein you remember Allah *Glorified is He* is an act of worship. and every action in life that helps you in worshipping Allah is itself an act of worship.

Let us state another example. To pray, we must wear clothes that cover our bodies appropriately. We buy these clothes from a merchant, who in turn brings it from the textile factory. The textile factory depends on the spinning mill, the cotton ginnery and the cotton plantations. The plantations also require materials to produce an ample harvest and to protect their cotton from harm. All these motions of life are required to get clothes that cover our bodies when we pray, and each one of them is an act of worship. So, it was necessary that Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...and obey Allah, and His Apostle' after saying, '...and are constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues' (*at-Tawba*: 71). After praying to Allah *Glorified is He* and paying the purifying charities, the believers must obey Allah in the rest of the teachings (of Islam) which were built on these pillars.

Allah *Glorified is He* then said, 'It is them, upon whom Allah will bestow His Mercy' (*at-Tawba*: 71). The word 'them' refers to all the believing men and women, who support one another in doing what is right and forbid each other of committing what is wrong. They are in constant prayer, pay the purifying charities and obey Allah and His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad

peace and blessings be upon him. These people shall be granted grace and mercy by Allah *Glorified is He*.

Is it more eloquent to say, 'It is they upon whom Allah bestows His Mercy', or to say, 'It is they upon whom Allah 'will' bestow His Mercy,' (*at-Tawba*: 71)? The words 'Allah 'will' bestow His Mercy' are more eloquent because the word 'will' crosses the veil of time, and therefore, indicates that the believer will live in constant mercy and grace from Allah *Glorified is He*.

That is the same reason why Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse regarding those believers who do good deeds, '...(Allah) The Most Gracious will bless (them) with affection' (*Maryam*: 96). That is, this affection will be continuous throughout time. Even those who hear this verse and then die shortly afterwards will be blessed with Allah's love and affection.

Allah *Glorified is He* also said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'and, indeed, in time will thy Lord grant thee (what thy heart desires), and thou shall be well-pleased' (*ad-Duha*: 5). Allah did not say, 'Thy Lord grants thy', but rather said, 'and, indeed, in time will thy Lord grant thee' (*ad-Duha*: 5), to show us that Allah *Glorified is He* bestows his blessings in a continuous manner.

An application of this linguistic choice can be made clear in the following example. When you threaten someone, you do not say, 'I am getting revenge on you'. Rather, you say, 'I will get my revenge on you' meaning that your revenge will continue for a certain amount of time.

Allah said, 'It is them upon whom Allah will bestow His Mercy (*Rahma*),' (*at-Tawba*: 71). This means that Allah's attribute of Mercy (*Rahma*) is greater than the attribute of mercy in his creation⁽¹⁾ because people are merciful to one another according to the means they have at their disposal, whilst the Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* exists through His attributes of perfection. These attributes of perfection are limitless and infinite. Allah's mercy can be

(1) *Abu Hurayra narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Allah has divided mercy into one hundred parts, keeping ninety-nine for Himself and sending one down to Earth; and from this one part, all created beings have mercy on one another, even the horse as it lifts its hoof from its foal in fear that it may harm it.'* Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* (6000) and *Muslim* (2752)

manifested in the absence of illnesses from a body. On the other hand, Allah's cure heals the body that has fallen ill. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Thus, We bestow in this Quran all that gives health (to the spirit) and is a mercy (*Rahma*) unto those who believe.' (*al-Isra*: 82)

These two forms of blessings spare society from the social ailments that man can suffer from. Mankind can either be spared from the onset of disease, or they can be spared after an ailment occurs. If someone has an attribute of wickedness as an ailment, the Quran can cure him of it. On the other hand, if Allah grants that person grace and mercy (*rahma*), the ailment will not befall him in the first place. Therefore, grace and mercy are continuous blessings.

Allah *Glorified is He* then said, 'Verily, Allah is Almighty and All Wise!' (*at-Tawba*: 71) The meaning of 'Almighty' is that He has full control over everything. Allah's Will is always manifested and He cannot be overcome. Never perceive this power and might as similar to autocratic tyranny, because Allah *Glorified is He* does not wrong anyone. His might is based on divine wisdom, while mankind's might is devoid of wisdom and knowledge.

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* promised the believing men and women that reward and bliss will await them in the Hereafter, saying in the next verse:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسْكَنٍ
طَيِّبَةٍ فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٧٢﴾

**Allah has promised the believers, both men and women, Gardens
graced with flowing streams where they will remain; good,
peaceful homes in Gardens of lasting bliss; and – greatest of all –
God's good pleasure. That is the supreme triumph [72]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 72)**

The Arabic word *wa'd* (promise) refers to glad tidings or blessings which will come later in the future, whilst the Arabic word *wa'eed* (warning) is a threat of a torment that is yet to come. A *wa'd* (promise) encourages the hearer to strive and work hard to attain the reward he has been promised, whilst a *wa'eed* (warning) gives the hearer a chance to repent from what incurs Allah's wrath, to escape from His chastisement.

However, we may observe that Allah *Glorified is He* says in an earlier verse, ‘Allah has given a promise (*wa’d*) to the hypocrites, both men and women, of Hell-fire’ (*at-Tawba*: 68), and then described the hypocrites’ punishment. He also said in the verse we are currently discussing, ‘Allah has given a promise (*wa’d*) to the believers, both men and women, of gardens’ (*at-Tawba*: 72) and then described the bliss which awaits them. Some people might have assumed it more lexically appropriate if Allah *Glorified is He* used the word ‘*wa’eed*’ instead of the word ‘*wa’d*’ in relation to the hypocrites’ punishment. They may have wanted the earlier verse to say, ‘Allah has given a warning (*wa’eed*) to the hypocrites’ because the rest of the verse mentions chastisement, hell and evil, while wanting the second verse, related to the believers’ reward, to remain the same, ‘Allah has promised the believers’ because it mentions Paradise, bliss and goodness. However, the rhetorical style used here by Allah *Glorified is He* is different than superficial human convention and Allah used the word ‘*wa’d*’ for both glad tidings and warnings for a reason in these verses.

To start with, we should not have the habit of comparing Allah’s speech with human speech, because certain observations that may escape from human speech will never escape Allah’s revelation. Additionally, humans vary in their modes of speech, while the style of Allah’s revelation is uniform.

Now to explain the point at hand, we need to consider the first verse closely. When Allah *Glorified is He* defined who the hypocrites are and then spoke about the punishment that awaits their actions, Allah wanted them to renounce their hypocrisy and turn to goodness and faith. Thus, Allah’s warning is a kind and caring admonition to them. When you say to a student who neglects his studies, ‘You shall fail if you neglect your education’, your desire is to encourage him to learn more. Your warning is essentially a heartened encouragement and your aim is to avoid the failure you are warning him from. This lexical style is also employed in another of Allah’s glorious verses from the chapter of *ar-Rahman*, where Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘A flash of fire will be let loose upon you and smoke, and you will be left without succour! Which, then, of your Lord’s blessings can you disavow?’ (*ar-Rahman*: 35-36) Are flashes of fire a blessing, such that Allah *Glorified is He* could follow them with the words, ‘which, then, of your Lord’s blessings can

you disavow?' Are these descriptions of punishment a favour by Allah towards His creation? They are indeed a favour because Allah's description of His punishments is a form of advice. They are favours because they encourage you to avoid the path that leads to Hell-fire and choose the path that leads to Paradise.

So, when Allah *Glorified is He* warns the hypocrites of the poor fate that awaits them, they may pay heed to this advice, renounce their hypocrisy and sincerely accept the true faith. If they choose that, they will save themselves from the torment of hell and this is a great good. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* used the word *wa'd* (promise) rather than *wa'eed* (warning), as it fulfils the meaning that Allah wanted.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse, 'Allah has given a promise to the believers, both men and women' (*at-Tawba*: 72). Promises and warnings constitute the balance of existence in this life and the Hereafter because if you promise a good thing to the one who adheres to Allah's way, reasonable people will choose to persevere to reach this good reward. If you warn them that evil awaits them if they disobey Allah *Glorified is He* the reasonable people will be averse to disobedience and sin because of their fear of torment. If your promise of glad tidings to the doers of good is true, and your promise of punishment to the doers of evil is true, then life will have balance.

We may advise a student during his revision for an exam, 'You will succeed if you revise well, and this will qualify you for the college of your choice. However, if you neglect your studies, you will fail and your future will be affected'. Here we have presented the student with a promise and a warning. If we do not fulfil our promise, and mistakenly grant success to a student who did not revise properly, we will contribute to the destruction of a natural equilibrium upon which the interest of all mankind is based.

Similarly, you may lay down a rule that a score of 90%, for example, will be accepted as a minimum entry score to medical school. If you break your promise by allowing those who get lower scores to enter medical school, while denying entry to those who get higher scores because of personal desire or nepotism, you will be transgressing against the motions of life by tarnishing the principals of good work. Additionally, if an authority loses the power to keep its promises and does not follow through with its warnings, its

words will be devalued. Our promises differ from Allah's promises because we are subject to vicissitudes. I might promise something which I cannot deliver, or warn of a consequence that I become too weak to implement. So, for life's motions to be balanced, promises and warnings must come from the One Who is always All-Capable, Strong and always Present. His words are final statements and nothing can prevent Him from keeping His promise or following through with His warning. When you read the chapter of *Al-Masad*, you find that Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Doomed are the hands of Abu Lahab and doomed is his fate! What will his wealth avail him, and all that he has gained (from Allah's punishment)? In the life to come, he shall have to endure a fire fiercely glowing; together with his wife, the carrier of evil tales, who bears around her neck a rope of twisted strands!' (*al-Masad*: 1-5) Allah *Glorified is He* decreed, in this blessed chapter, that Abu Lahab (the one with the glowing flame of fire) and his wife would die as disbelievers and enter Hell. Many of those who were disbelievers at the time when this verse was revealed such as Khalid ibn Al-Walid, 'Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl and 'Amr ibn al-'As *Allah be pleased with them* subsequently attained to faith, proved that they were true Muslims, and struggled in Allah's Cause. So, why did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* decree that Abu Lahab and his wife (Ummu Jamil) would not attain to the true faith as 'Amr, 'Ikrima and Khalid ibn Al-Walid did? The answer is that this damnation was not the decree of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but rather, it was Allah's decree. When Allah *Glorified is He* decrees something, have no doubt in his ruling, for there is no deity but Allah *Glorified is He* and He is able to do all things.

In the Quranic arrangement, these verses about Abu Lahab's doomed fate are followed by the chapter of *al-Ikhlās* where Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Say, "He is Allah, the One, Allah, The Eternal, The Uncaused Cause of All Being."' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1-2) Because Allah is the One, His commandments will always take effect, even in matters when man has free will. Allah *Glorified is He* says that, 'There is nothing that could alter His words' (*al-Kahf*: 27). This means that His promises are distinct events and His warnings are definite punishments. For life's balance to be maintained, there must be promises and warnings from Allah *Glorified is He* to provide us with certitude. No one shares in Allah's dominion and there is no invincible power except Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah *Glorified is He* gives us practical worldly examples of this natural principle. When you farm the earth, ploughing and irrigating it properly and placing seeds therein, its yield will give you abundant harvest. On the other hand, if you neglect the soil and leave it without ploughing, farming or planting, it will not give your desired yield. This natural principle gave a promise to mankind, that the one who farms his land well will receive a good yield. It is also a warning, that the one who does not bother to farm his land will not get his desired fruits from it. If the natural order of life was different, and people who farmed, ploughed and irrigated got nothing, while those who did not work got a rich yield from their land, the standards of the world would be inverted and no one would bother to work for food.

So, for the natural order to be maintained, the promise and the warning must be maintained by Allah, the One Who is able to fulfil all His promises and never weakens or changes. For a balanced life in our societies, we must be able to see this natural principle before us every day without contradiction. The one who studies properly succeeds and the one who does not study fails. This is a natural principle. If we interfere with this natural order and whims and nepotism interfere with our principles, the fruitful and successful motion of life will be thrown out of balance. It is this balance of promise and warning that drives the motions of life. Otherwise, the world will be disrupted.

Everyone wants to benefit themselves. There is no difference in this regard between the righteous believer, the sinner or the disbeliever. However, the sinner and the disbeliever love themselves unintelligently. Thereby, they seek to gain slight pleasures and benefits for a limited time, in exchange for an extended or eternal torment. As for the believer, he is distinguished by the ability to look ahead. Therefore, he may deny himself instantaneous and short-lived pleasures to gain a greater pleasure which lasts beyond the count of time.

We have given an example to illustrate this earlier. Suppose there are two dissimilar brothers. The first brother wakes up early to pray, eats breakfast, goes to school to listen attentively to his teachers and then returns home to revise his books. The second brother, however, stays asleep to enjoy his rest and then rises at midmorning. Then, he just wanders around in the streets for the rest of his day. When his soul suggests any kind of pleasure, he indulges in it without paying any heed to Allah's way and the moral values of life.

Both brothers love themselves, but the first brother subjects himself to bearable difficulties during his school years to attain comfort, a good position and wealth for the rest of his life. As for the second brother, he also cares for himself, through giving himself instantaneous gratification. There, he squanders his entire future, and becomes worthless to society. Therefore, we all care for ourselves, but the standards upon which we base this care are different. Some of us base our love on sound standards and endure slight hardships to earn eternal bliss, while others give themselves ephemeral pleasures and thereby lose the lasting blessings. You will find that this is the natural order of this worldly life. No person is comfortable in this life unless they worked hard in their early years to attain comfort for the rest of their lives.

It is said that no one ever takes their share of good fortune twice. The person who works hard at the start of their life may relax for the rest of it, and the one who relaxes at the start of their life must work hard for the rest of it. The popular expression has it, that the one who neglects his youth, will be neglected by his old age.

Parents and educators must alert their youngsters by means of promises and warnings, so that their lives remain balanced. Guardians must not delay the promises of good fortune while passively waiting until the fruit is ripened, or postpone warnings of ill-fate until evil has already occurred. Parents and educators must pay close attention to the behaviour of the children under their supervision by encouraging and making promises to the hard-workers. They should not simply wait for them to succeed. Promises must be given so that they will work hard, and warnings must be given before the child fails and ruins his life. Do not wait for a person to choose the wrong path and then warn him because promises and warnings are what give balance to life's motions.

If we see a society withholding the appropriate reward from the hard-workers while giving everything to the idle and indolent people, we will know that the balance of justice has been disturbed and that the society in question has problems. When hard-workers find out that their struggle gets them nowhere, they devote their energies to other efforts, such as hypocrisy, ostentation, falsehood and sycophancy. The result of this will be that society loses the value of work and becomes bereft of any productive labour, and turns into a society plagued by insincerity, showiness and injustice.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* established the standards of life's motions by means of promises and warnings. So, do not give incentives except to those who are worthy of them, and do not give compensation except to those who have earned it. However, if you squander rewards by giving them to hypocrites and those who fulfil your personal goals and deny those incentives to the vigilant and diligent, you will ruin the balance of life. Society benefits from each person working with skill and dedication. If a single hard-worker brings benefit to tens of people, or a single sincere employer facilitates the work of his employees, and then you neglect those people, all society will be disturbed.

Let us look at a verse in the chapter of *al-Kahf*. The Arabic word '*kahf*' means a cave in a mountain, and truths are often hidden and concealed like the interiors of caves. In this chapter, Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned the parable of Dhu Al-Qarnayn in the verse, 'And they will ask thee (O Muhammad) about the Two-Horned One (Dhu Al-Qarnayn). Say, "I will convey unto you something by which he ought to be remembered."' (*al-Kahf*: 83) What is this remarkable attribute of Dhul Al-Qarnayn that Allah *Glorified is He* referred to in this verse?

Some people confused themselves and overlooked the moral of the story by trying to identify the historical figure that was named Dhu Al-Qarnayn by Allah *Glorified is He*. They wondered if he was Cyrus, Alexander the Great or someone else. We say that the historical personality itself does not concern us. Our greater concern is that Dhu Al-Qarnayn was a man whom Allah *Glorified is He* blessed with firm power on earth. The moral of this story can be applied to any man who was blessed with established authority and influence on earth at any time or place. The purpose of being given authority on earth is not to passively utilize the means with which we are blessed. The divine purpose is to use these means of authority to attain strength to support the truth, as Allah said, 'Behold, We established him securely on Earth, and endowed him with (the knowledge of) the right means to achieve anything (that he might set out to achieve); and so he chose the right means (in whatever he did).' (*al-Kahf*: 84-85)

His purpose, then, was to reward that who worked appropriately and punish those who transgressed, as Allah *Glorified is He* clarified, 'We said (to him), "O you Two-Horned One! You may either cause (them) to suffer, or

treat them with kindness!” He answered, “As for him who does wrong (unto others) – him shall we, in time, cause to suffer; and thereupon he shall be referred to his Lord, and He (Allah) will cause him to suffer with unnameable suffering. But as for him who believes and does righteous deeds – he will have the ultimate good (of the life to come) as his reward; and (as for us,) we shall make binding on him (only) that which is easy to fulfil.” (*al-Kahf*: 86-88)

The first thing a person with firm authority on earth must do, after using the means at their disposal to attain power, is to rectify things by punishing the wrongdoers and restraining them. This is a way of reforming the motions of this worldly life. As for the Hereafter, the wrongdoers will have another kind of punishment therein. We cannot simply leave those who spread corruption on earth to the punishment of the Hereafter, for they do not believe in the Hereafter. If we leave them in their corruption without restraining them, they will fill the earth with wrongdoing. The corruption of society does not only affect the corrupt people, but affects the entire society. We must therefore penalize them now in this worldly life to protect society from corruption, and Allah *Glorified is He* will chastise them in the Hereafter as they did not believe in Him, and will not have prepared to meet Him on the Day of Resurrection. As for those who have faith and do good deeds by benefiting society from their faith, we must reward them well and encourage them. This is the law of righteousness in the universe, and these are its standards.

As we said, the power implementing these promises and warnings must have omnipotence, changelessness and omnipresence. There is nothing more powerful than Allah *Glorified is He*. He causes change but does not change and He Alone exists always and forever. The true believer is the one who knows that Allah’s promises cannot be affected by vicissitudes, while human promises are always subject to change. Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* wants you to say, ‘By Allah’s will’, whenever you promise anything, in order that you remain truthful. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And never say about anything, “Behold, I shall do this tomorrow”, without (adding), “If Allah so wills”. And remember your Lord, if you ever forget (saying this at the time) and say, “I pray that my Lord guides me, even closer than this, to a consciousness of what is right!”’ (*al-Kahf*: 23-24) This does not mean that we must refrain from planning and

making arrangements for the coming years, but, with planning, we must say, 'By Allah's will, I shall do such-and-such tomorrow', or 'By Allah's will, I shall do such-and-such next year'. When you make a promise, the time might come to deliver your promise, while having lost the power to do so.

For example, if I say to someone, 'We will meet tomorrow at the Mosque of Zaynab and speak about such-and-such', do I have the power to ensure that I, or my friend, will live to see that meeting? Will the reason for the meeting still exist? If I was going to meet him to borrow money, I might receive that money on the night before the meeting or I might change my mind. So, when you say, 'I will do a task tomorrow' say, 'By Allah's will' because you do not intrinsically possess any of the means which will enable you to do it.

Every action requires a doer, and you cannot guarantee that you will remain alive to be that doer. Every action also requires an object, and you cannot guarantee that the object will remain in existence. Additionally, every action requires an appropriate amount of strength which you cannot guarantee will remain intact, as you might fall sick and unable to move. Likewise, every action requires a reason for doing it, and the reason itself might change. Allah *Glorified is He* alone possesses all the constituent parts of the action.

On the other hand, if a promise is made by Allah *Glorified is He* it is certain to be fulfilled because Allah is Eternal, Immortal, All-Powerful and does whatever He wills.

Allah *Glorified is He* says that the believing men and women support one another, and that they enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong. They are constantly in prayer, and render the purifying charities. They also obey Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger in their worldly matters. Allah *Glorified is He* promised that He would bestow His Grace and Mercy upon them. So, what form will this mercy take?

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Allah has given a promise (*wa'd*) to the believers, both men and women, of gardens (*Jannat*) through which running waters flow, wherein they will abide, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual bliss.' (*at-Tawba*: 72) Allah *Glorified is He* has promised the believing men and women paradise (*al-janna*). The Arabic word *janna* literally means a 'garden'

or any beautiful place filled with flowers and trees. This is a universal reward which all the believers will enjoy. Allah *Glorified is He* then says, ‘...and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual bliss’ (*at-Tawba*: 72). These dwellings are an addition to this Garden. This is a promise from Allah *Glorified is He* of a garden for every believer in which he will have a pleasant dwelling.

So, there are gardens for all the believers, and pleasant chambers for every believer. What is ‘pleasant’ about these dwellings? We may observe that man loves to own a wide expanse of property before building a private and snug construction for his warmth and comfort. He finds that smaller construction a pleasant and warmer place to live. Allah’s words, ‘pleasant dwellings’ mean that nothing in these homes cause offence or discomfort. Instead, everything therein fills their souls with joy and warmth. The word *janna* (garden or Paradise) refers to a place with plants and greenery. These plants provide cover and conceal you from the eyes of others. Another meaning is that they provide you with all your needs and sustenance, so that you would not need to emerge from them looking for food or drink. Allah *Glorified is He* also uses the word ‘*janna*’ to mean the gardens of this worldly earth. He says, ‘Would any of you like to have a garden of date-palms and vines’ (*al-Baqara*: 266). He also said, ‘As for such sinners, behold, we (but) try them as we tried the owners of the garden’ (*al-Qalam*: 17). This last verse is from the chapter of *al-Qalam*, which narrates the story of a group of brothers who owned a garden. They failed in the test of wealth when they refused to give the obligatory charity to the people in need from their garden’s harvest.

How did Allah *Glorified is He* give us an image of the Garden of Paradise in the Hereafter, when this Garden contains that which no eye has seen, nor any ear heard nor any human heart imagined? We say that the things which obviously exist in the universe are those things that you can see or hear. Hearing in particular has a broader sphere of perception because you can learn about the things that others have seen through their narration. Hearing is, therefore, broader than sight because it incorporates your experiences and those experiences of others. If you say that you have been to New York, for example, this means that you have seen it. However, if you have not been there and one of your friends narrates a story of this city, the sphere of your

knowledge thereby broadens. You are able to add to your knowledge both what you have seen and what others have seen. As for those things which no human mind has ever imagined, they are much broader than what you have seen or heard, for they are countless.

Words are coined to symbolize known abstract meanings and material things. The words of a language must refer to concepts which have been seen, heard or imagined by human thought. Before the television was invented, it had no name. Therefore, there cannot be a name unless there is a thing to be named. Words are only added to languages after the things they describe come to exist. This is the function of language congregations all over the world. Things come into existence, and then, these academies meet to assign names to them.

Now, the Garden of Paradise in the Hereafter will contain neither what no eye has seen nor any ear heard. So, we do not have the words necessary to express what the Garden of Paradise will contain. If we add to this that it will contain, '...what no human mind has imagined' this shows how utterly incapable language is of expressing what the Gardens of Paradise will be blessed with.

When Allah *Glorified is He* wants to give us an image of Paradise He has promised to the pious and righteous people, He clarified that we cannot take its image from our languages because these languages are deficient in portraying what we have not seen or heard and what our minds cannot comprehend. Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* only gave us approximate examples to bring the image closer to our comprehension. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* did not simply refer to it as 'Paradise'. Instead, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'The parable of the Paradise which the pious (people) are promised' (*Muhammad*: 15). This is only a parable to facilitate our comprehension, but is not the true reality of what Paradise contains.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Allah has given a promise to the believers, both men and women, of gardens through which running waters flow' (*at-Tawba*: 72). The word 'gardens' (*jannat*) is the plural of 'garden' (*janna*), and the root letters of this word (*j-n-a*) have the basic meaning of cover and concealment. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Then, when the night overshadowed him (*Ibrahim*/Abraham) with its darkness (*janna*), he beheld a star; (and) he exclaimed, "This is my Lord!" – but when it went down, he said, 'I love not the things

that go down.”’ (*al-An‘am*: 76) So, the Arabic verb *janna* here means ‘covered’ and ‘concealed’; and the word *junun* means ‘madness’ or the covering of the rational mind.

A garden (*janna*) conceals everything within it because its trees are tall and lush. Those who walk amidst its trees are concealed by the branches and leaves of the trees from the sight of outsiders. All the needs of this life are also provided therein, so that he does not have to leave the garden searching for food, water or places to sit and rest.

If Allah *Glorified is He* has promised the believing men and women gardens, we can see that the words ‘believers’ and ‘gardens’ are mentioned in the plural form. When two plurals are juxtaposed in Arabic lexicon, this means that one group is divided amongst the individuals of the other group. This means that Allah *Glorified is He* has promised every believing man and woman a garden of their own.

However, we also find that Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*, ‘But for those who stand in fear of their Lord’s Presence, two gardens of paradise are prepared.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 46) We must be conscious here of the context and position of these words to ascertain their meaning. The chapter of *ar-Rahman* does not speak only of men, but also mentioned the jinn, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘He has created man out of sounding clay, like pottery, whereas the jinn, He has created out of a merging flame of fire.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 14-15) Allah *Glorified is He* also said, ‘We will soon finish your affair, O you (both) overburdened pair (the jinn and humankind).’ (*ar-Rahman*: 31)

There shall be one garden for the jinn and another for mankind, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘But for those who stand in fear of their Lord’s Presence, two gardens of paradise are prepared.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 46) So, the men who stand in fear of their Lord’s Presence shall have a garden, and the jinn who stand in fear of their Lord’s Presence shall have a garden. The meaning might also be that everyone will have two gardens. It is in Allah’s Knowledge what the final end of His servants will be and whether they will be pious or iniquitous. However, enough gardens were created in paradise to accommodate all the pious and the evil of creation and enough places were

created in Hell-fire for the evil creatures and the pious people.⁽¹⁾ When the occupants of Paradise enter therein, the gardens that were created for the residents of the Hell-fire will be given to them. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'For such will be the paradise which you shall have inherited by virtue of your past deeds.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 72) That is, they were not created for you, but inherited them, because their intended occupants ended up in hell.⁽²⁾

The Noble Quran has a special style, since the One speaking is Allah *Glorified is He*. Every word in the Noble Quran has an exact meaning. In any language, before you speak, you must know what the words you will use mean. Similarly, the listener must also know the meanings of the words to understand the meanings you had intended. If you say to someone, for example, 'Please bring me a cup of water to drink', they must know what the word 'cup' means, and what the word 'water' means. Otherwise, they will not be able to comprehend the request.

Similarly, the word 'Allah' or 'God' exists in every language. Since in every language, the concepts and the meanings of the words exist before the formulation of these words, our understanding of Allah's existence came before our knowledge of His Name. Therefore, the assertion that the concept of 'Allah' did not exist before known religions is false. Disbelievers came across this Name of God (Allah), and tried to conceal the word, although the meaning is present in their minds. That is why disbelief is called '*kuf*r' in Arabic, because it means 'to conceal'. Here, the word *kuf*r refers to the disbelievers concealing the concept of Allah's existence. The disbelievers are trying to conceal the concept of Allah's presence which their minds

(1) *Abu Hurayra narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'No one enters Paradise without first being shown the place in hell which would have been his had he been evil, so that he shall be ever more thankful; and no one enters hell without first being shown the place in paradise which would have been his had he been good, so that he shall be regretful.'* Narrated by Al-Bukhari (6569) and Ahmad (ii. 512)

(2) *Abu Hurayra narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Every one of you has two (possible) abodes, one in paradise and the other in hell; and if he should die and enter hell, the denizens of paradise shall inherit his abode. Therefore, Allah says, "It is they (the pious) who shall be the inheritors."' (al-Mu'minun: 10) Narrated by Ibn Majah (4341).*

acknowledge. Thereby, they are inadvertently proving that faith in Allah is the natural state of a mind.

The word (*janna*) means several different things in the Noble Quran such as when Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘As for such sinners, behold, We (but) try them as We tried the owners of the garden (*janna*) who vowed that they would surely harvest its fruit on the morning.’ (*al-Qalam*: 17) In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...two men, upon one of whom We had bestowed two vineyards (*jannatayn* or ‘two gardens’), and surrounded them with date-palms, and placed a plantation in between (the gardens).’ (*al-Kahf*: 32) So, the word *janna* is used in the Quran to mean the place in which plants, fruits and trees grow. Therefore, these gardens conceal those residents within and suffice those residents from going anywhere else for their livelihood and needs.

When Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to give us glad tidings of anything in the Hereafter, He compared it with things we can understand from this world and based these meanings on our knowledge of earthly things. This is because language is composed of words which can only describe established meanings that we can understand. Words do not exist unless their meaning exist first. If the meanings that are referred to, do not exist in this world, what words can help express these meanings for us? It is impossible because the meanings intended do not exist in our realms.

Therefore, the Gardens of Paradise are not the same as the gardens of this world. The gardens we know are only referred to as the closest possible approximation because Allah *Glorified is He* uses words which you can understand. In fact, the Gardens of Paradise contain that which no eye has ever seen, nor any ear has heard nor has any human heart imagined. Allah *Glorified is He* alerted us to this point when He says, ‘The parable of the Paradise which the pious (people) are promised.’ (*Muhammad*: 15) This is not a description of Paradise itself, but is only a parable to bring the meaning closer to your mind.

Take an image from the society in which you live. You need a dwelling in which you can rest and relax after the weary struggles of life. Some people’s dwellings consist of a single room. If they are promoted in their earnings, they might get a dwelling with one room and a hall, or two rooms and a hall. Then, after further promotion, they might get to live in a spacious apartment, followed

by a separate house. Further advancement might allow them a garden around the house and so on. It is not only a matter of having a place in which to reside. The more you achieve progress in life, you gain a more enjoyable residence.

Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...and pleasant dwellings’ (*at-Tawba*: 72). Essentially, there will be gardens prepared for the righteous people. Additionally, there will be residential dwellings because sometimes, a person may prefer to sit by himself in the midst of his private chambers. At other times, he may choose to interact with other people in beautiful surroundings such as the case on special occasions, when we go out to gardens or orchards to sit together. It is as if the gardens are meant for luxurious comfort, when you wish to enjoy the company of others. On the other hand, the dwellings allow every individual to have a private place where they can sit and enjoy their personal property.

So, the Gardens of Paradise have a similar outline to the worldly gardens. However, they are not made by material means, but rather, are made by the Creator of all means *Glorified is He*. When we go to a wealthy man’s house, we might find that the house has a garden which is tended by a skilled gardener. The gardener selects the flowers and trees which suit the wealth of the owner. We may be very impressed with this man-made garden and its scenery that we sometimes do not wish to leave it. If this is our choice in gardens designed by humans, what will the gardens created by Allah *Glorified is He* be like? How entertaining, charming and pleasant will they be?

Allah *Glorified is He* has promised us these Gardens, and He is well able to fulfil what His promise. He prepared gardens for the righteous people which contain sublime perfections and luxuries that no eye has ever seen, nor any ear heard nor any human heart imagined. He has made these Gardens wide and generous, rich with plants and flowers of all kinds, that are pleasant to behold, delicate to our touches and will fill our senses with fragrance. The rivers flowing through these gardens will arise from distant springs to flow beneath them or they will spring right out of the ground from every garden.⁽¹⁾ This exquisite beauty will be made by Allah *Glorified is He* Himself.

(1) The words ‘through which running waters flow’ (*tajri min tahtiha*, literally ‘flow from under them’) occur in The Quran 35 times. In one verse (*at-Tawba*: 100), the Arabic word ‘*min*’, (which literally means ‘from’) is not used, so the verse tells us that these rivers ‘flow under the gardens’.

In our worldly lives, we see that every river has two banks. The rivers of Paradise will not have banks, but rather, will be held in place in the same way that the sky is held in place so that it does not fall onto the earth.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, you will find that the rivers might flow side by side. There will be a river of milk, a river of honey, a river of water and a river of wine, all flowing side by side without mixing. They are separated from one another because Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who made them, and how glorious His making is!

After all this, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that the inhabitants of these gardens will abide in them eternally. He says, ‘...therein to abide’ (*at-Tawba*: 72). We know that a man might have limited enjoyment in this worldly life because it will never be eternal. You might lose your blessings and enjoyments, if you are struck by a financial crisis, for example. You might be removed from your blessings by death. On the other hand, in the Gardens of Paradise, you will enjoy all the perfection and beauty they contain, and Allah *Glorified is He* will increase your fortune therein by making you abide there eternally. The bounty of paradise never leaves you, nor do you leave it. There will be no vicissitudes there, nor any mortality.

In this world, every person’s enjoyment is proportional to their powers. People’s perceptions of bliss differ according to their environments and social status. If you are a farmer, your greatest pleasure might be to sit on the terrace in front of your house. Another person might enjoy the comfort of a large living-room in his house, while a third person might have several living-rooms. Thus, every person enjoys this world according to their power. In the Hereafter, we will all have enjoyment according to the powers of Allah *Glorified is He*. Our enjoyment will be drawn from a power which is beyond all other powers. Your rewards will depend on Allah’s Pleasure with the good you did in this worldly life, and how you followed Allah’s way. Therefore, you are the one who determines how great your share of paradise will be. By Allah’s Will, your deeds will determine what dwelling you will have and what kinds of bliss you will enjoy there.

(1) As Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...And [that it is He who] holds the celestial bodies [in their orbits], so that they may not fall upon the earth except by His leave. Verily, Allah is most compassionate towards men, a dispenser of mercy.’ (*al-Hajj*: 65)

What threats do you face regarding your earthly pleasures? People face two threats in this world. The first threat is losing their blessings and becoming poor. The second threat is dying while leaving their blessings behind. The blessings of the Hereafter are not subject to either of these threats because they are eternal blessings, and the residents of paradise will abide in their enjoyment. Therefore it will be said, 'O residents of Paradise! Your life is abiding without death, and bliss without dejection!'⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...therein to abide beyond the count of time' (*at-Tawba*: 72). To 'abide' means to remain for a very long time, and 'beyond the count of time' means that they will live there infinitely. When Allah *Glorified is He* speaks of this abiding, He makes an exemption, saying, 'But as for those who, by virtue of their past deeds, will have been blest with happiness, they shall live in paradise, therein to abide as long as the heavens and the earth endure – unless thy Lord wills it otherwise.' (*Hud*: 108)

What sky and earth is Allah *Glorified is He* speaking about here? Is it the sky we can see? We know that the earth upon which we live will be replaced and that the sky will be convulsed.⁽²⁾ When Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the skies and the earth in the context of the Hereafter, He is speaking about the new skies and earth which will replace the old ones, as He says, 'His promise will be fulfilled on the Day when the earth shall be changed into another earth, as shall be the heavens, and when (all men) shall appear before Allah, the One Who holds absolute authority over all that exists.' (*Ibrahim*: 48)

Since the heavens and the earth will be replaced, this means that Allah *Glorified is He* is speaking about the heavens and earth of the Hereafter. Some

(1) *Abu Hurayra and Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'A crier will cry out (on the Day of Judgment), "You shall be healthy, and never fall ill! And you shall live, and never die! And you shall be young, and never grow old! And you shall be blissful, and never dejected!" This is what it meant when Allah said, "...And (a voice) will call out unto them, "This is the paradise which you have inherited by virtue of your past deeds!"' (al-A'raf: 43). Narrated by Muslim (2837), Ahmad (ii. 319) and At-Tirmidhi (3246)*

(2) *As Allah Glorified is He says, 'It will come to pass on the Day when the skies will be convulsed in (a great) convulsion.' (at-Tur: 9). This means that the skies will move and melt into one another.*

superficial people say, ‘The Quran says that the believers will remain in paradise as long as the heavens and earth endure. Then, the Quran also says, ‘When the sun is shrouded in darkness, and when the stars lose their light, and when the mountains are made to vanish.’ (*at-Takwir*: 1-3) It is as though the earth upon which we live, and the sky which covers us, will be destroyed on the Day of Resurrection. Why, then, does the Quran say, ‘...therein to abide as long as the heavens and the earth endure...’ (*Hud*: 108)? Where is the eternity in this?’ We say to these people, ‘Read the Quran in its entirety, and you will see that Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...the Day when the earth shall be changed into another earth, as shall be the heavens...’ (*Ibrahim*: 48). So this earth is only a worldly body, as is the sky above it. Both will be replaced by other structures in the Here-after.

The earth upon which we live contains constituents of life which are governed by means: you sow, reap the harvest and manufacture your livelihood. As for the Hereafter, your life does not require you to utilise any means, and the moment something comes into your mind in paradise, you will find it materialized in front of you without having to move, plough, sow or engage in any toil. No matter the level of advancement in this world, you can never get to the point where your ideas materialize in front of your eyes in the same instant without any effort. The earth is a place in which you enjoy and gather whatever your skills allow you to. On the other hand, in the Hereafter, you will receive the blessings that Allah *Glorified is He* has allowed for you according to your righteousness.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...therein to abide as long as the heavens and the earth endure – unless thy Lord wills it otherwise.’ (*Hud*: 108) It is as if Allah excluded some people from this abiding in the Hereafter. ‘Now as for those who, by their deeds, will have brought wretchedness upon themselves, they shall live in the fire, where they will have nothing but moans and sobs to relieve their pain, abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure – unless thy Lord wills it otherwise.’ (*Hud*: 106-107)

That is, there is a way into paradise and a way into hell. As soon as a person is judged, he goes either to paradise or to hell. If the one judged is a hypocrite or a disbeliever, his eternity will begin from the moment he enters

hell and abides therein. If the one judged is a sinful believer, he will go to hell until his sins are expiated and then enter paradise.

So, the ones who enter the hell-fire will be of two kinds. There are those who will spend eternity there, namely the hypocrites and disbelievers. Then there are those who will stay there temporarily, namely the sinful believers. The stay of the sinful believers in hell will be incomplete, compared to that of the disbelievers. As for the believers who have done good deeds, they will enter paradise from the start and abide therein, whilst the sinful believers will only enter paradise after they have first been requited for their sins. Thus, the sinful believers' stay in Paradise will be incomplete. This is due to the period they missed because they will not enter it immediately after the Reckoning. Similarly, their stay in hell-fire because they will not abide therein forever.

Allah *Glorified is He* says pleasant are the '...dwellings in the gardens of perpetual bliss ('Adn)' (*at-Tawba*: 72); the dwellings of the believers in paradise will be in private gardens. The word 'Adn means 'perpetual bliss'. It is derived from the root *a-d-n*, from which the verb 'Adana (to reside) is derived. Therefore, they will be in gardens of permanent residence, as there is a difference between staying in a hotel, for example, where your existence is temporary, and residing somewhere forever.

When Allah *Glorified is He* gives believers glad tidings of something, He always wants us to remember that these things are related to His power. Things are always proportional to the power of their maker. When a poor man builds a house, the house will be humble, consisting of mere walls that provide him with cover. However, when a very wealthy man builds a house, it will be a huge palace. If the Creator of all existence makes something, it will be done in accordance with His Omnipotent Power. He is the One Who has power over everything, and everything He intends goes in accordance with His will.

So, to abide in the blissful gardens of paradise is to abide forever, and these gardens contain such pleasure that no resident would ever want to leave them because the Gardens of 'Adn are the utmost height of paradise, and there exists nothing better than them. A person only desires to leave a place when he has no desire for what it contains. If the contents of the gardens of perpetual bliss could elicit any boredom, Allah *Glorified is He* would not have described them in this way.

For pleasure to be perceived, a source of bliss must be created into existence by Allah *Glorified is He*. There must be an object that gives this pleasure, namely paradise itself. Finally, there must be someone to enjoy this bliss, namely the believers, men and women. Whoever obeys Allah *Glorified is He* desiring to attain His blessings in the Hereafter will receive this pleasure. Further than that, there are believers who obey Allah *Glorified is He* simply for Allah's sake because He alone deserves to be worshipped and obeyed. In the Hereafter, these believers will experience sublime honour, love and pleasure, in their meeting with Allah *Glorified is He* the Creator of all pleasures.

Therefore, every person will get what they worked for. Some people will worship Allah *Glorified is He* more than He has obliged them to striving to constantly meet with Allah *Glorified is He*. They were vigilant in their prayers by night reciting the Quran and praying while others slept, remaining diligent in working to improve their life and the lives of others and doing this solely for the sake of Allah *Glorified is He*. If you join them, you will deserve the highest level of paradise. There, you will be in the company of Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah says, 'Some faces on that Day will be bright with happiness, looking up towards their Lord,' (*al-Qiyama*: 22-23).

Allah *Glorified is He* will reveal Himself to the residents of paradise at given times, but will be present with those who were especially devoted to Him, at all times.⁽¹⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* will show His presence to the residents of paradise and say, 'O denizens of Paradise!' They will say, 'At Your service and Your pleasure, Lord, and all goodness is in Your hands!' Allah *Glorified is He* will ask, 'Are you pleased?' They will reply, 'and why should we not be pleased, our Lord, when You have given us that which You gave no other of our creatures?' He will say, 'Shall I not give you something even better?' They will say, 'Lord, what could be better than this?' He will say, 'I shall bless you with My pleasant acceptance, such that I shall never be displeased with you after that.'⁽²⁾

(1) *Ibn 'Umar narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'The highest ranked among you shall look upon the Face of Allah twice every day.' Narrated by Ahmad (ii. 13) and Abu Nu'aym in the Hilya (v. 87)*

(2) *Narrated by Al-Bukhari (6549) and Muslim (2829) on the authority of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri*

Having informed us about delight, bliss and gardens through which rivers flow, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual bliss, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies that there is something greater than all of this, which is Allah's goodly acceptance, as He says, 'but Allah's goodly acceptance is the greatest [bliss of all] – for this, this is the triumph supreme!' (*at-Tawba*: 72) The one who works for paradise, Allah admits him to paradise; and the one who works for pleasing Allah Himself will live in Allah's company

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes this noble verse saying, 'That is the supreme triumph.' (*at-Tawba*: 72) What does this supreme triumph mean? Many things have been mentioned before these words. There has been mention of gardens through which rivers flow, gardens of perpetual bliss, goodly dwelling and Allah's goodly acceptance; so which one of them is the supreme triumph? We say that they all constitute supreme triumph. The one who attains to prime bliss of paradise gains a supreme triumph, and the one who attains to goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual bliss gains a supreme triumph and the one who attains to Allah's goodly acceptance attains the greatest and supreme triumph.

It is noteworthy that the Quran always connects Allah's divine legislation with the recompense; it does not speak about the recompense in one section and the divine legislation in a separate section. Rather, when it describes paradise and its bliss to us, it guides us to the path which we should follow to get there; and when it describes to us the superior status the believers will enjoy in the Hereafter, it also reminds us of the torment which awaits the hypocrites and the disbelievers so that we shall avoid the path which leads us to hell -- Allah is our refuge.

We therefore find that after telling us of paradise and His goodly acceptance, Allah says:

يَأْتِيهَا النَّارُ جَهَنَّمَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلَظْ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهِمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَيَسَّ الْمَصِيرُ

**Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites,
and be tough with them. Hell is their final home – an evil
destination! [73] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 73)**

After telling us of paradise and what it contains which makes the soul yearn for it, Allah *Glorified is He* then reminds us of what we must do to be

obedient to Allah. Let me illustrate the point here with an example and Allah is surely beyond comparison. When you say to your son, ‘When you become a doctor, you will have a large clinic and then a hospital’, and you tell him of all the good things he can expect in the future, and then you remind him of how it is essential that he study hard so that he can get what he hopes for. By doing this, you attract him to the goal he can attain, and then you change focus to attract him to the means he must utilise to reach this goal.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘O Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be tough with them.’ (*at-Tawba*: 73) Allah *the Exalted* singles out His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* with privilege and glorification by not calling him by his name, and rather saying, ‘O Prophet’, elsewhere saying, ‘O Messenger’.⁽¹⁾

As for all other messengers and prophets of Allah, He calls them with their very names such as Adam, Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses) and `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon them* all, as in (*al-Baqara*: 35, 11: 48, 37: 104-105, 20: 12 and *al-Ma`ida*: 116). Allah *Glorified is He* called every messenger by his name, except for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* whom He called by saying, ‘O Prophet’ or ‘O Messenger’ as a token of honour and appreciation to him *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* tells His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites.⁽²⁾ We know that Allah does not intervene by sending a messenger to earth unless society has become completely corrupted; and we know that the human soul was made to instinctively love goodness. Therefore, if one is not driven by one’s whims, one does what is good and loves it. On the contrary, when one is driven by one’s own whim, it will veil him from goodness and open the doors of evil to him. A person might obey his own whim in some way and then come to his senses and reproach himself for what he has done; this is the ‘self-reproaching soul’ which reproaches one for doing sin and incites him to do good. But

(1) In the Quran, Allah called His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the phrase ‘O Prophet’ 13 times, and twice with the phrase ‘O Messenger’.

(2) *Al-Qurtubi* quotes Ibn `Abbas as saying, commenting on this verse, ‘This is a command for the disbelievers to be fought with the sword, and the hypocrites to be fought with the tongue, with rebuke and resoluteness. (*Tafsir Al-Qurtubi*, vol. 4, p. 3129).

there is also a soul in which all the impulses to goodness have been suppressed so that it does evil without regret, and this soul becomes so evil that it turns into the 'soul which enjoins evil'. It does not suffice itself with doing evil, but rather, it commands and attracts others to do evil. There are different categories of the human soul: there is the soul which finds peace in following Allah's Way and obeying Him; this is the 'soul at peace', to which Allah *Glorified is He* gives glad tidings that it will be admitted to paradise along with Allah's true worshippers. (*al-Fajr*: 27-29) If the 'soul at peace' and the 'self-reproaching soul' exist, then the society is doing well because the soul at peace obeys and enjoins obedience, and the self-reproaching soul reproaches itself for sinning. Every believer has a weak point, and so if a believer weakens, his fellow believer rushes to reproach him for his weakness and correct his conduct. As weak points differ from person to person, we find that society is on the right track when there are those who point out evils and forbid them. Allah *Glorified is He* describes those people as those who believe in Him, do good and cooperate with one another for prevailing truth and show patience in this respect. (*al-'Asr*: 3)

But when all souls become corrupt so that there is no one who enjoins what is right and forbids what is wrong and, on the contrary, you find people who enjoin what is wrong and forbid what is right, at this point Allah *Glorified is He* intervenes to return truth to its rightful position in the world.

Allah *Glorified is He* does not intervene when there exist souls at peace who adhere to Allah's way and enjoin obedience, or self-reproaching souls, whether individually or collectively, who reproach and upbraid those who commit sin. But when society becomes completely steeped in corruption so that there is no longer anyone who enjoins what is right and forbids what is wrong and the few good people who remain are unable to do anything, the messengers of Allah come to bring back Allah's Way so that the life of society will be returned to order.

When one of Allah's Messengers comes, he knows that he has only been sent because corruption has filled the world and that the corrupt people are the majority and enjoy all the influence and power benefitting from the corruption and deviance which has saturated society. When these people are faced with

the call of truth, they will not simply stand aside and make way for it, but they will wage war against whoever conveys the message of truth to them. In such a case, the messenger must stand firm in their faces, and strive against them.

The verb *jahada* (to strive hard) is in the morphological form *fa`ala* which implies a reciprocity, like the word *sharaka* which means to share with someone, or the word *qatala* which means to fight with someone. So, there must be reciprocity between the messenger and his followers on one side, and the leaders of disbelief and corruption in society on the other.

The messenger and those who believe in his teachings must be prepared to be harmed by those who do not believe in these teachings; for the disbelievers benefit from the corruption that exists. It is natural then that, for this benefit to continue, the disbelievers must stand in the way of those who convey the teachings of Allah *Glorified is He* and resist them to ensure the preservation of the state of affairs which allows their falsehood to remain unchecked. Allah *Glorified is He* alerts His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* here of the reality of those disbelievers who benefit from corruption, and tells him that they will wage war against him. Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* does not say to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Unite with them’, but rather, He said, ‘Strive hard against the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites’ (*at-Tawba*: 73). That is, be firm against them in battle. There are many Quranic verses in which Allah commands His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers to have steadfast patience in battle, for to strive means to confront, and therefore Allah *Glorified is He* commands people to show patience.

But suppose that my enemy is also patient in battle: if I am patient and my enemy is also patient, then we will be equal. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* orders the believers to be more steadfast than the others. (*Al-‘Imran*: 200) This means that if your enemy confronts you with patience, then your patience must be even stronger than his so that you defeat him with patience and fortitude. Allah orders his Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to stand patiently against the disbelievers and hypocrites with those who believe in his message at his side. The forces of faith must confront the forces of disbelief and hypocrisy. A disbeliever is the one who denies faith with his heart and announces it as much with his tongue, whilst the hypocrite is the one who

disbelieves in his heart but claims to be a believer and this is the one of whom we must be especially cautious, for as we do not know his identity we cannot guard against his evil as we can with the disbeliever. A hypocrite might backstab us, whilst we trust him and feel secure with him and this makes the blow he can strike deadlier.

Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that the enmity he will face while conveying Allah's teachings will come from two categories of people: disbelievers and hypocrites. The hypocrite is the difficult enemy because he mixes with us while we are unaware of his reality. Despite this, hypocrisy is a powerful proof of the truth of Allah's teachings because only the strong are infiltrated hypocritically; no one seeks to infiltrate the weak.

That is why there were no hypocrites around Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he was still in Mecca before his emigration to Medina. In Mecca, Muslims were a weak minority and were subjected to torment and persecution. There was nothing to attract anyone to infiltrate them because there would have been nothing to gain from this infiltration, but rather, anyone who sympathised with them would have been subjected to the same torment and persecution. When a hypocrite acts as though he believes in something which he does not, he does this to gain some type of personal benefit for himself.

Things were different after Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* emigrated to Medina. Hypocrites emerged after Islam had gained its own state and power. At this point, the hypocrites falsely claimed to have faith to use the power of the Muslims to their own ends. So, hypocrisy is a defect in the hypocrite, but at the same time it is a proof of the power of the believer whom the hypocrite dissembles.

We observe that Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the disbelievers before the hypocrites in this verse, whilst in other verses He mentions the hypocrites first.⁽¹⁾ As we know, the conflict with the disbelievers came first. In the early years of Prophet Muhammad's call to Islam, there were no hypocrites as there

(1) Such as (*an-Nisa'*: 140 and *at-Tawba*: 86).

were only believers and disbelievers. The struggle against the disbelievers came about in stages, not all at once. The first stage of the struggle was to struggle with arguments; for in the beginning, the believers were a weak minority without the power to face such a large number of disbelievers. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would present the teachings of the faith with arguments to convince the mind, that perhaps some minds would wake up to the truth and believe in Allah's teachings. He would ask them, for example: Who created the heavens and the earth?

When a disbeliever pondered this in his mind, he found that no one claimed – or could claim – that he created the heavens and the earth, so the only possible answer is that it is Allah who created them.⁽¹⁾ Why? This is because man, by nature, may claim that he owns anything, even if it is not his, but he never denies ownership of what is rightfully his. An inventor or manufacturer of anything will never deny that he invented it or made it, but rather, he wants the whole world to know that he invented it or made it. Therefore, you cannot find anything beneficial in the world, however trivial it is, save that we know its history where it came from and who invented it, discovered it or made it. Examples of this are what we studied in school about the discoverer of electricity, the inventor of the first electric light bulb, the one who developed this science and likewise the ones who invented the aeroplane and we know about how the notion of flight began with Abbas ibn Firnas⁽²⁾ who attempted to fly using large wings, which was the beginning.

So, for everything beneficial in the world, we know who discovered, made or invented it. If this is true for man's limited creations, then what about the universe itself? When we ask who made the sun, does not its maker deserve to be known to us, especially given that we know who invented the electric light bulb and brought it into our lives?

We have been greatly celebrating the inventor of the electric lamp which lights a small space for a period of time and large factories were built to

(1) This is clearly stated in (*Luqman*: 25).

(2) 'Abbas Abu Al-Qasim ibn Firnas ibn Wirdas Al-Takurini, also known as 'Abbas ibn Firnas, was an Andalusian polymath: an inventor, physician, chemist, engineer, Andalusian musician and Arabic poet (Wikipedia).

produce this lamp, then should we not know who made the sun which lights half of earth all at once? This sun, which has been shining for millions of years without ever once going out and which has never required any maintenance in all this time, must have had a maker whose strength and power commensurate with this miracle which we see, whether with respect to its light, the characteristics of this light or the precision of its design. The sun never rises even a second late or a second early. Its maker must have enough power to produce such a magnificent creation.

So, when a messenger comes and tells us that it is Allah who created the sun, then this is either true, in which case we must all accept that Allah is the Creator and the Maker; or otherwise it is not true, in which case we say: why did not someone else claim to have created it?

However, the precision and miraculous nature of creation, which no human power can ever emulate either individually or collectively, proves that it could have been no one other than Allah *Glorified is He* who created it.⁽¹⁾ Until someone else comes and claims that he created the sun – and no one ever will, Allah *Glorified is He* is the Only Creator of the universe and no one can dispute this.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to people that the Creator of the earth, the sun, the heavens and the universe is Allah *Glorified is He* no one else claimed that he had created any of this. This confirms that what the Prophet has said is true and it also confirms that the One Who made this universe has infinite strength and infinite power and, therefore, it is more proper to worship Him than to worship the statues and Gods which the idolaters worship.

Afterwards, Allah informs His Prophet *peace and blessing be upon him* to logically question them: Have you yourselves been created from nothing or have they created themselves? (*at-Tur*: 35)

(1) Nimrod, King of Shinar, claimed that he was Allah and argued with Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did not ask him to produce something similar to the sun, but he challenged him to make it only rise from the west instead of east, but Nimrod failed. (*al-Baqara*: 258)

If the answer is, ‘neither one nor the other’, then there must have been a Creator and a Maker. Then if a messenger comes and tells us that the universe’s Creator and our Creator is Allah, then we must believe him because no one else has claimed, nor could anyone ever claim, to have created this universe or to have created himself. Let us draw a logical example to illustrate this point. If we all sit together somewhere and then after we leave, a wallet is found and the host asks all those who were present about it. If they all say it is not their wallet except for one person, this means that the wallet belongs to him because he is the only one who claimed this and no one disputed it.

When it comes to the creation of the heavens and the earth and the creation of man, no one would dare to dispute Allah *Glorified is He* and claim that he created them. So, it is indisputably true that Allah is the Creator. This is the struggle of argumentation which uses logic to convince those who have rational intellects, or those who hear and employ their minds. Having proved that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator and the Originator, we may then ask: Who is best placed to give man a way of guidance for life on earth? We must all know that the one best placed to give man a way of guidance on earth is his Creator and Originator, just as we are sure that the manufacturer of any device is the one best suited to give the instructions for its use since he knows best what is good for it and what is bad for it.

For example, when one’s wristwatch malfunctions, one brings it to a watch mender and calls for a refrigerator repairman if one’s refrigerator breaks down. We always call on the experts who have studied all the details of how to repair particular devices and every repairman refers to the maintenance manual written by the device’s manufacturer in which he specified what is good for it and what is bad for it. One never calls for a carpenter to repair a television.

Since Allah *Glorified is He* has given us a way of guidance, we must follow it because He is the Originator of this universe and our Originator as well; He knows what is good and what is bad for us.

If the struggle of argumentation fails, Allah *Glorified is He* then orders, ‘And be tough with them.’ (*at-Tawba*: 73) Why should Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* be tough with them? He should be tough to clarify the fate that awaits them. As disbelievers are keen on enjoying all

pleasures of this worldly life and fear lest they may miss them, since they do not believe in the Hereafter, Allah orders His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to warn them of the Hereafter and of the torment that awaits them, saying to them: You are not immortal in this world, and there awaits you in the Hereafter great horror.

On the contrary, the believers know that this worldly life will be followed by a Hereafter and a Paradise, which is why we find that a believer said to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at one battle, 'Invoke Allah for me that I be martyred, O Messenger of Allah!', and another said, 'Is there nought between me and Paradise save that I fight these people and they kill me?' The Messenger of Allah told him that indeed this was so, whereupon the man threw aside the dates he had been eating and rushed into the battle and was martyred. This is the true meaning of faith. Had the believing man not been completely certain that he would go on to bliss beyond all bliss, he would not have rushed to battle in search of martyrdom. As believers welcome martyrdom with this bravery, their deepest souls are filled with pure faith and obedience to Allah's commands. Their absolute conviction that Paradise exists encourages them to seek martyrdom. On the other hand, we know that the fate of the disbelievers is hell. This is how we understand Allah's words, 'And be tough with them' (*at-Tawba*: 73), that is, warn them of the terrible torment that awaits them, that they might come to their senses. An Arab poet says:

Have patience, and if it succeeds not, then give a threat;
 And if it succeeds not, then to implement it will succeed.
 Nothing less than the sharp edge of a sword
 Will straighten the neck of those who stray.
 This is the cure for every ignoramus' sickness,
 And the other is the cure for the intelligent man's disease.

So, there are those who only need logical arguments to come to believe. But to those who still do not believe we say, 'Allow the teachings of the truth to be proclaimed to all people and you are free to choose whether to believe or not. Moreover, if you want to live within the Islamic community, then you

are welcome, whether you believe or not, for Allah *Glorified is He* states clearly in the Quran that people are given free will either to believe or disbelieve in Prophet Muhammad'. (*al-Kahf*: 29)

Know that it is necessary that all those who embrace Islam be convinced with it and convinced that it is the true religion. Those who do not believe but still live in the Islamic community have complete freedom to follow their own beliefs, but the public life must be in accordance with Allah's way. As long as the rites of Islam and its teaching are prevalent in the community, then let whoever wants to believe, let him believe and whoever wants to disbelieve, let him disbelieve.

Allah is man's Creator and the One Who made him successor on earth. Therefore, He is protective of His creatures. It is just as though you take an artwork and spoil it in the presence of the one who crafted it. In this case, this person will get profoundly irritated and angry and will be quick to punish you.

When Allah *Glorified is He* sees someone corrupting His creation and trying to break it, Allah *Glorified is He* is jealously protective of His creation, for Allah created us with free will and for the Reckoning to be fair, Allah's Message shall be honestly and intact communicated to all people. When the call is conveyed, then Prophet Muhammad's mission comes to an end, and it is then the turn of the individual to choose whether to believe or not. Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* told His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to strive against the disbelievers and hypocrites. Allah ordered him to begin with proofs and arguments and if proofs do not work and disbelievers tried to oppose the call militarily, then they shall be prevented to do so militarily. Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* orders His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to be tough with them and not be lenient with them because lenience may tempt them to sin. For example, if someone commits theft and you let him go unpunished, this might tempt him, and even others, to steal, but to punish the crime, even once, is a deterrent and a protection for all society. That is why we find that punishing murder with execution prevents further murder; when you take a murderer and execute him publicly, this deters other people from considering murder or committing it. So, by punishing, we protect society from becoming inundated with crime.

Some superficial people may say, 'Does a thief really deserve to have his hand amputated'? We say to them, 'Indeed yes, because amputating one person's hand protects society from the crime of theft. The goal of this action is not then that a hand be amputated but rather that no one steals'. When the person is found guilty of committing the crime and the punishment is set for him, beware of allowing mercy to prevent you from implementing the punishment, for if you succumb to mercy at this point, you are encouraging others to commit the crime. That is why after He has clearly stated the punishment of a fornicator⁽¹⁾, he orders believers not to let compassion with them keep you from carrying out the punishment set out by Allah *Glorified is He. (an-Nur: 2)*

Despite this, the debate about punishments in Islam continues unabated.⁽²⁾ We say to those who engage in such debate: Is there any society in which there is no criminalisation or punishment? Consider even the non-religious societies, do they not have crimes and punishments? Every society protects itself by stipulating the actions that are deemed criminal and assigning punishments for them. There can be no punishment without criminalisation, and no criminalisation without a text.

So, every state and every society must have punishments, otherwise life would become chaotic and it would be impossible to live in security. If even

(1) *The punishment of an unmarried fornicator is to be flogged one hundred lashes. As for a married adulterer, his punishment is to be stoned to death. 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab said, 'Allah sent His Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him with the truth and revealed to him the Book, the Quran. Among the revealed verses were the verses of stoning to death which we recited and understood. Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him carried out stoning to death and so did we. I fear that people may come after the passage of time and say, 'we find no mention of stoning to death in the Book of Allah and, in this way, they will violate an obligation. Stoning to death is stated in the Book of Allah as a punishment for the married person who is proven to have committed adultery or due to pregnancy outside the limits of lawful marriage or confession.' Narrated by Malik in his Al-Muwatta', vol. 2, p. 823*

(2) The Quran and *Sunna* have affirmed that there are certain specific punishments for certain specific crimes, namely: Fornication, false accusations of fornication, stealing, (public) drunkenness, unjust war, apostasy and public licentiousness. The purpose of this is to protect, in society, the sanctity of religion, sanity, property, honour and life. Each one of these crimes must be proven according to exacting standards before they may be punished. Details of this may be found in the relevant sections of the works of jurisprudence.

the ruler of any small nation establishes laws of crime and punishment, although he does not own that which he rules, would not Allah, Who is the real Ruler, also stipulate the actions He deems to be crimes and legislate appropriate punishments for these crimes. If Allah *Glorified is He* has ordained the amputation of the hand, which He Himself has created, He willed this to prevent millions of hands from seizing the property of others.

Therefore, there must not be too long interval between the time where a crime occurs and the implementation of the punishment. This is because when the process of litigation and judicial proceedings take a very long time, this places people into great hardship and leads the people to forget all about the crime and begin to feel pity and mercy for the criminal. Yet, if the punishment were to be implemented right after the crime was committed, no one would seek to be lenient with the criminal.

Back to the verse under discussion; Allah's saying, 'Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be tough with them. Hell is their final home— an evil destination!' (*at-Tawba*: 73) We have seen how the disbelievers should be struggled against, but how should we struggle against the hypocrites when they act as though they are believers?

We say that to strive against them means to punish them for their sins.⁽¹⁾ The hypocrites would commit sins and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would then ask them about this and they would deny it, so he would leave them. Allah *Glorified is He* here made it clear to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: Be tough with them if they commit sin. In this chapter of *at-Tawba*, Allah states that the hypocrites swore false oaths about many things, as in (*at-Tawba*: 56, 62 and 74) and in (*al-Mujadala*: 14). It is as though every time they swore an oath, Prophet Muhammad *peace and*

(1) *Al-Hasan Al-Basri said that this verse means, 'Strive against the hypocrites by inflicting prescribed legal punishments on them and by rebuking them. Most of those who were punished by the prescribed legal punishments were hypocrites.' Abu Bakr ibn Al-'Arabi responded to this by saying that, on the contrary, the sinner is not a hypocrite. Rather, a hypocrite is the one who conceals hypocrisy, not judged according to the sins that one may visibly commit. Moreover, the stories of those who were punished by the prescribed legal punishments (at the time of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him) clearly show that they were not hypocrites. See Al-Qurtubi's exegesis (vol. 4, 3129).*

blessings be upon him believed them and pardoned them, so Allah exposed them as liars and told His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to be adamant about punishing them. But did the Messenger of Allah's adamant stance with them absolve them from punishment in the Hereafter? We say no, as they must be treated adamantly in this worldly life to preserve the security of life's motions and for every hypocrite to know that he is exposed before Allah, but this does not absolve him from punishment in the Hereafter.

Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Hell is their final home— an evil destination!' (*at-Tawba*: 73) It is possible that any punishment might not actually be carried out in full as it is scheduled, since the one who punishes might choose to forgive, or a person might be released before his sentence is completed for medical grounds, or for having served three-quarters of his sentence or the like. But there will be no release from the punishment of the hypocrites and this is a means of making them fear it, for when one becomes certain that the punishment will be eternal, one will fear to commit the crime.

Allah *Glorified is He* and then gives us another example of how the hypocrites swore false oaths, saying:

يَخْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ مَا قَالُوا وَلَقَدْ قَالُوا كَلِمَةَ الْكُفْرِ وَكَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِسْلَامِهِمْ وَهُمْ أَوَّاهٌ
يَنَالُونَ وَمَا نَقَمُوا إِلَّا أَنْ أَغْنَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ فَإِنْ يَتُوبُوا يَكُ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَإِنْ يَسْتَوَلَوْا
يُعَذِّبَهُمُ اللَّهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٧٤﴾

They swear by God that they did not, but they certainly did speak words of defiance and became defiant after having submitted; they tried to do something, though they did not achieve it,— being spiteful was their only response to God and His Messenger enriching them out of His bounty.

They would be better off turning back [to God]: if they turn away, God will punish them in this world and the Hereafter, and there will be no one on earth to protect or help them [74] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 74)

In this noble verse, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us of the series of false oaths that the hypocrites swore. They swore that they had said nothing wrong, and making Allah the object of their oath, even though they had spoken words of disbelief, and had disbelieved after having professed with their tongues to have accepted Islam, and this was only a claim.

There is a story behind this noble verse which took place during the events of the Battle of Tabuk in which the Muslims went to fight the Byzantines. This was the first battle between the Muslims and non-Arabs. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called on the believers to fight at a time of intense heat; a time when everyone preferred to sit in private gardens beneath the palm-trees in the clement breeze and no one liked to come out from under the shade.

When Prophet Muhammad called on the believers to strive in Allah's Cause and to set out to fight the Byzantines, the hypocrites proffered false excuses in order not to join fighting. The Quran continued to be revealed with words concerning those who did not join the army for two whole months. A man named Al-Julas ibn Suwayd said, 'By Allah, if what Muhammad says about those who stayed home from the battle is true, then we are worse than donkeys!' Upon hearing this, 'Amir ibn Qays *Al-Ansari Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Indeed the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke truly, and you are worse than donkeys!' Upon this a group of hypocrites assaulted 'Amir *Allah be pleased with him* because Al-Julas ibn Suwayd was a leader among his people. Thereafter, 'Amir *Allah be pleased with him* went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and told him what had happened, so the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* sent for Ibn Suwayd and asked him about it, but the latter swore by Allah that what 'Amir *Allah be pleased with him* said had never happened. Since he had sworn by Allah, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* left him unpunished. At this point, 'Amir *Allah be pleased with him* raised his hands towards the sky and said, 'O Allah, I ask you to reveal unto Your servant and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a confirmation of who is telling the truth (in this matter), and who is lying!' Upon hearing this, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Amen'⁽¹⁾. As soon they (Prophet Muhammad and 'Amir) ended their supplications, Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the verse under discussion which reads, 'They swear by Allah that they did not, but they certainly did speak words of defiance and became defiant after having submitted; they tried to do something, though they did not achieve it.' (*at-Tawba*: 74) In this way, this noble verse gave the final word on the matter

(1) See the exegesis of Ibn Kathir, (vol. 2, pp. 371-373).

and revealed who was telling the truth and who was lying regarding what `Amir ibn Qays *Allah be pleased with him* said, and what al-Julas had denied.

Furthermore, the noble verse went even further than that part of the incident that was known and mentioned something that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had not been told. Allah *Glorified is He* said, 'They tried to do something, though they did not achieve it.' This was because Allah *Glorified is He* wanted the hypocrites to know that He would always tell His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* what they concealed. Had the verse only been concerned with the event of the false oath, the hypocrites would have said, 'Muhammad knows nothing more than what `Amir has told him'. But there were things they said that `Amir did not hear such as the plot they developed in order to assassinate Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as he passed through Al-`Aqaba, which is a group of tall rocks that impeded a path. People used to traverse these rocks either by passing through tunnels under them or by climbing on top of them and then down the other side.

The hypocrites planned to push Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from the top of the rocks so that he would fall into the valley.⁽¹⁾ As Hudhayfa ibn Al-Yaman became aware of the plot as he walked behind Prophet Muhammad's camel, the hypocrites fled. Thus, they did not get what they wanted, just as they did not get what they wanted when Prophet Muhammad

(1) *There were twelve men who died whilst waging war against Allah and His Messenger. Hudhyfa ibn Al-Yaman said, 'I was holding the reins of Prophet Muhammad's camel and leading it, and `Ammar was driving it. When we arrived at Al-`Aqaba, we found twelve men, mounted and waiting to confront him. I told Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him that they were there, and he called out to them, whereupon they turned and fled. Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said to us, "Do you know who they were?" "No, O Messenger of Allah", we said, "their faces were veiled, but we recognised their mounts." He said, "They shall be hypocrites until the Day of Resurrection. Do you know what they meant to do?" "No', we said. "They meant to fall upon The Messenger of Allah at Al- `Aqaba," he said, "and cast him from it." "O Messenger of Allah,' we said, 'will you not send word to their kinsmen that each tribe must send you their heads?" "No," he said, "for I would hate for the Arabs to say to one another that Muhammad fought alongside people, and then when Allah gave him victory by means of them he set about killing them." Then he said, "O Allah, send (Dabila) upon them!" We said, 'What is the (Dabila), O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "A burning flame that strikes a man's heartstrings and kills him." Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in (Dala'il An-Nubuwwa) (v. 5, pp. 260-261)*

peace and blessings be upon him emigrated to Medina when they had been planning to make `Abdullah ibn Ubayy their king, but the coming of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not allow them to do so.

It is also said that they plotted to kill `Amir ibn Qays *Allah be pleased with him* because he told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* what Al-Julus ibn Suwayd had said, but they were unable to do so.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'being spiteful was their only response to Allah and His Messenger enriching them out of His bounty.' (*at-Tawba*: 74) As we know, richness is not something to criticise. Therefore, the fact that they criticize it here showcases their corrupted natures and unfair judgements, for the wealth and security given to them was not a flaw which could be criticised, but rather, it naturally should have inspired love and self-sacrifice for the sake of faith.

Allah *Glorified is He* is clarifying to them: Why do you put Muhammad down? What do you hate about him? Do you hate that he has brought you honour and wealth?

Before Prophet Muhammad's emigration, the ones who later hated to see him come to Medina were paupers who owned nothing, but after they dissembled and pretended to enter Islam, they took battle-spoils and Allah enriched them.⁽¹⁾ Indeed, when a servant of Al-Julus ibn Suwayd was killed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave him an indemnity of twelve thousand dirhams. So, because of him *peace and blessings be upon him* everyone was enriched. Is this something they should have hated? Of course not, but it shows how corrupt their natures were and how unjust their thinking was. As long as Allah *Glorified is He* enriched them by sending them His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* it was not right for them to put the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* down on this account, but rather, they should have praised him for it and been keen to believe in him and succour him.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says 'out of His bounty', this draws our attention to the rhetorical style of the Noble Quran in this verse. Allah *Glorified is He* says,

(1) Al-Kalbi said, 'Before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came they lived a meagre existence; neither mounting horses nor plundering spoils. Yet, once Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to them, they were enriched with battle-spoils.' Related by Al-Qurtubi in his exegesis (vol. 4, p. 3132)

‘Allah... and His Messenger’ (in the Arabic these words directly follow one another: *Allah wa Rasuluhu*); the usual human way to proceed, according to the rules of Arabic, would have been to say, ‘out of their bounty, but He says, ‘out of His bounty’ because Allah cannot be paired with anyone else, even with Muhammad ibn `Abdullah *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Therefore, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard a man giving a sermon and saying, ‘Whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger will be saved, and whosoever disobeys them will be damned’, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘How ill-fit are you to preach to the people!’ This is because the preacher used the plural pronoun ‘they’ to refer to Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and this signifies some sort of equality.

Upon this the preacher stopped and said, ‘what then should I say, O Messenger of Allah?’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘Say, “And whosoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger will be damned.”’⁽¹⁾ Do not say, ‘disobeys them and do not place Allah in a plural or a dual with anyone else.’ That is why we find that the Glorious Quran did not say, ‘Allah and His Messenger enriched them out of their bounty’, but rather ‘out of His bounty’ because there is only one source of bounty. Although Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has bounty, its original source is the bounty of Allah. In any case, it is not permissible to mention or set someone equal to Allah. That is why we find that the Glorious Quran mentions the singular pronoun referring to Allah Alone, after mentioning both Allah *Glorified is He* and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. (at-Tawba: 62).

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* uses the singular pronoun to refer to His pleasure because Allah’s Pleasure and the Prophet Muhammad’s pleasure

(1) *The like of it is what is narrated on the authority of `Udayy ibn Hatim that while a person was giving a sermon in the presence of Prophet Muhammad, he said, ‘Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger will be guided and whoever disobeys them will be astray.’ Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, ‘How ill-fit are you to preach to the people! But rather say, ‘and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger will go astray’. It is narrated by Muslim in his Sahih (870), Ahmad (4/256, 379) and Abu Dawud (1099).*

intersect; anything that pleases Allah shall please Prophet Muhammad. This clearly indicates that when Allah's Name is mentioned, it must not be grouped with anyone else in a pronoun.

After exposing the hypocrites and what is in their hearts, Allah *Glorified is He* did not completely deny any chance of attaining His Mercy; for He is Merciful with His servants and therefore opens for them the door to repentance by saying, 'They would be better off turning back [to Allah].' Opening the door to repentance is a mercy and to people go with their lives; for had Allah closed the door to repentance, everyone who commits a sin would be inevitably destined for hell and once a man knows he is destined for the torment of hell no matter what good he may do, he would inevitably steep himself in sin and increase his evil-doing. It would make no difference whether he commits one sin or a whole legion of sins. But if a man who sins knows that the door to repentance is open, he will not steep himself in sin. Moreover, it is the society which really suffers from sins and evil acts committed by a person. If there is, for example, a dangerous thief, the whole of society suffers from his acts of theft and if there is a mass murderer, the ones who suffer from his crimes are the members of society whom he murders.

So, opening the door to repentance is a mercy for all society because it does not compel the criminal to steep himself in his crimes. If you examine this noble verse, you see that after Allah *Glorified is He* made clear the truth and told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers about things which the hypocrites had been concealing, He then opened the door to repentance for the hypocrites. Upon this, Al-Julas ibn Suwayd, the then leader of the hypocrites, said, 'O Messenger of Allah, as Allah gives me a chance to repent, then I swear by Allah that I did say what 'Amir told you about me. Surely, 'Amir told the truth about me.' Al-Julas ibn Suwayd repented and became a true Muslim.⁽¹⁾

As for those to whom Allah gives the chance to repent, but they refuse it, He, says of them, 'If they turn away, Allah will punish them in this world and the Hereafter, and there will be no one on earth to protect or help them.' (*at-Tawba*: 74). According to this verse, the requital of those who refuse to

(1) See Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani's *Al-'Isaba*, biography no. 1172.

repent and admit their wrongs will be grievous suffering not only in the Hereafter but also in this worldly life. The suffering in this world will be either to be killed or to be exposed and the suffering in the Hereafter will be to inhabit the lowest level of hell.

But some people might misunderstand Allah's saying, 'And there will be no one on earth to protect or help them.' as meaning that this suffering only applies to this worldly life, but the fact of the matter is that there is an earth in this world and there will be another earth in the next world too; the earth of the Resurrection, as Allah clearly indicates in (*Ibrahim*: 48), that the earth shall be changed into another earth and so shall the heavens. The word 'earth' gives us two images, one applying to this world and the other to the Hereafter.

Moreover, this statement of Allah explains to us that the word *wali* (to protect or help) means the one who is close to you so that you can seek his aid at times of hardship and peril. At such times, you only seek the aid of one in whose succour you have hope, or one who is stronger than you. As for the one who gives succour (*nasr*), he is the one from whom you seek help. He might be distant from you and have no close connection with you. So, neither the one who is close to you, nor the stranger from whom you seek aid and succour will be able to do anything for you; for there is no salvation for the hypocrite or the disbeliever from Allah's punishment.

Allah *Glorified is He* then presents us with another appearance of hypocrisy, saying:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عَاهَدَ اللَّهَ لَئِىْ ءَاتَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ
لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾

There are some among them who pledged themselves to God, saying, 'If God gives us some of His bounty, we shall certainly give alms and be righteous' [75]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 75)

This verse states that from among the hypocrites of whose practices Allah has presented many times in this chapter. The exegetes and narrators have differed in their ascription of who exactly is meant by the words, 'there are

some among them who pledged themselves to Allah'. Some of them say he was Tha'laba ibn Hatib, others say he was Mu'attib ibn Qushayr, others say that it was Al-Jadd ibn Qays and others that it was Hatib ibn Abu Balta'a. The verse could possibly refer to any one of these because Allah *Glorified is He* refers to them in the following verse using the plural pronoun saying, 'Yet when He did give them some of His bounty, they became mean and turned obstinately away.' (*at-Tawba*: 76).

So, as the pronoun is plural, then all these narrations could conceivably be correct since the verse refers to several people. As Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'There are some among them who pledged themselves to Allah', one may ask: how could the hypocrites have made a pact (*'ahd*) with Allah? We say that these hypocrites were treated according to what they claimed with their tongues; they claimed to have embraced Islam and one of them would say, 'I vow to Allah that I will do such-and-such', just as they might attend the prayer and do their best to get a place in the first row. Did their hypocrisy prevent them from performing the outward actions of the prayer? They were not prevented by anyone. In the same way, when they made vows to Allah they did so with their tongues alone.

The occasion of the revelation of this verse⁽¹⁾ is as follows. A poor man from among the people of *Al-Ansar* (the Helpers) went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I am desperately poor, so pray to Allah for me that He may give my wealth.' Out of his great sagacity, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'A little for which you give thanks to Allah is better than a lot which you cannot manage.' But the man insisted, saying, 'Pray to Allah that He may allow me to get rich', so Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed for him and Allah gave him wealth.

Someone might ask: How could Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* assent to pray for a hypocrite? And if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only prayed for him to please him, then how could Allah

(1) The details of the narration of this story were already given above on the commentary on the verse (*at-Tawba*: 53).

answer His Prophet's prayer for a hypocrite? We say: Perhaps it was because the hypocrite wanted to test if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was truly a divine messenger by seeing whether Allah would answer his prayer or not.

When the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made his supplication, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to teach this hypocrite that indeed he truly was the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and if he prayed for anyone Allah would answer the prayer, so this was for the sake of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed for Tha'laba, Al-Jadd ibn Qays or for Hatib ibn Abu Balta'a, Allah answered the prayer of His Messenger and gave the one who asked for the prayer abundant wealth. It is narrated that Tha'laba's wealth increased until his sheep bred so much that the streets of Medina were too small to keep them all, so he took them into the mountains and to the open desert and filled it. His wealth first distracted him from the communal prayer so that he would only attend the Friday prayer. When his wealth increased even more, it also kept him from attending the Friday prayer. This confirms Prophet Muhammad's *peace and blessings be upon him* prediction for the man. So, all of this happened to prove to them the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that he could show them how absurd it was that they falsely claimed to be Muslims.

After all this happened, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked after the man and he was told that he was out in the valley, preoccupied with his wealth. Prophet Muhammad said, 'Woe betide Tha'laba!' and he sent a charity-collector to him;⁽¹⁾ for Tha'laba had made a vow to Allah, and said, 'If Allah gives us some of His bounty, we shall certainly give alms.' (*at-Tawba*: 75)

(1) This is because when the Tha'laba made his vow to give charity, there was not obligation for Muslims to give charity, but rather, they were only commended to do so. (*at-Tawba*: 103). Afterwards, Allah made it obligatory on Muslims to give *zakat* (obligatory alms giving). Nevertheless, Tha'laba refused to pay *zakat*. Allah relates to us in (*al-Baqara*: 246), a similar account which happened to the children of Israel. They called upon their messenger to assign for them a king who would lead them in fighting for the sake of Allah, but when their demand was accepted and fighting was made obligatory upon them, they turned away and disobeyed Allah's Order.

The charity-collector went to him and said, 'Give up the charity which Allah has ordained you should give from your wealth.' He said, 'Is this like the non-Muslim poll-tax?'⁽¹⁾ The collector reminded him, 'You are the one who vowed that if you were given wealth, you would spend in charity and be righteous. Why do you not fulfil your vow?' Tha`laba said to the collector, 'Leave me until I decide what to do.'

When the charity-collector returned to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and told him about Tha`laba's response, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Woe betide Tha`laba!' When Tha`laba knew that a Quranic verse had been revealed about him, he became severely worried and rushed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and presented him the share of *zakat* due on him, but Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not accept it. He began to beseech him again and again to accept it, but the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* would not accept it from him. In doing this, the Prophet meant to affirm that Allah and the poor people are in no need of his wealth.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* passed away, Tha`laba brought all of the shares of *zakat* due on him to Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* but Abu Bakr said, 'It is not fitting that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* refuses something and Abu Bakr accepts it.' When Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* died he presented it to `Umar *Allah be pleased with him* who said the same thing Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* had said. Afterwards, he came to present it to `Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* but he died before he reached him.

The Arabic article *la`in* as well as the letter *lam* which occur in the beginning of the word *lanasaddaqa*n in the Quranic verse (*al-A'raf*: 75) signify that he made an oath to give obligatory alms giving and charity and be righteous should Allah grant him wealth.

(1) The non-Muslim poll-tax (*jizya*) is a tax levied on the people of the Book who live under the protection of the Muslims. It is levied on the people of the Book as a substitute for the *zakat* which is obligatory on Muslims and as a fee for the protection afforded to these people living within the Muslim lands. It must be given by all free adult males of the people of the Book, except for the poor and needy. See Al-Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh As-Sunna*, vol. 3, pp. 112-117.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

فَلَمَّا آتٰهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهِۦٓ بَخِلُوْا بِهٖۤ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٧٦﴾

**Yet when He did give them some of His bounty,
they became mean and turned obstinately away [76]**

(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 76)

Allah gives in two ways. He gives through means, and He gives through bounteous grace. His giving through means occurs when a man works hard at any task so Allah gives him the fruits of his labours whether he is a believer or a disbeliever, obedient or disobedient because he has utilised the means well. That is why we find that some people who deny the existence of Allah live in comfort because they exert their efforts and utilise the means provided by Allah to acquire wealth. As long as they utilise the means well and as they are Allah's servants, and as He is the One Who created them, He therefore guarantees for them that the means they utilise shall serve them to acquire what they aspire for. When the sun rises, the believers and disbelievers as well as the righteous and sinners all benefit from it. Likewise, rain falls onto the earth to benefit all people. In this way, everything on earth serves all people. This is how Allah gives through means.

But Allah *Glorified is He* conceals His gifts of bounteous grace within His gifts of means as is the case when someone is lost and stumbles upon treasure, when a farmer's yield is untouched by winds of storms which could cause it to diminish or when Allah *Glorified is He* blesses him by ensuring that his yield sells well and blesses the provision he earns from it so that he does not spend it on things which squander his wealth. These are all examples of how Allah gives through grace. The gifts of means are given to all people, but the gifts of bounteous grace are exclusively given to the true worshippers of Allah who sincerely devote their actions to Allah and obey Him.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'When He did give them some of His bounty' (*at-Tawba*: 76); this indicates that the provision which comes to them is not only the result of the means they utilise, but rather, it is more than what they may earn due to exertion of their utmost effort. The way in which Tha'laba's sheep increased was not only a natural increase based on his effort, but rather,

there was also a blessing which made the sheep produce so many lambs and made the grass they fed on produce large quantities of milk.

Allah says, ‘When He did give them some of His bounty, they *bakhilu bihi* (became mean)’ (*at-Tawba*: 76). What does *al-bukhl* (mean) refer to in this context? In Arabic, there are many words to describe the action or declining to give charity such as stinginess (*bukhl*), greed (*shuhh*) and stinginess (*kazaza*). All these words mean ‘to decline to give in charity’, but the degrees of the giving and the withholding differ in each. That is, some people only give to those who ask them – this is one degree; other people do not give to everyone who asks them, but only to those who ask in a way that moves them by, for example, saying ‘I am ill’ or ‘my house burned down’; here the petitioner does not only ask, but he gives a reason for asking which might move one’s emotions. Then there are those who give without even being asked.

So, there are three levels of giving in charity. One gives to those whom he deems to be needy without their even asking him. This is one of the acts of worship which draw people nearer to Allah. Allah enlightens the insights of those people so that they give out of the wealth Allah has given to them. Moreover, there are some people who reproach themselves if someone comes and asks them for charity or assistance as they feel guilty that they did not give them before they ask. Once a man went to someone’s house and knocked on the door, so the owner of the house came out and asked him what he wanted. The man asked for money, so the owner of the house went into the house, got some money and gave it to him. Having given the money to the asking person, he went into the house weeping. Noticing the whole story, the wife of the home owner asked him, ‘Why are you weeping, although you gave him what he asked for?’ He replied, ‘It makes me weep that I left him until he was forced to ask.’ That is, he weeps because he did not have the alertness to ask about the people around him to give to the needy without their having to ask of him.

So again, there are many levels of giving in charity. One person gives after being asked, another gives without being asked but rather gives freely from his bounty; that is, he owns a lot and gives from it. Of this category, a person may give half of what he has, dividing up his possessions, or give as

much as he can according to the need of the one who asks. The third level is the one who gives the one who asks him for charity in a way that moves him.

So the question is, who is the stingy one? The worst kind of stinginess is when a man is asked to give in charity and the one who asks gives the reasons which force him to do so, yet his heart remains unmoved; this is the real stinginess. Allah describes those whom He blessed with wealth and still refuse to give charity saying, 'Yet when He did give them some of His bounty, they became mean and turned obstinately away.' (*at-Tawba*: 76) Such people do not refuse to give in charity to the needy, but they also turn away from the one who asks them. A case in point, is the one who turned away when the *zakat* collector came to collect the *zakat* due on him. What he should have done, for example, was to bid the collector sit down welcome him properly and then say, 'We will see what we can do', but instead he turned away and left him.

Allah *Glorified is He* then tells us of the requital which awaits those who behave in this way, saying:

فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهُ بِمَا أَخْلَفُوا اللَّهَ
مَا وَعَدُوهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

Because they broke their promise to God, because of all the lies they told, He made hypocrisy settle in their hearts until the Day they meet Him[77] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 77)

Allah *Glorified is He* explains that He makes the consequence of this action that He causes hypocrisy to take root in their hearts and remain therein until the Day of Resurrection. Because Allah said this, this constitutes a proclamation by Allah that the one who acts in this way (being asked for charity but clings to it stingily and turns away) will never die as a believer. The fact of the matter is that indeed none of these people died as believers. This was the consequence of their having failed to fulfil the vow they made to Allah and because of all the lies they told. It is as though each one of them lied first when he made his vow and then lied again when he said, 'Is this like the non-Muslim poll-tax?', although he knew full well that the *zakat* is one of the Pillars of Islam.

Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ

**Do they not realize that God knows their secrets
and their private discussions? That God knows
all that is hidden? [78] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 78)**

The ‘knowledge’ meant here is to come to know about something of which one was unaware before. In this verse, Allah’s saying, ‘Do they not know?’ includes a question which includes an interrogative particle followed by negation. This also applies to the question included in the chapter of *al-Fil*.

We know that the dialogue which takes place between a speaker and an addressee can take several forms. The first form is that the speaker tells the addressee what he knows; this is called ‘informing’. The second form is that the speaker does not tell the addressee the information, but rather, he makes him tell it himself, such as when one says to another, ‘Was I not kind to you?’ He may say to him, ‘I was kind to you’ so that the information come from him, but he wants to make it stronger by having acknowledgement from the addressee himself. Therefore, he phrases the question in such a way as he is sure that the addressee would be able except to rely to the question in the affirmative by saying, ‘Yes, you were kind to me’.

Therefore, predicate can either be a normal statement with no negation or with negation. It can be posed as a question as well. The strongest way of stating a predicate is to pose it in a form of both a negation and a question, for a mere predicate is given by the speaker himself which means it could either be true or false, while a question requires an answer from the addressee. The addressee will only give the answer which the questioner wants to hear because if the questioner thought that the addressee might answer in a different way than expected, he would not ask in the first place. He would not say, ‘I trust your judgement’ which means that the one saying that knows for sure that there is nothing else true, but what he expects and that anyone who thinks about the subject matter will inevitably conclude that it is true.

Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about hidden thoughts and their secret counsels, which are *sirr* and *najwa* respectively. What are they? A hidden thought is

something that you keep to yourself and do not divulge to anyone. It is not what you divulge secretly to others, for this is a *najwa* (a secret counsel). The root meaning of *najwa* is distance. If it is said that someone is '*bi najwa* from something', it means that he is far away from it. Another root meaning of it is the higher part of a mountain since it is far away from the surface of the ground. When someone wants to tell another something that no one else hears it, he draws him away from others to tell him what he wants or he lowers his voice so that only the one to whom he whispers can hear what he says. That is why they call it *munajat* (intimate discourse) which means speech that even those near cannot hear it because you lower your voice to a level that is not even clear to those near you, as if your voice was remote. So, a hidden thought is what you keep to yourself while a secret counsel is what you secretly divulge to someone without anyone around hearing it.

Apparently, those who refused to spend in charity must have agreed amongst themselves to do so and have spoken about withholding charity after they became wealthy and well-off. They refused to submit to the edict of Islam even though they were always keen to present themselves as though they were even better than real Muslims. They used to always pray in the first row to conceal their hypocrisy.

When Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies to us that they confined a secret to themselves and reveals it, the veil of time and place is being torn asunder. Allah *Glorified is He* informed His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of the content of this secrecy just as He revealed to Him the veil of the past incidents that he has not witnessed, heard from any teacher or read in any book since He was unlettered. Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke of many things he has never seen, heard or read. So how did He know such things? Allah *Glorified is He* who knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth, told him. Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the veil of the future to Him as well. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew about things before they occurred. He had been informed by the One Who holds sway over time, place and over all events. Those future highlights are what it is meant by revealing the veil of future. Allah *Glorified is He* revealed to him the veil of place as well. Therefore, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would tell them about the things they had concealed in their souls. Allah

Glorified is He revealed to His Prophet that they secretly say, 'Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?' (*al-Mujadala*: 8)

Tell me, when one of them hears the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* disclosing what he had told himself, who could possibly reveal this veil to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Undoubtedly, it is the One Who knows all that is secret and what is even more hidden than that. There are no veils that can conceal things from Allah *Glorified is He*. Veils of the unseen are only applied to men. Thus, there are veils of the past, the future, place and time.

Therefore, Knowledge of Allah is not restricted to that of their own affairs only but rather, He knows their hidden thoughts and secret counsels. He is the Lord Who knows fully all the things that are beyond the reach of human perception. He knows the secrets of this one, that one and that one. Thus, the Arabic word '*Allam* expresses a hyperbole as Allah's Knowledge encompasses the secrets of everyone. He even knows what you tried to hide and conceal (*Luqman*: 16). Therefore, nothing escapes His Knowledge.

Allah *Glorified is He* then goes on to highlight another image of the hypocrites and what they do to the believers. He says:

الَّذِينَ يَلْمِزُونَ الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَالَّذِينَ لَا
يَجِدُونَ إِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنْهُمْ سَخِرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٩﴾

It is they who criticize the believers who give freely and those who can only give a little with great effort: they scoff at such people, but it is God who scoffs at them – a painful punishment awaits them [79] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 79)

Allah *Glorified is He* is giving another description of the hypocrites. The Arabic word *lamaz* means to taunt but in an implicit way like a gesture of the eye, the hand, the mouth or the like. There was a group of hypocrites who taunted those believers who volunteered to help collect the poor-due. Some of those hypocrites criticised with words, others with actions while others with gestures. Those who are *mutawwi'in* are the ones who give more than their prescribed duty. Allah *Glorified is He* obliged us, for example, to pray five

times a day. However, some Muslims voluntarily offer five more prayers. Allah *Glorified is He* prescribed 2.5% of wealth as *zakat*, yet there are some who voluntarily give ten percent. Allah *Glorified is He* obliged us to fast Ramadan but there are those who also fast every Monday and Thursday. This is what we call approaching the level of *ihsan*, by drawing near to Allah through observing more of the obligations that Allah has prescribed.

However, when you only carry out what you are obliged to do, you adhere to the way of Allah. A man once asked the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the obligations of Islam and on hearing them he said, 'I will neither make any addition to this nor will I decrease anything from it.' Upon hearing this, the Messenger of Allah remarked, 'He is successful if he proves truthful.'

There are two things that can be said about observing more than what Allah has obliged of the same kinds of actions. Firstly, the servant testifies to the mercy Allah that He obliged him to do far less than He deserves. Secondly, being obedient to Allah has made those obligations easy for a believer and thereby, he enjoys them. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about the prayer, 'give us comfort by it, O Bilal.'⁽¹⁾

The person who is *mutaww'* is the one who does more than what Allah *Glorified is He* has obliged of the same kinds of actions. These are *al-muhsinoon* (doers of good). Allah *Glorified is He* promises them saying, 'Surely those who guard [against evil] shall be in gardens and fountains. Taking what their Lord gives them; surely they were before that, the doers of good. They used to sleep but little in the night. And in the morning, they asked forgiveness. And in their property, was a portion due to him who begs and to him who is denied [good].'^(adh-Dhariyat: 15-19)

The Islamic religion does not oblige the believers to sleep only a little portion of the night and spend the rest praying, nor does it oblige them to pray for forgiveness in the night. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* does not speak of a specific share of wealth that must be given away. That is because a believer gives more than he is obliged to. Here, we might ask, when a believer

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

voluntarily does more than Allah *Glorified is He* obliges him to, does he deserve to be blamed, criticised and taunted? Or does he deserve to be honoured and esteemed? However, the hypocrites have imbalanced standards of judgement. They consider a good deed to be a flaw like when a man donates some of his wealth to the poor and some people mock him saying that he is a fool. A believer who gives a lot of charity spreads the benefit of his wealth throughout society and is cleverer than they are. They spend their money on themselves and use it up, while he gives it in charity and thereby, preserve it.

The cause of revelation of this verse is as follows. 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf *Allah be pleased with him* migrated to Medina and left all his possessions behind in Mecca. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made bonds of brotherhood among the Emigrants and Helpers by assigning every man of the Helpers a man from the Emigrants to share his wealth with.

When 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf came, his assigned brother from the Helpers told him that he wanted to split his wealth with him. He replied, 'May Allah bless your wealth, but direct me to the market.' He went to the market, and Allah *Glorified is He* blessed his trade. He used to divide his profits between charity and his family. One day he came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said that he had made eight thousand dirhams and that he would give four thousand to Allah *Glorified is He* and keep the same amount to his family. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed to Allah to bless what he had given and what he had kept. When 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf *Allah be pleased with him* died, they counted his fortune and there was a dispute about its value. His heirs wanted to please his fourth wife, Tamadur, by giving her eighty thousand *dirhams*. Since she was one of four wives and four wives inherit an eighth of the estate, this means that his total wealth was worth at least two million, five hundred and sixty thousand *dirhams*. 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf *Allah be pleased with him* used only his own money for trade.

When the hypocrites heard about the amount of charity 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf had given away, they said that he had given charity only to show off and take credit. Is ostentation something people can see or is it something known only to Allah *Glorified is He*? 'Asim ibn 'Udayy owned a very fruitful

orchard. He came and gave one hundred loads of dates in charity. The hypocrites swore that he only did this to show off. Another man named Abu 'Qail *Al-Ansari* came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Prophet Muhammad, I spent the other night working and collected two *sa'* (an Arabian measure) of dates. I kept one for my family and brought the other to you as charity.' The hypocrites mocked him and remarked that Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger were doing well without his charity.

They taunted 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf for giving too much and said that he did so ostentatiously and when 'Asim ibn 'Udayy came they said that he was showing off by giving away half of the yield of his orchard. Similarly, when someone who only had a single *sa'* of dates to denote came, they said that Allah and His Messenger can do well without his dates! They, therefore, mocked those who gave a lot and those who gave a little. They should have praised them instead because each one of them gave as much as he could afford and they gave of the bounty which Allah *Glorified is He* gave them, whether a little or a lot.

Therefore, those who mock the believers must be rebuked for having such bad character, as to mock and belittle pious conduct. Their reward was that Allah *Glorified is He* Himself scoffs at them and prepares a grievous punishment for them. To scoff means to mock someone's action. When those hypocrites scoff at the believers, it expresses nothing other than their displeasure at those who do good deeds and their scoffing could only hurt the feelings of benevolent believers. However, when Allah *Glorified is He* scoffs at them, it means, a just requital due to what they themselves did. But, is the scoffing of Allah *Glorified is He* nothing more than an expression of displeasure or is there a requital included?

Apparently, there is also requital from Allah *Glorified is He*. Requital is commensurate to the power of the one who scoffs and there is a huge difference between the Power of Allah *Glorified is He* and the power of men. When they scoffed at the believers for giving a little charity out of what they possessed, Allah *Glorified is He* undertook the task of responding to them and their scoffing. In doing so, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to show us an image of how He defends the devoted believers. In addition, it is Allah Who is going to punish the hypocrites and it would certainly be grievous and humiliating.

We said before that when someone offends another, the person offended returns the offence by punishing him according to his capability, but if he pardons him, we advise the offender not to imagine that this pardon is good for him. In contrary, he who pardons you leaves your judgement up to Allah *Glorified is He* and your punishment therefore, will not be commensurate with the strength and power of the one who pardoned you, but rather, your punishment will be left up to Allah and will be commensurate with the power of Allah.

Therefore, the one who takes revenge and returns the offence only, enlists his own power, while the one who pardons, he enlists the power of Allah *Glorified is He* and there is even a higher level than this prepared for the sinner and for the one who is wronged, for Allah *Glorified is He* is the Lord of both. So, when someone wrongs you, you might return the wrong as according to your power and capability or you might pardon and Allah *Glorified is He* will punish according to His own power and strength.

The person who wrongs you does you good even though he does not intend to do so, how? Suppose that when you come home and find that one of your sons had beaten the other and wronged him, to which side will your heart and your sympathy incline? Your heart will be on the side of the one who had been wronged, and you will try to please him and give him a gift, some money or the like. Hence, the etiquette of Islam is to be kind to who wrongs you, because he thereby, does you a favour without intending to. Allah *Glorified is He* asks you to forgive those who sin against you and reassure you that who scoffs at Muslims, He will cause their scoffing to rebound on themselves. (*at-Tawba*: 79) Literally, it means that Allah *Glorified is He* scoffs at them. When you see a human action with a corresponding divine action, do not understand the divine action in the same way you understand the human action. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And they planned and Allah [also] planned, and Allah is the best of planners.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 54), and says, 'Surely the hypocrites strive to deceive Allah, and He shall requite their deceit to them.' (*an-Nisa*': 142) Literally, this means that He deceives them. Here, we find an action performed by Allah *Glorified is He* and the same action could be carried out by humans. We, Muslims, must understand actions of Allah *Glorified is He* in a way that is different than human action.

For example, when we consider the verse in which Allah *Glorified is He* says that the hypocrites strive to deceive Allah but He shall requite their deceit to them, we find that the word *makr* (scheme) means to defeat the enemy by use of cunning. That you make him think you will do something good to him when you mean to harm him by digging a large pit, for example, and then covering it with grass and flowers and then asking your enemy to bring you a flower so that he falls into the pit and breaks his bones.

Thus, you plotted a secret plot against him. Plots and schemes do not prove one's power, but rather, they prove one's weakness. A brave and strong man faces his enemies openly because he is stronger than they are, while a weak man uses ruses and schemes to hurt his enemy. Therefore, we read the verse that speaks about women describing their plans as great (*Yusuf*: 28). As long as their plans are great, their weakness must be severe as well since only a feeble person contrives ruses of guile on one hand. A strong person is not outdone by his enemy's challenge. He says to him, 'Go where you like and I will come and get you whenever I want. There is nowhere you can hide from me.' On the other hand, when a person who is feeble gets an advantage over his enemy, he would destroy him because he knows that such an opportunity would not come again. Therefore, a poet composed a line of poetry stating that when a weak one gets her chance, she kills and such are the chances of the weak. As for the strong person, he is able to pardon and excuse because he knows that he could take care of his enemy whenever he wants.

The root meaning of the word *makr* is a tree whose branches are intertwined like a braid that you cannot tell which leaf grows from which branch and makes you confused. In the same way, a scheme makes things confusing for you so that you do not know where the truth lies. A human plots according to the abilities of his mind and intelligence, but when Allah *Glorified is He* requites him for his plot, the requital will be terrible. Allah knows well your plot, but you do not know what Allah *Glorified is He* has in store for you.

Allah *Glorified is He* succoured His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* openly in battles. He also succoured Him against all the things which they plotted and schemed against him in secret. For example, when the disbelievers gathered outside his house to kill him on the eve of the Emigration, Allah

inspired him to go out with no fear from their schemers. Thus, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went out and found them all sleeping where they stood with their eyes open but unseeing. He walked right through them throwing handfuls of dust at them and saying, 'May these faces be deformed.' Once the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* went far from their place, they all woke up and were amazed to find that he had eluded them. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted them to know that they would never be able to get the Prophet, neither with open battle nor with secret schemes.

On reading the subject verse, you notice that the act of scoffing on the part of Allah *Glorified is He* is a result of their own scoffing. The act of scoffing on the human part does not exceed criticism, but on the part of Allah, it leads to suffering. Therefore, Allah says that for them is a grievous punishment. This is what distinguishes the actions of Allah *Glorified is He* from human actions. Those who scoffed at the believers criticised their actions, but Allah *Glorified is He* will scoff at them on the Day of Resurrection before all His creatures. In addition, He will cast them into grievous suffering.

We said before that the Quran speaks of three kinds of punishment. These are *alim*, *'adhim* and *muhin*, which are a grievous, great and shameful punishments respectively. These are all attributes of punishment and suffering. Punishment means torment but there are those who scream when they are exposed to pain and others try to be thick-skinned and bear the pain because their pride does not allow them to cry out. In such a situation, their punishment will be shameful because they bear the pain due to their pride but they are humiliated because their pride is which makes their suffering shameful.

Punishment might take a long time or a short time. However, there is a punishment which is great in its grievousness and shamefulness. A punishment which is great in its grievousness is the kind of punishment which is exaggerated in terms of pain, while that which is greatly shameful is that in which the shame is pronounced. As for the punishment which is greatly extended, it is that which is pronounced in terms of duration and this is what is called a lasting punishment, that it will be endless without ceasing or relenting.

Allah *Glorified is He* moves on to present another image of the way Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* dealt with the hypocrites. Prophet

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew who the hypocrites were since Allah *Glorified is He* informed him. Allah could have made the Prophet recognise them by their marks and the intent of their speech. (*Muhammad*: 30) He could simply recognise them by looking and listening to them, as if they had the word hypocrite written on their foreheads.

However, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to go out to those who believed in him and in his message with a tranquil heart and without feeling ill-disposed towards anyone. That is because his light would shine upon them all, that perhaps a ray of his light might shine upon a hypocrite and cause him to repent to Allah and embrace the True Faith, as the case was with many hypocrites, who announced their repentance and became true Muslims.

We know that 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, who was the leader of the hypocrites, was about to be crowned king of Medina. During the preparations for the coronation, they were surprised by the emigration of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to Medina, which was one of the reasons why 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul hated the Prophet. He lost out on his chance to be a king. 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy had a son, also named 'Abdullah. He embraced Islam and became a true Muslim. He went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he heard that he would order the execution of his father for his saying, at a certain battle, 'If we return to Medina, the mighty will surely drive out the meaner therefrom.' (*al-Munafiqun*: 8)

'Abdullah ibn Ubayy meant that the hypocrites of Medina were the mighty ones, while the Muslims of the Emigrants and Helpers were the meaner. Allah *Glorified is He* affirmed that the ones who were most worthy of honour would drive out the most contemptible ones. However, Allah *Glorified is He* said that all honour belongs to Him, His Apostle and those who believe. (*al-Munafiqun*: 8) It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* confirmed what the hypocrite had said, but it turned out that the hypocrites would be driven from Medina and the believers would remain there in honour since all honour belongs to them.

When 'Abdullah, son of 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, heard that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would order the execution of his father, he went to him and said, 'O Prophet Muhammad, if you are truly to command the

execution of my father, then command me to execute him, for I fear that when my fellow Muslim executes him, I will hate him and I would not like to harbour hatred against any believer.' Here, we see the power and truthfulness of faith. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to be kind to this hypocrite for his son's sake, so he did not order his execution. The son afterwards asked him *peace and blessings be upon him* to pray for his father's forgiveness. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knowing that he had been sent as a mercy to the worlds, prayed for forgiveness for 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, whereupon the next noble verse was revealed:

أَسْتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ
ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾

It makes no difference [Prophet] whether you ask forgiveness for them or not: God will not forgive them even if you ask seventy times, because they reject God and His Messenger. God does not guide those who rebel against Him [80] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 80)

Concerning this verse, the scholars had observed a principle known as *mafhum al-mukhalafa* (the contrary inference). Allah *Glorified is He* identifies the number of petitions for forgiveness, which will not be accepted as seventy. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* whom Allah *Glorified is He* sent as a mercy to the worlds, clarified that as long as the petitions of forgiveness were limited to seventy, he would go a little further over seventy petitions. Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave preference to the side of mercy and the side of honour for 'Abdullah, son of 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, who embraced Islam and was a true Muslim.

The number seven was considered by Arabs to be the last of numbers and any other number was a mere addition to this. The basis of all numbers is number one and all members stem from adding to it. One plus one makes two, to which another one may be added to make three and this continues until the number seven is reached. When we leave the number one to the side because it is the basis, we would have three even numbers, which are two, four and six and three odd numbers, which are three, five and seven. Thus, the number seven synthesises the singular, the dual and the plural.

Therefore, when they wanted to add a number to seven they would have to use a conjunctive like 'and'. We find an example of this in the chapter of *al-Kahf* where Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the people of the cave. He says, 'Some say, [They are] three, the fourth of them being their dog; and [others] say, five, the sixth of them being their dog, making conjectures at what is unknown; and [others yet] say, seven, and the eighth of them is their dog.' (*al-Kahf*: 22) Allah did not add the conjunctive 'and' after the number seven because the number eight is a different kind of number. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard the number seventy, he said that he would go beyond seventy. Thus, he respected the Words of Allah *Glorified is He* as well as his honour due to 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, who had asked him to pray for his father's forgiveness.

Here, some wonder how could the real meaning of the number seventy, which implies an outgoing and endless number of petitions, had escaped the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while they said that he was the most eloquent of the Arabs, especially given that he was of Quraysh? A poet of ancient times said in this regard, be bad to us, or good, you shall not be blamed, which implies the meaning of 'Do whatever you wish'.

Therefore, it is as if Allah *Glorified is He* meant to mention the uppermost multiples of numbers, which is seventy, to make it clear that the matter was final. And elsewhere Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned that it was the same for them whether the Prophet asked for their forgiveness or not and that He would never forgive them. (*al-Munafiqun*: 6) This means that even though you prayed for their forgiveness many times, Allah *Glorified is He* will not forgive them.

We say that this matter has two possible implications. The first one is that Allah *Glorified is He* would forgive, while the second is that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been paying a compliment to 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, whilst knowing fully well that Allah *Glorified is He* would not forgive the hypocrites. Thus, asking for forgiveness on the part of the Prophet was only to honour the son's request and a mere courtesy since his prayers for forgiveness were not accepted. There is a prayer for forgiveness which results in forgiveness and another one that merely

pleases someone as in this case of 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy. But, does the father not have his own distinct identity?

We say that we read the history of 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy and he had his own share of the world. Allah *Glorified is He* said that He will not allow the reward of any who did well in deeds to be lost. (*al-Kahf*: 30) The reward for good deeds might be given to some people in this world and in the Hereafter to others. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Whoever desires the gain of the hereafter, We will give him more of that gain; and whoever desires the gain of this world, We give him of it, and in the hereafter, he has no portion.' (*ash-Shura*: 20)

The scholars of the biography of the Prophet tell us that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'the punishment of Abu Lahab is being eased every Monday.' That is Abu Lahab, about whom Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Perdition overtake both hands of Abu Lahab, and he will perish. His wealth and what he earns will not avail him. He shall soon burn in fire that flames.' (*al-Masad*: 1-3)

Why is the punishment of Abu Lahab being eased every Monday? It is because this was the day when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was born? Abu Lahab was so pleased with His birth that he freed the slave-girl who gave him tidings of the birth. Thus, for this reason his punishment is being eased every Monday.

Likewise, 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy did something honourable during the events of The Treaty of Hudaibiya, when Muslims went to perform the lesser pilgrimage but the disbelievers prevented them from entering the Sacred House of Allah. This led to the ratification of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah which was the first covenant to be made between the forces of faith and disbelief. Even though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his companions were hindered from entering the Sacred House, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* realised the graces of Allah *Glorified is He* which would be culminated from the Treaty of Hudaibiya. The disbelievers of Quraysh recognised Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Muslims to the level of concluding a treaty with them. The Prophet carried out the mission of calling to Allah freely and secure from Quraysh. Islam continued to spread until Quraysh violated the treaty and Mecca was conquered.

Thus, looking back at the story of 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy on the day of Hdaybiya we see he did something good. The disbelievers knew the hatred he harboured against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because of how the coming of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had prevented him from being crowned king of Medina. They also knew that his conversion to Islam was hypocritical. They wanted to cause discord amongst the Muslims, so they said that Muhammad and his companions would not enter, while 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy and his companions might enter Mecca and perform the lesser pilgrimage. 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy refused, saying that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was his role-model and he did not wish to perform the lesser pilgrimage unless Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went as well. This was a praiseworthy stance for him.

Likewise, he had another good stance at the Battle of Badr. The uncle of Prophet Muhammad, named Al-'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* was taken prisoner. He was very tall and his clothes were torn in the battle. They found no one the same height as him except 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy. He duly gave them his shirt for Al-'Abbas to wear and the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not forget this. Because of all this, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed for his forgiveness but the higher verdict was revealed stating that Allah would not forgive them (*at-Tawba*: 80).

There are means by which sins are expiated and it is not only a matter of the Prophet's prayer for forgiveness. When someone sins, he must first come to you, O Prophet Muhammad, to ask for forgiveness and then ask you to pray for his forgiveness. That he would find Allah Accepting of repentance and Merciful (*an-Nisa*': 64).

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does not pray for forgiveness for someone who wants to repent and be forgiven unless the guilty person first asks for his own forgiveness. Asking for forgiveness on the part of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* follows that of the guilty person himself. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does not pray for their forgiveness, while they do not do that themselves. Thus, we learn that 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy did not know the right way of seeking forgiveness. He should have gone to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* humbly,

prayed for forgiveness before him and not send someone else to ask for prayers of forgiveness on his behalf.

Allah *Glorified is He* then clarifies why He did not forgive them. That is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger, and Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people. When Allah *Glorified is He* negates guidance of certain people, it does not make them say that Allah has not guided them. They cannot wonder what they should do about it and thereby, blame Allah. Rather, we should ask them, 'Why did He not guide you?' It is because you are iniquitous.

Therefore, the cause of your deviance is that you chose the way of wrong and abandoned Allah's way of guidance. The guidance referred to in this verse is not the guidance which means direction to the right path. Allah *Glorified is He* gives direction to the right path to both believers and disbelievers since His way of guidance has been conveyed to all mankind. He shows them the right path and directs them to it. However, what is meant by guidance in this verse is the other kind of guidance which Allah *Glorified is He* gives to those who embrace Islam and do good deeds. Allah *Glorified is He* declares that He guides those who are willing to be guided, increases them in guidance and gives them their righteousness. (*Muhammad*: 17)

Therefore, all those who intend the path of faith are helped by Allah unlike those who do not. Allah *Glorified is He* thereupon, proclaimed that He does not guide the wrongdoing people (*al-Ahqaf*: 10). He declared that He does not guide the disbelieving people (*at-Tawba*: 37). Similarly, Allah does not guide the transgressing people (*as-Saff*: 5).

We can never say that those people are excused because Allah *Glorified is He* did not guide them. Indeed, He guided and directed them all to the right path but they are the ones who chose the path of disbelief, evil and wrong doing. You could read in the Holy Quran that Allah offered guidance to the people Thamud, however, they chose blindness in preference to guidance (*Fussilat*: 17). Therefore, the guidance of direction is for everyone, while the guidance of assistance is for the believers alone.

In the next verse, Allah *Glorified is He* gives us another image of the hypocrites, saying:

فَرِحَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ خَلْفَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَكَرِهُوا أَنْ
يُجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَالُوا لَا تَنْفِرُوا فِي الْحَرِّ قُلْ
نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ أَشَدُّ حَرًّا لَوْ كَانُوا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

Those who were left behind were happy to stay behind when God's Messenger set out; they hated the thought of striving in God's way with their possessions and their persons. They said to one another, 'Do not go [to war] in this heat.' Say, 'Hellfire is hotter.' If only they understood! [81]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 81)

To rejoice means to feel happiness because of an action that pleases the soul. Those who were left behind were those whose hypocrisy caused them to lag behind, and whom the Prophet left in Medina and he set out to struggle in the cause of Allah after they came up with false excuses. Prophet Muhammad left them behind because Allah had informed him that would add nothing to him save corruption (*at-Tawba*: 47). Whoever does not desire to struggle in the cause of Allah, would be against you and will not be on your side, if it happens and they set out with you. They will spread lies amidst the believers and try to instil in them fear of war. They would be the first to flee and seek out a cave or rock to hide behind, once the fighting starts. So, they will not be with you but against you. They will not fight alongside you, they might even aid your enemy against you; at the same time, they will harm the believers and try to instil dread in them by spreading false rumours.

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* shows the natural faithful instinct of His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. He gave them permission to stay behind and not go out to fight even though they made up their excuses. Allah uses the words *maq'ad*. It refers to a place where one can sit. Sitting symbolises staying in one place, while standing symbolises the beginning of the act of moving from one place to another. Those who fought alongside the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stood and prepared for fighting, but those who stayed behind sat, did not stand and desired to remain where they were.

Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the word *khilaf* which is derived from the root *khalafa* which means to distinct and differ, like the verb *qatala* which

means to fight. The difference can be either a difference of opinion like saying that such and such a person is distinct from another meaning that they hold separate opinions. It can be a difference of movement such as if you stand up to leave the place and your colleague or companion differs from you by remaining seated or you remain seated whilst he leaves.

Differences in terms of opinions are a matter of the heart, while differences of movement involve both the heart and the body. Their rejoicing at remaining seated after the Prophet and the believers stood to go out and struggle, indicates that their staying behind was in accord with their whims that they were pleased with. Thus, they contravened a condition of faith because those who had the right to stay behind were specified in the Holy Quran. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'It shall be no crime in the weak, or in the sick, or in those who do not find what they should spend [to stay behind], so long as they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger.' (*at-Tawba*: 91)

He also says, 'nor in those who when they came to you that you might carry them, you said, "I cannot find that on which to carry you."'" (*at-Tawba*: 92) This means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told them that he had no mount for them to carry them with him to the battleground. Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* portrayed to us the state of those people who were unable to go out alongside the Prophet due to these reasons. He said that they turned away with their eyes overflowing with tears out of sorrow that they had no means to spend (*at-Tawba*: 92).

Therefore, those who stayed behind for good reasons were flooded with sorrow and their eyes with tears because they had lost out on the reward of struggling in the cause of Allah, while those who rejoiced at staying behind, instead of going out to struggle, were hypocrites.

We may observe that the word *khilaf* can also mean 'after', that is, after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. As he set out to the battle, they sat down and did not go themselves. They joined those who were weak, sick and those with true excuses in addition to those for whom the Prophet had found no mounts. Those were the ones who were left behind. However, Allah *Glorified is He* reveals the reason why the hypocrites stayed behind. He

said that they hated the thought of striving with their possessions and their lives for the cause of Allah (*at-Tawba*: 81).

That is, they hated to struggle and fight. It would have been enough if this was just it. However, they wanted to hold the believers back and make fighting repugnant to them. They enticed them not to go forth to war in this heat. They were not content with their own disgraceful stance, but they attempted to urge the believers not to fight. This battle, which was the Battle of Tabuk, took place during a very hot spell. The city of Medina was packed with shady orchards and fruits, but the way to the Byzantine front was long and thereby, was a battle of many ominous hardships.

The hypocrites told the believers *la tanfiru* (not to go). The meaning of the Arabic word *nafar* is to be averse to something. When it is said that such and such a person *nafir* from such and such a person, it means that neither likes to exist in the same place as the other. It is as if the person who set out to war hated to remain in the place where he was sitting in and went forth to the battleground as well as sacrificing of property and life in the cause of Allah was more beloved to him than sitting and relaxing.

Allah proclaimed that they wanted to justify themselves in quitting the struggle. They said that the weather was hot and arduous. But they were foolish. They satisfied themselves with short-lived comfort in exchange for a long-lasting ordeal by fearing heat and its ordeal and preferring to sit in shade and its comfort.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* ordered His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to say that the fire of the Hell is hotter by far. If they thought that they would evade an ordeal by evading heat, the ordeal of hellfire and eternity therein is much worse than what they evaded. When a person is given good news of something, which would please him for a year or several years, but he was informed of something that will come after it which will cause him woe and suffering, thereby, his knowledge of what is coming will cause him pain so that he cannot enjoy his present comfort. A person is always prepared to bear something difficult to secure his future. Therefore, you might find someone who works night and day happily and if you ask him how he can bear all this hardship, he would answer that he could secure his future. Thus,

the happiness of a year or a few years is spoiled by the prospect of a few bad and tiring days or years. What about the eternity in hell which awaits them?

There are some related questions here. Did they only conceal that saying in their hearts without saying it aloud? Or did they say it secretly to one another? Who informed the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of what they had said? We say that this might be something they thought about in their minds. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted them to know that He knows what their souls concealed. He wanted to expose their hidden thoughts, so that this might instil fear in their hearts knowing that Allah knows everything and would attain to faith out of fear of Hell.

A similar example to this is when Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to bar the idolaters from making the pilgrimage to His Sacred House. He said that those idolaters who were impure and thereby, shall not approach the House (*at-Tawba*: 28).

The economy of Mecca used to rebound during the ceremony of pilgrimage. Riches would come to Mecca from all over during the pilgrimage season. The idolaters would even say, 'Be careful, do not perform circumambulation wearing sinful clothes', as if their souls were filled with piety. In fact, they were indeed far from piety since they were idol-worshippers. They, instead, would say this to make the pilgrims remove their clothes and buy new clothes to use for circumambulation and whoever could not afford to buy it would perform the circumambulation naked.

So, the season of pilgrimage was an economic boom for the people of Mecca. They would make enough profit to live on the rest of the year. When Allah *Glorified is He* announced that they were impure and not allowed to come near the House, the question that popped to the human soul was, how shall we live then? This was the first thought that came to mind because it is about the basic needs of life. The One Who created them knew well what was going on in their minds even if they uttered it not with their tongues. Thereupon, Allah *Glorified is He* responds, 'and if you fear poverty then Allah will enrich you out of His grace if He pleases.' (*at-Tawba*: 28) So Allah *Glorified is He* knew what was in their minds and responded to them before they even uttered it.

Allah *Glorified is He* said that if only they could understand that the hell fire is much severe in heat. The word used to express understanding is *fiqh*. It

means to understand deeply. When you know something superficially, you have knowledge of it, however, when you know all its details and implications, you truly understand it. When you set out to fight during a hot spell, you might suffer. However, when you refuse to go out and fight, your punishment will be worse and your suffering greater. Thus, your knowledge of the heat, which you will endure when you go out to fight, must not make you forget what you do not observe. That is a person who evades going out to fight will lead him to a fire which is hotter, where he will abide. When one forgets that, this means he does not understand reality because he knows one thing and forgets many others.

That was the logical argument that 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* used in response to those whom he called to fight against the kharijites. He said, 'Struggling in the cause of Allah is one of the doors to Paradise and whoever dismisses it, shall be disgraced!' Then he said, 'If I told you to fight them in the winter, you would say, "It is too cold." If I told you to fight them in summer, you would say, "Leave us be until the heat passes." If you flee like that from cold and heat, then by Allah, you shall end up in the hellfire. You are but men-like and not men.'

Thus, the meaning is that although they delighted and rejoiced at evading fighting in the heat, they would come to greatly regret this. Therefore, Allah says next:

فَلْيَضْحَكُوا قَلِيلًا وَلْيَبْكُوا كَثِيرًا جَزَاءٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

**Let them laugh a little; they will weep a lot in return for
what they have done [82] (The Quran, at-Tawba: 82)**

Laughter is a natural instinctive reaction which happens when a person encounters something which pleases him or when events occur in an unexpected manner. As for weeping it is also a natural instinctive reaction to events which cause sadness or grief. It stems from remembering something that saddens him. They are both natural phenomena. They occur naturally in the same way to all people and are not affected by race, colour or environment. There is no such thing as Russian or American weeping. Similarly, there is no Russian or American, or Eastern or Western laughter. This is because laughter and

weeping are universal natural reactions which are unaffected by environment, culture or race. Allah *Glorified is He* ascribed the origin of both to Himself. Allah *Glorified is He* gives life, causes death and likewise; He alone causes laughter; it is He Alone Who causes weeping. Allah says, 'And that He it is who makes [men] laugh and makes [them] weep; And that He it is Who causes death and gives life. And that He created pairs, the male and the female. From the small seed when it is adapted.' (*an-Najm*: 43-45)

That is why laughter and tears happen suddenly for no reason. I do not say to myself before laughing that I am going to laugh now, likewise I do not say before weeping that I am going to weep now. They are instinctive reactions with which will and choice play no role. However, we pretend to laugh and weep sometimes, but this is pure affectation and not genuine. Suppose that someone tells you a joke to make you laugh. However, the joke is not funny and you want to please him, so you laugh. Likewise, weeping can also be affected, as in the case of the professional mourner who sits amongst the bereaved family and weeps. She might put drops of glycerine in her eyes to make her cry. That is all affectation. However, true laughter and true weeping are purely natural matters which are under the control of Allah *Glorified is He* alone.

The subject verse comes directly after the verse that explains their happiness due to staying behind (*at-Tawba*: 81). They rejoiced when they stayed in Medina and the believers set out to fight. They sat in the gardens of Medina rejoicing in comfort, happiness and laughter because they thought that they had won by avoiding participation in the fighting. However, this laughter would only last a little and a great weeping and regret would replace it for a long and endless amount of time when they enter Hell. May Allah secure us from it.

We notice that Allah *Glorified is He* said, 'Let them laugh a little and let them weep a lot.' He did not say, 'they will laugh a little and then weep a lot'. Why? We say that when an action is ascribed to a created being that lives in a world of vicissitudes and has free will to choose from several possibilities, the action might or not occur. However, ascribing the matter of laughter and weeping in the verse to Allah, bears the meaning of a commandment for them to laugh and weep. Are these commandments to laugh and weep optional from Allah that they might obey and disobey?

If it was optional, would the hypocrites obey a commandment of Allah which is optional? We say that this is not an optional commandment of free choice because Allah *Glorified is He* alone is the One Who places in the human soul the reactions of laughter or weeping at events, and we have shown that man cannot make himself truly laugh or weep.

So, the meaning of the verse is that the action of laughing is their inescapable fate and likewise the action of weeping is inevitable because the action of weeping has been destined for them by Allah. As it is said that the one who laughs last, laughs longest and the one who weeps last weeps the longest.

Therefore, everything depends on its final outcomes. Something pleasing might happen to a man at which he feels happy, although, a bad time of woe comes and effaces all this happiness and the opposite is also true. If those hypocrites had laughed a little in this worldly life, their lives in this world is short. If they spend their whole worldly life laughing, how long they would laugh, forty, fifty years?

Each one of us has a limited time in this world. If you say that an event lasts for the entire duration of this world, it is still short, and if you say that it only lasts as long as you live in this world, it is shorter as well. The Hereafter will come with its endless abiding where the weeping of the hypocrite will last for eternity.

Therefore, every person must consider the punishment alongside the sin and the reward along with the good deed. A man might commit sins to please his soul's passions, but he does not bring up its due punishment along. If he were to think about the punishment, he would refrain from the sin. If a thief thought, while stealing, that he might be caught, plead guilty and be sentenced to have his hand amputated; if he was certain of this, he would never steal. Rather, he steals because he thinks he will evade punishment. No thief plans a robbery whilst imagining that he will be caught, but rather he is certain that he will steal and get away with it.

Therefore, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The one who commits illegal sexual intercourse is not a believer at the time of committing illegal sexual intercourse and a thief is not a believer at the time of committing theft.' This is because if a fornicator imagined that he would be cast

into hell because of his act of fornication, he would never fornicate. The same is true with the one who drinks wine. He would not put the glass to his mouth if he imagined himself being punished in hell for doing so. Sins are committed during the inadvertency of faith. Faith requires you to think of the punishment when you approach the sin. It wants you to know, for sure, that everything you do will be reckoned in the Hereafter and that there will be requital.

If you laugh at the obligations of faith, you will certainly weep for it in the Hereafter. If you are happy, for example, to abandon the prayer or *zakat*, and you imagine that you have gained riches in this worldly life, you will certainly feel regret and woe in the Hereafter; and if you enjoy the fruits of ill-gotten wealth, you will certainly be made to suffer in the Hereafter. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘Indeed, those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed. And whenever they passed by them, used to wink one to another (in mockery); and when they returned to their people, they would return jesting.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-31)

Thus Allah *Glorified is He* gives us several images of the ridicule directed at the believers in this worldly life, the first of which is that the hypocrites and the disbelievers laugh at the believers. One of them might say to a believer who prays, ‘Carry me on your wings in the Hereafter!’ And then He mentions how they wink and gesture; and then when the hypocrite goes back to his own people, he mocks the righteous people and says, ‘I did such-and-such to a religious person, and I mocked him and he could not respond!’ He feels happy as he tells this story, rejoicing in what he has done; but he forgets that he has committed three crimes. The crime of the ridicule itself, the crime of being happy with it and the crime of telling others about it. Had he mocked the believer and then felt bad about it afterwards, his punishment might have been light, but as long as he rejoices in his action, his punishment will be more severe; and then when he goes back to his people and tells them what happened with glee and pride, he condemns himself to a third punishment. It was bad enough for them to go so far, but then they went even further by accusing the believers of being astray, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And when they saw them, they said, “Verily! These have indeed gone astray! But they had not been sent as guardians over them.”’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 32-33) That is,

they went even further by accusing the believers of being astray, and this is what they did in this worldly life, which is transitory and short-lived; and then the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us what the contrasting image will be in the Hereafter, saying, 'So Today those who believed are laughing at the disbelievers. On adorned couches, observing. Are not the disbelievers paid (fully) for what they used to do?' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 33-36)

Just as the disbelievers laughed at the believers in this worldly life, the believers will laugh at the disbelievers in the Hereafter, and the believers will sit on couches in Paradise looking on as the disbelievers are tormented in hell. Allah will compensate them with their own action, with the difference that their powers are limited, whilst His powers are unlimited. The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not say, 'they will laugh' as a mere statement which might happen or not, but rather, He emphasised it; and when He talks about the hypocrites here, 'Let them, then, laugh' this means that the laughter will definitely take place because these are the words of Allah *Glorified is He*.

The words of the True Lord *Glorified is He* 'Let them, then, laugh a little – and [then] weep much as recompense for what they used to earn' provide us with the reason for why their laughter will be short-lived, whilst their weeping will be long-lived; for this is the recompense for what they did in this life. They rejoiced in evading the struggle in Allah's cause, and were happy to stay and relax in Medina. They will inevitably be requited for this action in the Hereafter, just as the believers will be rewarded for going out to struggle in the heat.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not wrong them, but rather, He gave them fair recompense for their actions, as He says, 'as recompense for what they used to earn.' The word 'earned' here requires us to make an observation. He could have said, 'in return for what they have done' or 'for how they have acted'; so why did the True Lord *Glorified is He* say, 'earned'? And what is the difference between this and 'done' or 'acted'?

We know that every part of a man's body has an action: the ear hears, the eye sees, the hand grasps, the foot walks, the nose smells and the fingertips feel; so, every part of the body has its function. If the function is to make utterances with the tongue, we call this 'speech'; and if the function is performed by any other body part, we call it a 'deed'. The tongue alone

carries out speech, and all the other body parts carry out deeds. And speech and deeds together are called ‘actions’. So, if the True Lord *Glorified is He* had said, ‘they had done’ this would contrast with what they said because a man might say something with his tongue which the rest of his body does not actually do. This is made clear by the noble verse, ‘O you who have believed, why do you say what you do not do? Most hateful it is with Allah that you say that which you do not do.’ (*as-Saff*: 2-3).

So, if speech and deed are united, this makes action. Every action which is not in line with Allah’s way involves a certain amount of additional work. The verb ‘earn’ is an action, whilst ‘contrive’ is to put an effort to earn something; earning is to act naturally, whilst ‘to contrive to earn’ means to act with effort. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned.’ (*al-Baqara*: 286) This is because when forbidden deeds are committed, this requires additional effort and disturbs the soul so that it is not in harmony with the body. When a man is at home with his wife, his body is relaxed and he fears nothing, but when he is with someone else’s wife, his body is tense, and he closes the windows and turns off all the lights; and if the doorbell rings, he is filled with nervousness and anxiety. This is because his soul’s faculties are not in harmony with his action.

But if the soul becomes used to sin, as in the case of a habitual criminal, forbidden deeds do not disturb it. In this case, the ‘contrived deed’ becomes a regular deed, and the soul becomes accustomed to sin and evil. The requital it shall receive from Allah becomes grievous and severe.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* alerts us here to the fact that these hypocrites have grown accustomed to sin, and lived in disbelief, so their evil deeds had become easy for them and they no longer needed to exert extra effort.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘As for the thief, the male and the female, amputate their hands in recompense for what they earned as a deterrent [punishment] from Allah.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 38)

Stealing is not an ordinary action, and therefore the thief does it stealthily. This might have made it logical to use the verb ‘contrive’ but the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted us to know that thievery has become natural for these

people because of how often they have done it so that it has become easy and automatic for them. The Sacred Law has placed a minimum value for this penalty which is the theft of one quarter of a *dinar*, for example.⁽¹⁾ The one who steals less than this is not punished with the amputation of his hand. Why? Because at that time, a quarter of a *dinar* was enough to feed a medium-sized family for a whole day, and so if someone stole enough to feed a family for a single day, it would be said that perhaps he stole it because his family does not have anything to eat. Yet, if he took more than the absolute necessary, he must have taken more than he needed, and therefore was guilty of stealing and had to be punished.⁽²⁾

We know that the purpose of the human mind is to choose between alternatives, and a person is supposed to bear the consequences in mind when he commits the sin, and bear the reward in mind when he does good deeds. Such understanding encourages a man to do good deeds. If we ask the hard-working student to lessen the amount of study he is doing, he refuses to put the books away because he is thinking about success, and what will happen after he succeeds and how he will be able to enter whatever university he wants. Or if he is studying for his finals at university, he thinks about what will happen after he graduates; and he also thinks about what his family, teachers and colleagues will think of him. Thinking about all of this drives him to spend long hours studying without feeling tired. So, the way to love

(1) 'A'isha Allah be pleased with her is narrated to have said, 'The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him would amputate the thief for stealing a quarter of a *dinar* or more.' Related by Muslim (1684), Ahmad (vi. 6) and At-Tirmidhi (1445)

(2) Stealing is of two kinds: one that requires taking a disciplinary action, and another that requires exacting the legal punishment. The first kind is the one that lacks the necessary requirements for exacting the legal punishment like the one stealing the fruits from trees. As for the kind which is punished by the prescribed legal punishment, it must fulfil three conditions:

1 – The value of the wealth stolen must be at least a quarter of a *dinar*.

2 – The wealth must be secured in such a place as a treasury, house or mosque.

3 – The theft must be committed clandestinely and secretly (so a mugger, snatcher or traitor is not counted as a thief whose hand must be cut.)

If it is proven that an act of theft took place consistent with all these conditions, the thief's right hand is amputated from the joint of the wrist; if he steals again, his foot is amputated. See details of this in Sayyid Sabiq's (*Fiqh As-Sunna*) (ii. 461-476).

good deeds is to think of the sweetness of their reward and conversely the way to hate sins is to think of the pain of their punishment.

But these hypocrites and disbelievers have become accustomed to sin and disbelief to the extent that they act impiously without thinking about the punishment for sin, and they commit sins gleefully. Allah says, ‘for what they have earned’ to give us the correct image, which is that they were accustomed to sin to the extent that they committed it without any extra effort.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then tells us His worldly decree concerning those hypocrites who rejoiced in staying at home instead of going out to strive for Allah’s cause, saying:

فَإِنْ رَجَعَكَ اللَّهُ إِلَى طَائِفَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسْتَعِذْهُكَ لِخُرُوجٍ فَقُلْ لَّنْ تَخْرُجُوا مَعِيَ أَبَدًا وَلَكِنْ
تُقَاتِلُوا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا إِنَّكُمْ رَضِيتُمْ بِالْقُعُودِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَاقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْخَائِلِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

So [Prophet], if God brings you back to a group of them, who ask you for permission to go out [to battle], say, ‘You will never go out and fight an enemy with me: you chose to sit at home the first time, so remain with those who stay behind now’ [83] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 83)

Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies to His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘When you finish with the battle and return to Medina, there is an ordinance which you must apply to those hypocrites who stayed at home and rejoiced in not joining the battle’.

‘If Allah should return you’, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is the subject of the verb, and the pronoun ‘you’ is the object. In another verse, Allah says, ‘And when Musa (Moses) returned to his people, full of wrath and sorrow.’ (*al-A’raf*: 150) In a third verse addressing the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when his mother cast him into the sea, Pharaoh’s family adopted him and his sister went after him; then Allah made him refuse all the nursemaids so that he would be returned to his mother to relieve her sorrow. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘And We favoured you when your sister went and said, “Shall I direct you to someone who will be responsible for him?” So, we returned you to your mother that she might be content and not grieve.’ (*Ta Ha*: 40)

What is the difference between the three verses? Why is the same verb 'return' used with both a transitive and an intransitive sense? We say that when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'And when Musa (Moses) returned to his people' this meant that Musa (Moses) made the decision to return on his own. As for when He says, 'If Allah should return you' at this point, Musa (Moses) was a baby who could not return on his own accord, and therefore the True Lord *Glorified is He* provided him with a way of returning by bringing someone to carry him and return him. And when He says, 'If Allah should return you' He could have said, 'and if you once again come face to face with some of them', just as He said of Musa (Moses), 'And when Moses returned to his people', but the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Allah should return you' to indicate that Muhammad's decisions to act or abstain were not in his own hands.

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* were saying, 'Beware of ascribing Muhammad's actions to his human nature, for if Muhammad goes somewhere, it is because Allah sent him there; and if he returns from somewhere, he only returns because Allah returns him'. Likewise, the Prophet Muhammad's *peace and blessings be upon him* emigration to Medina was undertaken by Allah's leave. Before Allah gave him leave to emigrate, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could not emigrate by his human nature. So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants us always to know that when Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went anywhere or returned from anywhere, this was not the result of the Prophet's human nature, but rather, the result of the will of the True Lord *Glorified is He*.

But why did the True Lord *Glorified is He* say, 'If Allah should return you to a faction of them' when He could have said, 'if Allah brings you to them', or 'if Allah brings you to Medina'? We say that the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants these words to refer to those who refused to join the battle, for there were those who had remained in Medina against their wishes because they could not afford to go or because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could not find mounts for them. In addition, there were also those who were unable to fight because of illness or old age; and these people were true Muslims, and their excuses were accepted by Allah and His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.

But the True Lord *Glorified is He* is speaking about those who refused to go out and fight even though they were able to do so and possessed the necessary wealth, weapons and everything else that was required. These were the ones who rejoiced in not going out to fight; as for the others, their eyes filled with tears grieving for not being able to join. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is referring here to the hypocrites who continued in their hypocrisy; if any hypocrite repented before this verse was revealed, their repentance was accepted, and those who died before this verse was revealed were left to the judgement of Allah. So, there remained those hypocrites who rejoiced and laughed when they remained in Medina. Allah punished them by erasing their names from the records of those who struggled for Allah's Cause, and they were denied the great reward merited by striving in His cause.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'If Allah should return you to a faction of them [after the expedition] and then they ask your permission to go out [to battle].' How could they first ask for leave to stay behind and contrive ways to get this leave dishonestly, but then ask leave to go out and fight? We say that when they saw the believers come back with battle-spoils, this caused them to feel woe in their hearts because they were worldly people, and thereupon they asked leave to go out and fight the next time so that they could get hold of spoils and worldly gains. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* instructed His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* not to give them leave to fight alongside the Muslims, saying, 'You will not go out with me, ever, and you will never fight with me an enemy.' That is, your names have been erased from the record of those who strived in the cause of Allah. Why the True Lord *Glorified is He* chose not to give them the honour of struggling and the reward of fighting alongside the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*? The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Indeed, you were satisfied with sitting [at home] the first time.'

The True Lord *Glorified is He* also says, 'ask your permission to go out.' This only applies to cases where the believers went out of the city to fight; what, then, would their position have been if Medina itself was attacked? The True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he should not even allow them to fight in such a case,

instructing him to inform them of, ‘nor shall you fight an enemy together with me!’ So that was the end of the matter; they were not allowed to go out and fight battles outside, nor to fight the enemies if they invaded Medina, for they had been completely erased from the records of those who strived for Allah’s cause, and they were not allowed to fight either within Medina or outside it. As long as they rejoiced in staying behind and refused to join when they were able, the True Lord *Glorified is He* decreed that they would remain with those who remained behind.

What does ‘those who stay behind’ mean? It either means those who remained behind when the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went out. Or it means those who disobeyed the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by refusing to go out. Or it means that their scent was changed. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about fasting, ‘Yes, the changed scent of the breath of one who fasts shall be sweeter to Allah on the Day of Resurrection than the scent of musk.’⁽¹⁾

When something’s scent changes, this indicates that it has turned rotten, so it is as though they had become rotten. This implies that they have become rotten and corrupt because they disobeyed the Prophet’s command. It also means that they stayed behind when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went out to fight. The requital of these deserters was not only that their names were erased from the records of those who strive for Allah’s Cause, but there was another requital, of which the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us:

وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّتَّ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَقُمْ عَلَى قَبْرِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا
بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ فَسِقُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

**Do not hold prayers for any of them if they die, and do not
stand by their graves: they disbelieved in God and His
Messenger and died rebellious [84] (The Quran, at-Tawba: 84)**

Prophet Muhammad’s prayer over the dead was a means of mercy for them and a means for their sins to be forgiven because to pray over the dead

(1) Related by al-Bukhari (1904) and Muslim (163) on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him

means to supplicate for mercy and forgiveness for them, and to ask Allah to include them with the righteous. And if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said these words and made this supplication, his prayer would certainly be answered by Allah. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* denied them mercy at a time when a man had a dire need of it, when he leaves the life of this world for the life of the grave is between this life and the Hereafter.⁽¹⁾

The True Lord's words to His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* 'And do not pray [the funeral prayer, O Muhammad], over any of them who has died – ever' are a prohibition of something which has not yet occurred. When He says, 'or stand at his grave' this means do not go to his grave and supplicate for mercy for him. Why did the True Lord not say, 'that dies' instead of using the past tense and saying, 'that has died'? We say that it is because death is a certain event which has been decreed by Allah and destined, and the event of death is recorded and known to Allah, and cannot be called future in respect to Allah. Death is not decreed a night or two before it occurs, but rather, its occurrence has already been decreed and made final.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'and do not pray [the funeral prayer, O Muhammad], over any of them.' This tells us that this matter is not a special circumstance, but rather it is a general rule. There are rulings which are determined by certain circumstances and others which are general. An example of a ruling determined by circumstance was the verse which was revealed about the leader of the hypocrites, 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, when he contracted his final sickness, his son 'Abdullah went to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked him to give him his shirt to use as his father's shroud, so he gave it to him. He then asked him to pray over him, so the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to pray over him and supplicate forgiveness for him.⁽²⁾ The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings*

(1) The life of death and resurrection, as Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, "and behind them is a (*Barzakh*) barrier until the Day they are resurrected.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 100). The word *barzakh* in Arabic means a veil or barrier between two things, as is found in Allah's words, 'And it is He who has released [simultaneously] the two seas, one fresh and sweet and one salty and bitter, and He placed between them a barrier and prohibiting partition.' (*al-Furqan*: 53)

(2) See the notes for verse 9:80.

be upon him did this as a kindness to `Abdullah the son of `Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, who was a true Muslim.

When the Prophet of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* stood by `Abdullah Ibn Ubayy's side, he said to him, 'It was your love for the Jews that ruined you.'⁽¹⁾ This was because `Abdullah Ibn Ubayy used to indulge the Jews and aid them, and the reason he dissembled Islam hypocritically was to assist the Jews. When he was with the Jews he would act as a disbeliever, whilst when he was with the Muslims he would act like a Muslim. Upon this, Ibn Ubayy said, 'O Prophet Muhammad, I asked to see you so that you might pray for forgiveness for me, not so that you would scold me.'

So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed for forgiveness for him, whereupon the verse was revealed, 'Ask forgiveness for them, [O Muhammad], or do not ask forgiveness for them. If you should ask forgiveness for them seventy times - never will Allah forgive them.' (*at-Tawba*: 80)

`Abdullah Ibn Ubayy asked the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to give him his robe to be shrouded and buried in, and when the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* returned to his house, he sent him his outer robe. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* used to wear two robes, one against his body and the other over it, and when the outer robe was delivered to `Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, he said, 'I want the robe which has touched the skin of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.'

Look at the leader of the hypocrites, who was filled with prideful disdain for the believers, making all these requests as he lay dying. So, what did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* do? He sent him the robe which had touched his blessed body. All of this was to please `Abdullah, the son of `Abdullah Ibn Ubayy.

Several believers did not accept these actions and felt uneasy about them. When `Abdullah Ibn Ubayy finally died, his son `Abdullah came and asked

(1) Related by Ibn Kathir in his exegesis (ii. 379) on the authority of Qatadah, who did not specify which companion he heard it from. Ibn Hajr related it in 'Al-Fat-h' (8/334) and ascribed it to Abd Ar-Razzaq and At-Tabari on the authority of Qatadah. Ibn Hajar commented, 'This is a Mursal Hadith and its narrators are trustworthy. It is backed by what At-Tabari related on the authority of ibn `Abbas with similar wording.'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to pray over him. And when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to pray over him, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* stood between the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the direction of prayer so he will not pray the funeral prayer.⁽¹⁾ At this point the True Lord *Glorified is He* gave the final word on the matter and revealed the noble verse, 'and do not pray [the funeral prayer, O Muhammad], over any of them who has died – ever.' The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to pray over Ibn Ubayy because he was a prophet of mercy to the worlds, but 'Umar ibn al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* stood between him and the prayer-direction so that he could not pray. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* revealed his words, 'and do not pray [the funeral prayer, O Muhammad], over any of them who has died – ever.' They say that this was one of the times when the Revelation agreed with 'Umar bin al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him*.

One of the things about which the Revelation agreed with 'Umar bin al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* was the changing of the prayer-direction from Jerusalem to Allah's Inviolable House. 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* used to wish for this, and used to say to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'O Prophet Muhammad, would that you were to take the Station of Ibrahim (Abraham) as your place of prayer!'⁽²⁾ Another example was the issue of the prisoners taken at Badr. 'Umar thought they should be killed. Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* was of the opinion that the prisoners should have been employed to teach the Muslims how to read and write, or that they should be ransomed; and then the noble verse was revealed, 'It is not for a prophet to have captives [of war] until he suppressed the enemies [upon Allah's enemies] in the land. Some Muslims desire the commodities of this world, but Allah desires [for you] the Hereafter.' (*al-Anfal*: 67)

Some people wonder, 'How could 'Umar challenge the judgement of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*?' We say that it is because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would not remain alive forever, so he wanted to give them a good example of how if he *peace and blessings be upon him*

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari (4671), Ahmad (i. 16), At-Tirmidhi (3097) and an-Nisa'i (iv. 67)

(2) Related by Al-Bukhari (4483) on the authority of Anas *Allah be pleased with him*

saw a good idea, he would accept it. Some of the orientalist say, 'you are always talking about how `Umar did this and that; why do you never tell us about how Muhammad did this and that?' We reply to this that if Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did something, he was a Messenger of Allah. As for others than him, when they did things, this showed that it is possible for the natural Islamic instinct to have an opinion with which Allah concurs.

And after 'And do not pray [the funeral prayer, O Muhammad], over any of them who has died – ever' was revealed, it became a general rule that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* will never pray over the hypocrites, but if anyone else wanted to pray over them, they could. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would honour every Muslim by praying over them when they died, but after this noble verse was revealed, he stopped praying over the hypocrites.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also refrained from praying over people who died leaving debts behind. He would ask the family of the deceased if he owed any debts, and if they said yes, he would ask if the deceased had left any wealth to cover the debts. If they said that he had not, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would say, 'Pray over your fellow.'⁽¹⁾

But what is the sin of the one who owes a debt, to the extent that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would refrain from praying over him? We find the answer from his narration, 'If one takes money from people with the intention of paying it back, Allah will make it easy for him to pay it back; and if one takes it with the intention of squandering it, Allah squanders him.'⁽²⁾

So, if the one who died leaving behind debts and he had the intention to repay them, Allah would have helped him to repay them; and if he left enough wealth to cover these debts, in the form of property, land or money in the bank, he is not considered to be a debtor.

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari (2298) and Muslim (1619) on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him

(2) Related by Al-Bukhari (2387), Ahmad (ii. 361, 417) and Ibn Majah (2411) on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘or stand at his grave.’ We know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would visit the grave of Hamza Allah *be pleased with him* and would stand by the graves of the believers and say, ‘Peace be upon you, abode of believing folk!’⁽¹⁾ The True Lord *Glorified is He* forbade him from doing this for the graves of the hypocrites. The True Lord *Glorified is He* then gives us the reason for this, saying, ‘They disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger and died while they were defiantly disobedient.’ We know how they denied Allah and His Prophet, but what about the True Lord’s words, ‘and died while they were defiantly disobedient.’? Did they die whilst being outside the confines of the religion? Indeed, they did. But we might ask here: Is disbelief not worse than disobedience, since we know there is no sin graver than disbelief? So why does Allah *Glorified is He* say, ‘and died while they were defiantly disobedient,’ when they also disbelieved?

We say that disbelief means the absence of faith in Allah and His Prophet and the refusal to enter Islam, but disobedience means to be bereft of adherence to any kind of values; for religion generally instils values which even those who disbelieve follow. For example, when they wanted to rebuild the *Ka’ba* before the coming of Islam, they said, ‘We want to build it with lawfully-earned money, not unlawful money.’ In those days, they used to run prostitutes and fly flags to advertise them, and take a share of their earnings. Islam had not yet come, but there was still a sense of the values of the divinely-revealed religions which had come before Islam, some of which Islam acknowledged.

So, the True Lord’s words, ‘They disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger’ mean that they were not Muslims; and His words, ‘and died while they were defiantly disobedient’ meant that they did not adhere to any values.

The True Lord says:

(1) *Related by Muslim (249), Ahmad (ii. 375), Ibn Majah (4306) and An-Nisa’i (i. 94) on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him*

وَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَأَوْلَادُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي
الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

**Do not let their possessions and their children impress
you: God means to punish them through these in this
world, and that their souls should depart while they
disbelieve [85] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 85)**

We know that the True Lord *Glorified is He* said in a previous verse, ‘So let not their wealth or their children impress you. Allah only intends to punish them through them in this worldly life and that their souls should depart [at death] while they are disbelievers.’ (*at-Tawba*: 55)

When one verse very similar to another, we say that the specific wording used and the context differs, and whoever pays attention to the specifics and the contexts will see that this is reinforcement, not repetition. Two verses might have the same general meaning, but every verse has its own special meaning to impart. Let us take an example of this from the True Lord’s words, ‘and do not kill your children out of poverty; we will provide for you and them.’ (*al-An‘am*: 151); And His words, ‘And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you.’ (*al-Isra*’: 31)

Some of the orientalist have claimed that the Quran repeats itself. Yet this is not correct because they are only considering the general meaning of the verse not the specific meaning it imparts. The specific meaning of each verse corresponds to its context. Regarding His words about sustenance for children, they did not look at the beginnings of each verse, but only at the ending of each, which is a result of their ignorance of the Arabic language manner of articulation. We would like to ask the orientalist who raise these kinds of issues if they believe that either one of these verses is more eloquent than the other. They will have no answer since they do not know about the precision of the Arabic language manner of articulation. We say to them: If you consider both the ends and the beginnings of each verse, you will find that the wording of the end of each verse is a natural consequence of its beginning otherwise the meaning would be lost. Notice that in one verse, ‘for fear of poverty’, and in the other, ‘out of poverty’ at the end; and in the beginning, one says, ‘We

will provide for you and them’, and in the other ‘We provide for them and for you.’ The two verses begin differently: the first verse asserts the existence of poverty, whereas the second asserts it does not exist, but the parents fear that they will fall into poverty because of the coming of their children.

The first verse addresses those who are already poor, whilst the second verse addresses those who are not yet poor but who fear they will become poor if they have children. The poor person, as we know, must get provisions for himself before he can get them for his children, and therefore the True Lord *Glorified is He* reassures him that his children will not detract anything from his provision saying, ‘We will provide for you and them.’ That is, ‘Be assured, O poor person, that you will be provided for and your children will not take anything from your provision because the True Lord *Glorified is He* will provide for you first and then for your children as well’. As for the one who is not yet poor but fears having children will bring poverty with them, he might worry that the new baby will come and turn his wealth into poverty; so, the True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses him by saying, ‘We provide for them and for you.’ That is, their provision will come from Allah before your own provision will. So, do not fear poverty and kill your children due to this fear; the True Lord *Glorified is He* will certainly provide for them, and you will not become poor because of your children. Thus, we see that the meaning of the two verses is completely different, and there is no repetition.

Likewise, regarding the verse we are currently studying, some people say, ‘This verse was revealed in the same chapter that the one which resembles it is in’. We say to them: Indeed, it was, but each verse has its own meaning. But what is the difference between the two verses, so we can see that there is no repetition? The first verse says: ‘So let not their wealth or their children impress you. Allah only intends to punish them through them in this worldly life and that their souls should depart [at death] while they are disbelievers.’ The second verse, which we are currently examining, says, ‘And let not their wealth and their children impress you. Allah only intends to punish them through them in this world and that their souls should depart [at death] while they are disbelievers.’ The first difference is found at the beginning of the verses: the first verse says, ‘So let not’, whilst the second says, ‘And let not.’

In the first verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'so' which implies that this verse is based on the previous one; that is, 'And what prevents their expenditures from being accepted from them but that they have disbelieved in Allah and in His Messenger and that they come not to prayer except while they are lazy and that they do not spend except while they are unwilling.' (*at-Tawba*: 54) It is as though this is the nature of their disbelief: they only pray hypocritically, and they only spend money for Allah's Cause with resentment.

What makes money enjoyable is to spend it on what you like: if you like a certain food, you buy it, and if you like a certain item of clothing, you buy it. In doing so, you are happy as you spend your money; but these people feel resentment as they spend their money. When the believer spends his money on charity, he does this with faith that Allah *Glorified is He* will give him many multiples of reward in this life and in the Hereafter; so, when the believer spends his money on charity, he is happy to have contributed to the good of his worldly life and his Hereafter. As for the hypocrite who conceals disbelief in his heart, he does not believe in the Hereafter, nor know anything about blessed provision, so it is as though he spends his money without getting anything in return. That is, he considers it as a loss of wealth and nothing else. If a person spends resentfully, the money he possesses is a source of ignominy and woe for him because he gets the money after toil and struggle, and then spends it without believing in the Hereafter or divine reward.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to alert us to the fact that the provision He gives to these people is a cause of their misery and ignominy in this life. He makes them gather money by work and toil but then spend it without reward, so that they lose it. One of them might go hypocritically to war, spending money on his weapon and his mount, but getting no reward for this; or he might raise his sons until a time of war comes, and send them off to war hypocritically so that they die without attaining martyrdom if they are hypocrites like their fathers. Thus, we find that the wealth of the hypocrite, who pretends to be Muslim whilst really being a disbeliever, is nothing but a source of woe for him. Because of this, as a believer you must not admire their wealth as it will be a source of ignominy for them in this worldly life. They spend it hypocritically because if they were to refuse to spend and fight

for Allah's Cause whilst claiming to be Muslims, it would be as though they were announcing themselves to be hypocrites. Therefore, we find that their reluctant spending was a source of ignominy for them, and if they did not spend, this would expose them, so it is as though their wealth and children were a source of torment for them; and this is not something to be admired but rather to be pitied.

Do not think that when you erased their names from the records of warriors and soldiers so that they would never go out with you or fight an enemy alongside you, that their wealth would make up for not being allowed to go out; do not let this excite your admiration, for it will cause punishment, exposure and ignominy for them.

But in the first verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'So let not their wealth or their children impress you.' Why? Because some of them had wealth of which they were proud, and others had many children of whom they were proud, and some of them had both wealth and children. So, their states were different, which is why He says, 'their wealth or their children' to convey all these states, and to include those who had only wealth, those who had only children, and those who had both.

As for the second verse which we are currently examining, it says, 'And let not their wealth and their children impress you. Allah only intends to punish them through them in this world and that their souls should depart [at death] while they are disbelievers.'

The True Lord *Glorified is He* gave them wealth to punish them; but there are those who ask, 'If Allah wanted to punish them with wealth and children, does this mean that wealth and children are the cause of the punishment? Do Allah's actions require causes? Do the Muslims not say that Allah's actions require no causes?' We reply to this: They said the same thing about the True Lord's words, 'And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 56).

They did not realise that the cause of creation does not benefit Allah, but rather, it benefits the creation because this worship is a source of benefit and advantage for the created being. The reason for creation is worship, and this

reason does not benefit the Creator and does not give any advantage to Allah, and nothing is added or taken away from His Dominion. Another interpretation of the verse suggests that worship is the consequence of creation, as is the case 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.’ (*al-Qasas*: 8) Did Pharaoh’s family adopt Musa (Moses) so that he would become an enemy and source of grief for them, or did they adopt him so that he would become a source of joy for them? They adopted him so that he would become a source of joy for them, but things did not turn out as they intended, and the one they adopted to be an ally and aid for them ended up bringing their end. If Pharaoh had knowledge of the unseen, he would not have adopted Musa (Moses) and would have killed him instead. The True Lord *Glorified is He* willed to conceal the unseen from him so that he would raise the child that would one day bring an end to his reign. It is like when you send your son to school and he fails, and you spend money on him, but he does not graduate. Did you put him in school so that he would fail? Of course, you did not.

Likewise, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘intends to punish them’ He wants us to understand that the punishment is not the reason for their amassing wealth; rather, the reason they amass wealth is that they love wealth and pleasure. The same is true for children: the reason for having children is not so that they will be a cause of their parents’ punishment, but rather, they have children to derive pride from them. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to punish them with their wealth and children in this worldly life. The hypocrite amasses wealth in both lawful and unlawful ways, and after this the wealth either leaves him because of some catastrophe which befalls him, or he leaves his wealth by dying, or this wealth will be a source of punishment for him and he will live in fear of poverty and loss of his blessings. Likewise, in the case of children, he will raise them and struggle with their upbringing, and then either they will leave him by dying, or they will grow up to be corrupt and therefore will be a source of punishment for him.

It is as though the True Lord’s words, ‘So let not their wealth or their children impress you. Allah only intends to punish them through them in this

worldly life and that their souls should depart [at death] while they are disbelievers' are directed from the True Lord *Glorified is He* to the believers, because Allah might confer wealth and children upon those hypocrites, but this will not be good for them. It will rather be a punishment for them; for by concealing their disbelief and pretending to be believers, they obliged upon themselves responsibilities which will claim part of their wealth and children, and this will be a punishment for them because they will have lost everything and gained nothing. They will have no reward if their children are killed, and no reward for charity they give out of ostentation and hypocrisy.

As for the second verse, which says, 'And let not their wealth and their children impress you, Allah only intends to punish them through them in this world and that their souls should depart [at death] while they are disbelievers.' It is a general verdict concerning the worldly blessings Allah gives them, whilst they deny His existence. These blessings will be a source of punishment for them because they will always fear losing their wealth or their children, and therefore they will be punished by suffering. They will also be tormented by their fear of dying and leaving behind their possessions. They do not want to die because they do not believe in the Hereafter, and their wealth and children will be a source of woe for them; if the believer's child dies, he knows that the loss of his child will close the way to hell for him and lead him to Allah's Mercy, and he will be rewarded for his loss. If the child is still young, he will be a treasure for him in the Hereafter, and if the child is grown, he will remember what the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'And those who believed and whose descendants followed them in faith - We will join with them their descendants.' (*at-Tur*: 21). This will console him for the loss of his child, but the hypocrite will live in fear and woe, and this will be a punishment for him. The True Lord *Glorified is He* alerts us to the fact that the hypocrite's wealth always causes him woe when He says, 'Indeed, those who disbelieve spend their wealth to avert [people] from the way of Allah. So they will spend it; then it will be for them a [source of] regret; then they will be overcome. And those who have disbelieved - unto Hell they will be gathered.' (*al-Anfal*: 36)

Allah *Glorified is He* punishes those who use hypocrisy to fight His religion by leaving them in their hypocrisy and then succouring His religion

so that this will cause them woe in their souls when they see the wealth they have spent and how it has introduced the opposite effect they intended, contributing to the victory and spread of the religion.

The True Lord's words, 'and that their souls should depart [at death] while they are disbelievers' refer to the greatest loss. When the disbeliever dies, and finds that there is nothing in store for him in the Hereafter but hell because he died without having any certitude that paradise exists and without having done anything to earn it, he will be cast into hell full of woe for what he left behind in this world. And this is not all, but rather, we read that Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And if you could but see when the angels take the souls of those who disbelieved... They are striking their faces and their backs.' (*al-Anfal*: 50) Thus, they shall experience the punishment.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then gives us another image of the hypocrites, saying:

وَإِذَا أَنْزَلَتْ سُورَةٌ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَجَاهِدُوا مَعَ رَسُولِهِ اسْتَأْذَنَكَ
أُولُوا الطَّوْلِ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُوا ذَرْنَا نَكُنْ مَعَ الْقَاعِدِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

**When a sura is revealed [saying], 'Believe in God
and strive hard alongside His Messenger,' their
wealthy ask your permission [to be exempt], saying,
'Allow us to stay behind with the others' [86]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 86)**

The True Lord *Glorified is He* willed to expose the hypocrites who enjoyed the same rights as the believers simply by claiming to be Muslims, when, in fact, their hearts harboured disbelief and schemes against the believers. The True Lord's words, 'and when a chapter was revealed [enjoining them] to believe in Allah and to fight with His Messenger' are addressed to the hypocrites who revealed the falseness of their faith. It is why He says 'Believe', which means to bring your hearts into agreement with your tongues, for Allah wants faith to be in the heart as well as on the tongue, so that actions are in line with convictions. His words, 'fight with His Messenger' mean: go out to war and fight alongside the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* which is a practical

expression of faith. Do not rejoice in how you have avoided going out to fight for Allah's cause because fighting in Allah's cause is a great honour which will be greatly rewarded, and so to avoid the fighting is to lose out on a great good. The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives great reward to those who truly struggle in His cause.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'those of wealth among them asked your permission.' They asked for permission to stay behind because they pretended to have faith whilst secretly concealing their disbelief, proven by their abandonment to believers when the call to fight was made. They should have joined those who went out to fight and used this as an opportunity to proclaim their repentance and return to the truth so that their fighting would make up for their previous hypocrisy; but they did not do this. They rather asked permission to stay behind.

Who among them asked for permission? They were those who possessed the necessary means to go out and fight such as bodily health and strength. They did not suffer from the weakness of old age, and were men and not boys; for the old man is too weak to go out and fight, and the young boy is not strong enough to fight. Also, a sick person might be prevented from fighting because of his illness. As for those able-bodied, they were the ones who possessed all the necessary means of war such as bodily strength and weapons. They were neither too old, too young nor too ill,

So, whenever a verse was revealed mentioning to strive in Allah's Cause, the ones who asked for exemption did not have any valid excuses – for otherwise they would have been excused – but rather, the ones who asked for exemption would be the hypocrites who satisfied all the criteria for being able to fight, yet still they asked leave to remain behind. They would say, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us, 'Leave us to be with them who sit [at home]'. The verse strictly refers to men, not women. When the hypocrites sat and stayed behind, and asked to be allowed to stay with the women, the disabled, the ill and the children, they thereby dishonoured themselves. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says about them:



رَضُوا بِأَن يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ

They prefer to be with those who stay behind.

Their hearts have been sealed: they do not comprehend [87] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 87)

They were content to be judged according to the standards of women rather than men. Therefore, they could not ‘understand’ because they were happy to be described in a way which no man should be content with, and indeed they rejoiced in this description without realising how humiliating it was for them. They fled from battle as women flee from it. The hypocrite, as we said before, has two faculties: his speech, and his heart. The hypocrite’s words proclaim his faith, yet his heart is filled with disbelief; and therefore, his faculties are contradictory.

Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies for them: ‘We shall treat you in this worldly life according to what you say, whilst in the Hereafter, we shall treat you according to what your hearts conceal. We shall set a seal on these hearts so that the disbelief shall never come out of them, nor shall faith enter them’. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘their hearts were sealed over.’

Elsewhere the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘Allah has sealed their hearts.’ (*al-Baqara*: 7), and, ‘wherefore Allah has sealed their hearts’. (*at-Tawba*: 93) As long as the disbeliever is pleased with the disbelief in his heart, the True Lord *Glorified is He* seals his heart so that the disbelief within it, cannot come out, and the faith outside it cannot come in. It is just like when you seal something with red wax, so that what is inside it remains as it is, and what is outside it remains as it is. Allah seals the heart by preventing the disbelief inside from coming out and preventing the faith outside from coming in.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘so they do not understand.’ They do not understand that they have been denied the reward and bliss of the Hereafter because of how they rejoiced in staying behind and not going out to fight; and they believe that this is good for them when really the opposite.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to reassure the hearts of the believers and tell them not to be aggrieved by those hypocrites who did not go out to fight even though they were able to do so financially and physically. The True Lord *Glorified is He* removed the effects of this from the souls of the believers by saying:

لَكِنَّ الرُّسُولَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَعَهُ جَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ
وَأَوْلِيَائِهِمْ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرَاتُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

But the Messenger and those who believe with him strive hard with their possessions and their persons. The best things belong to them; it is they who will prosper [88] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 88)

That is, do not be aggrieved by these hypocrites because they did not join the fighting alongside you, and do not say, ‘We have lost their support in our fight’, because the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not need them or their fighting, as Allah says, ‘But if the disbelievers deny it, then We have entrusted it to a people who are not therein disbelievers.’ (*al-An‘am*: 89), ‘But if they are arrogant - then those who are near your Lord exalt Him by night and by day, and they do not become weary.’ (*Fussilat*: 38), ‘Here you are - those invited to spend in the cause of Allah - but among you are those who withhold [out of greed]. And whoever withholds only withholds [benefit] from himself; and Allah is the Free of need, while you are the needy. And if you turn away, He will replace you with another people; then they will not be the likes of you.’ (*Muhammad*: 38) and ‘O you who have believed, 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)

So, if some of those who possessed power, wealth and influence refused to join the fight, this must not cause concern or grief in the souls of the believers because Allah is with them and because the most excellent things await them, which is everything that could be called ‘excellent’ or ‘good’.⁽¹⁾ ‘Those will have all that is good, and it is those who are the successful.’ The successful is the one who succeeds and triumphs by gaining the fruits of his labours. The root Arabic word, equivalent to ‘successful’ is taken from ploughing the earth which is required for farming, and man must plough it to get crops. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘and have you seen that [seed] which you sow? Is it

(1) ‘The most excellent things’ means that they shall have the good things of both this life and the next. *Al-Hasan*, however, said that it means beautiful women, based on Allah’s words: ‘In them [gardens] are good and beautiful women.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 70) See the exegesis of *Al-Qurtubi* (iv. 3149)

you who makes it grow, or are we the grower?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 63-64) When we plough the earth we churn it up, so that it softens and allows air to enter it or sunrays to penetrate it. After ploughing, it becomes receptive to air and sunrays, and this cleanses it of any stagnant water it may have contained within it. In this way, the earth takes in enough air to allow the roots of the plants to grow; for if you plant a seed in unploughed ground, the plant will not grow because its roots will not have any air to breathe. But if you plough the earth, you allow the rays of the sun to penetrate beneath the surface of the earth so that the water stored therein can evaporate and air replaces it; and then the roots of the plants can grow. So, whenever an action leads to a good result we call this success, a word which is derived from a physical matter we see every day, namely farming.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to explain an abstract concept to us, He presents us with a physical image which we can see before us to make the matter easier for the mind to comprehend. This is especially true when it comes to unseen matters which we cannot see for ourselves. If the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to make them easier for our minds to understand, He presents us with parables based on psychical things. When a man ploughs the earth and splits it, and then plants the seed in it, it gives him a large yield. Likewise, we call every action which leads to a good result a 'success'.

To explain the way *zakat* and all acts of charity will be rewarded and multiplied for us in the Hereafter, He says, 'The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills.' (*al-Baqara*: 261) If a single grain, when it multiplies in the ground, gives seven hundred grains; and if the earth, which is Allah's creation, can give you seven hundred multiples of one thing, then how much can the Creator of the earth give? And how many multiples can He make?

This is a tangible image of the reward for charity and *zakat*. When you farm the earth, you do not say, 'I have decreased my wheat stores by such-and-such a measure', because you know that you are taking this amount from your wheat stores to plant it in the earth. You do not worry about the amount of wheat you have taken from the stores, but rather, you think about what this

wheat will bring you when the harvest comes. The same is true of *zakat*: do not consider how your wealth will be reduced when you pay *zakat*, but consider how Allah will multiply this wealth for you.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* drew this parable from something physical which everyone knows, and an image which everyone can see before them, so that we can understand what awaits us. If the earth, which is the primary source of sustenance, takes one single grain planted in it and gives a yield of seven ears, each contains one hundred grains, and if the earth which was created by Allah can give you a seven-hundredfold return of what you place within it, then how much can the Creator of the earth give you?

Allah *Glorified is He* is able to multiply for whomever He wills beyond any reckoning. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives glad tidings to the believers by saying, ‘Those will have [all that is] good, and it is those who are the successful.’ (*at-Tawba*: 88). This is the reward of the believers in this worldly life, but there will also be another reward in the Hereafter, of which the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us glad tidings when He says:

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٨٩﴾

God has prepared Gardens graced with flowing streams for them and there they will stay. That is the supreme triumph [89] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 89)

We have already spoken about the tidings of gardens and rivers. Here the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks of the great goodness in which the believers will abide.

Why does Allah *Glorified is He* call the reward of the Hereafter ‘supreme success’? It is because there is a difference between goodness and success in this worldly life and success in the Hereafter. The life of this world only lasts as long as your life within it, and the enjoyment you gain from it is commensurate with the means available to you; so it contains a limited success, but nothing that could be called a supreme success. As for the Hereafter, its blessings never cease and you never leave them; the blessings live forever, and you live forever. At the same time, these blessings are not commensurate with your own power, but rather with the power of your Creator *Glorified is He* and they do not

require you to work or strive for them, but rather as soon as you think of something it comes to you. This only happens in the in paradise. This is the supreme success because it is permanent and everlasting.

The True Lord says:

وَجَاءَ الْمُعَذِّرُونَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ لِيُؤْذَنَ لَهُمْ وَقَعَدَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا
 اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٠﴾

Some of the desert Arabs, too, came to make excuses, asking to be granted exemption. Those who lied to God and His Messenger stayed behind at home. A painful punishment will afflict those of them who disbelieved [90] (The Quran, at-Tawba: 90)

These words refer to the nomadic hypocrites who lived around the outskirts of Medina and were called 'Bedouin'. The previous verses referred to the hypocrites who lived in Medina, of whom the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'and [also] from the people of Medina. They have become accustomed to hypocrisy.' (*at-Tawba*: 101)

This verse under discussion speaks of the hypocrites who lived in the desert areas around Medina, who were Bedouin. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'and those with excuses'. This refers to the ones who wanted to avoid going out to fight by proffering contrived excuses, wanting to stay behind where they were instead of fighting, even though they had no genuine excuse for doing so. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'and those with excuses among the Bedouins came to be permitted [to remain], and they who had lied to Allah and His Messenger sat [at home].' They lied to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when they claimed to believe in him, for they did not even bother to proffer false excuses, and simply remained behind. Had they truly believed, they would not have refused to go out and fight, or at least they would have asked the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for leave to stay behind.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says, 'There will be, for those who disbelieved among them, a painful punishment.' Disbelief, as we know, means to cover up faith. The hypocrites from amongst the Bedouins pretended to have faith, but their hearts were filled with disbelief; and the True Lord *Glorified is He*

says, ‘The Bedouins say, “We have believed.” Say, “You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], ‘we have submitted,’ for faith has not yet entered your hearts.”’ (*al-Hujurat*: 14) That is, they adhered to the outward actions of Islam, but faith had not yet entered their hearts.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us of the requital which awaits those Bedouin who stayed behind, saying, ‘There will be, for those who disbelieved among them, a painful punishment.’ We saw before that the punishment in hell is sometimes called ‘grievous’ in the Quran, sometimes ‘humiliating’, sometimes ‘horrendous’ and sometimes ‘lasting.’

The True Lord *Glorified is He* and then wanted to give a dispensation to those who were unable to fight and had a genuine excuse to stay behind, so He said:

لَيْسَ عَلَى الضَّعَفَاءِ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرْضَى وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ
مَا يُنْفِقُونَ حَرَجٌ إِذَا نَصَحُوا لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْ
سَبِيلٍ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٩١﴾

**But there is no blame attached to the weak, the sick, and
those who have no means to spend, provided they are true to
God and His Messenger – there is no reason to reproach
those who do good: God is most forgiving and merciful [91]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 91)**

We know that the weak person is the one who is unable to work, not because of illness but because he is either too old or too young to go to war. The True Lord *Glorified is He* also excuses the sick from fighting. These are the ones who have been afflicted with a malady which has made them unable to fight. Additionally, Allah also excused those who do not have the means to spend on their equipment because they are too poor to afford mounts to carry them or weapons to fight with.

Means of equipment, as we know, requires that you can support yourself throughout the journey to war, the duration of the war itself and then the journey home; and every warrior had to provide his own means for going to war. Allah *Glorified is He* excused those who could not afford to equip themselves and gave them other tasks to serve the cause, as He says, ‘they are sincere to

Allah and His Messenger'. That is, they advise and encourage those who can go out and fight to instil in them the zeal to fight. They could also assist those who went to fight⁽¹⁾ by combating the rumours and lies which the hypocrites stirred up in Medina to detract the Muslims' spirit, and responding to them to silence their wicked tongues.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says, 'There is not upon the doers of good any cause [for blame]. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.' The meaning is that they are not guilty of any sin or fault, nor should they be censured or reprimanded; and there is no cause for doing any of this to the doers of good. Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies that there is no cause to reproach them since they did all that is required from them, but they did not actually go to the battlefield for reasons out of their control, and they did what that faith asked of them.

If the warrior did have enough to support himself but did not possess a mount to ride, he had to go to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and ask him for a mount; and if the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'I can find nothing for you to ride upon' (*at-Tawba*: 92). There will be, for those who disbelieved among them, a painful punishment.', this was permission for him to stay behind. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says of this:

وَلَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ إِذَا مَا أَتَوْكَ لِتَحْمِلَهُمْ قُلْتَ لَا أَجِدُ مَا أَحْمِلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ
تَوَلَّوْا وَأَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ حَرَنًا أَلَّا يَجِدُوا مَا يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

And there is no blame attached to those who came to you [Prophet] for riding animals and to whom you said, 'I cannot find a mount for you': they turned away with their eyes overflowing with tears of grief that they had nothing they could contribute[92] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 92)

Those excused are: the weak, the sick, the one who cannot support himself and the one who does not have a mount even after he asked the Prophet

(1) Zayd ibn Khaldi Al-Jahni Allah be pleased with him narrated that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Whoever equips a warrior in Allah's Cause thereby joins the battle; and whoever looks after a warrior's family in his absence thereby joins the battle.' Related by Al-Bukhari (2843) and Muslim (1895)... An-Nawawi said in his commentary in Sahih Muslim, 'This reward is given to all those who look after the warrior's family in his absence by attending to their needs, spending money on them or helping them in their affairs.'

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for one, and could not secure it. The one who experienced this would grieve for two reasons: the disability of Muslims to possess enough financial means to provide the necessary equipment for the warriors themselves and the necessary means to transport them to the battlefield. The second: he was unable to get to the battlefield to join his brothers and fight alongside them, and the only way he could participate was to strive with a different kind of striving to that which occurs on the battlefield. His type of struggle was to protect the others who stayed behind from the rumours the hypocrites spread; for the hypocrites would not cease to fight the faith with their words. They would endeavour to bring false reports to the families of those who had gone to fight. In modern terminology, we would call them the ‘fifth column’. They were the ones who attempted to bring down the aspirations and spirits of the families of those who went out to fight. So, those who stayed behind from the battle because of genuine excuses had to strive in another way which was to protect the home front, composed of the families of those who had gone out to fight, by countering the war of rumours which was waged by the hypocrites.

We find that *jihad* is one of the obligations of Islam.⁽¹⁾ *Jihad* against the non-Muslims is for two reasons: Firstly, when the non-Muslims oppose the call to faith and stand in the way of the preacher to silence him and prevent him from giving the call to Allah; secondly, to allow the Muslims to disperse throughout the earth to make Allah’s word ascendant – not by compelling people to follow it, since there is no compulsion in religion. The sword which was wielded for the cause of Islam was not wielded to force people to accept the religion, but rather, it was wielded to protect man’s freedom to choose the religion he wanted to follow without any compulsion. Man’s freedom to choose can only be liberated by removing the obstacles which imposed any religion upon him so that he is free to examine all religions and then freely choose the religion he wants to follow. So, Islam was not compelled by use of the sword; otherwise, who imposed Islam onto the first people who accepted it when it was weak, and could not protect those who adhered to it?

(1) *Jihad* is an individual obligation in the case where the aggressor invades the land, but it is a collective obligation when the aggressor does not invade. Likewise, *jihad* is also obligatory to spread Allah’s Call by use of argument and proof; for Islam only resorts to the sword if the Muslims are attacked and oppressed by others.

As long as *jihad* is obligatory in this sense, every Muslim is obliged to join: either as an individual obligation if the believers are compelled by force to do something they do not wish to do or else as a collective responsibility which if fulfilled by some, the rest are excused. Allah only excused the following people from the struggle: the weak because they are too old or too young, the sick and those who do not have the means. The last category is of two kinds: those who do not have enough to support themselves at all, and those who do not have the means to go to war such as weapons or mounts.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* excused those people, and gave them another task of faith which required them to assist the families of the warriors, to hinder the rumour-mongers who sought to break the spirits of the Muslims and to reply to them and silence their wicked tongues. This was true in the case of those who did not have the means to go to war such as food, weapons and so on. As for those who have the means to support themselves but do not possess means of transport to get them to the battlefield, they must go to the ruler and ask him to provide them with a mount. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the commander of all the warfare which took place while he was alive. If he said to anyone, 'I do not have anything to carry you to the battlefield', this constituted permission for them to stay behind, but it was not sufficient to absolve them of blame. Rather, they had to emotionally express their reaction because of their desire to join and their grief at not being able to fight alongside the others. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'They turned back while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend.' The phrase 'overflowed with tears' expressed what was in the hearts of these believers. The word 'overflow' is always used for tears which are drops of water which come from the eyes out of sorrow; and if sadness is so intense the tears run out and the eyes dried up, and another liquid replaces them and it is said that the person 'cries blood'.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* depicts for us the intensity of the sorrow the believers felt when they were prevented from joining the battle. Allah *Glorified is He* did not say 'their tears overflowed' or 'they cried blood instead of tears', but rather 'overflowed with tears', as though the eye contained neither water nor blood, but that the eye itself flowed out onto the cheek. This showed the deep

sorrow in the heart; and a warrior such as this is not at all guilty of any fault or sin, for he had done his best and all that he could have done. This is clearly expressed by his emotional pain at not being able to join the others.

The True Lord says:

إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَسْتَعِذُّونَكَ وَهُمْ أَغْنِيَاءُ رَضُوا بِأَن
يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

The ones open to blame are those who asked you for exemption despite their wealth, and who preferred to be with those who stay behind. God has sealed their hearts: they do not understand [93] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 93)

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘There is not upon the doers of good any cause [for blame]’ referring to those who had valid excuses for not going out to fight and who nevertheless were doers of good, as He says, ‘when they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger.’ So, who should be reproached? The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us the answer. ‘The cause [for blame] is only upon those who ask permission of you while they are rich.’ That is, reproach and censure was only directed towards those people who were fully able, but nevertheless asked leave to stay home instead of fighting. When you hear the word *rich*, it usually refers to possessing wealth, but if the word is used in a specific way, its meaning is determined by the context of the text. The one who could not afford to support himself was excused, and therefore the one who was able to support himself was rich in food; and the weak person was excused, so the strong person was rich in strength; and the sick person was excused, and therefore the healthy person was rich in health; and the one who had no mount to carry him to the battlefield was excused, and therefore the one who had a mount was rich in the sense that he possessed a mount. In this way, do not take for granted the word ‘rich’ to mean only ‘possession of wealth’, but consider those who possess all the means to join the battle. So, rebuke and censure was rightfully directed at those people who were enriched by all these means, yet asked to remain behind.

Someone might ask, ‘Why did they ask for exemption when they were fully able to go?’ We say, ‘It was because they were hypocrites, and their hypocrisy

put them in a humiliating position such that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says about them, "They are satisfied to be with those who stay behind." Those who were pleased to remain with those who are left behind were thereby tainted by dishonour and shame, for they were happy to be treated as women. As we know, this description came in stages; first they said, 'Allow us to stay behind with those who remain at home!' (*at-Tawba*: 86). We said before that 'remain at home' is for women. They were happy to be humiliated and debased; they descended from the level of men and were happy to join the women in fleeing from battle. A poet said:

I do not know, nor am I close to knowing

Whether the tribe of Hisn are men or women!

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then tells us of the punishment which awaits them, saying, 'and Allah has sealed over their hearts, so they do not know.' In a previous verse, He says, 'and Allah has sealed over their hearts, so they do not understand.' (*at-Tawba*: 87) What is the difference between the two statements? If you see a verb which ordained responsibility given in the passive voice, such as Allah's words, 'Fighting is ordained for you, even though it is hateful to you' (*al-Baqara*: 216) and His words 'Fasting is ordained for you' (*al-Baqara*: 183), someone might say that it should have been 'Allah has ordained fighting for you' and 'Allah has ordained fasting for you' because this is a clear and binding commandment, and so it would have been better to say 'Allah has ordained for you'. Even though the True Lord *Glorified is He* ordains them, obligations are always given in the passive voice in the Quran such as when Allah says, 'prescribed for you is legal retribution for those murdered - the free for the free, the slave for the slave and the female for the female.' (*al-Baqara*: 178), and when He says, 'Prescribed for you when death approaches [any] one of you if he leaves wealth [is that he should make] a bequest for the parents and near relatives'. (*al-Baqara*: 180)

The reason is that Allah *Glorified is He* does not ordain any religious responsibilities to disbelievers; He only issues religious responsibilities to those who believe in Him and submit to Him. Therefore, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* ordains responsibilities, He says, 'O you who have believed, prescribed for you...' (*al-Baqara*: 178).

From this, we know that Allah *Glorified is He* has not ordained any obligations or tasks to those who do not believe in Him. An individual embraces faith of his own free will, and once he embraces faith Allah ordains things for him. So, faith is the basis of obligation; as long as you believe, you become addressed in what the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes obligatory; for if you do not believe, you are not subject to any obligations. So, you are the one who has obliged yourself to obey Allah's Law because you believe in Him as a Deity, Creator and God. Because of your own faith, Allah obliges you to do things, and you are a party in everything you are obliged to do. Even though He is the One Who obliges, He loves that you have entered into the sphere of religious responsibility by believing, and therefore He gives the verb in the passive voice.

If we consider Allah's words, 'their hearts have been sealed', we find that the True Lord *Glorified is He* is drawing our attention to the fact that the hypocrites are the ones who caused their own hearts to be sealed because they embraced disbelief in their hearts and then claimed with their tongues that they had faith, and tried to deceive the believers and to deceive Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* therefore wanted to make it clear to them, 'As long as you have chosen hypocrisy and disbelief in your hearts, We shall close these hearts and seal them so that the disbelief does not come out and faith does not enter'.

Allah *Glorified is He* therefore, is the One Who sealed their hearts, but only after they themselves filled their hearts with disbelief and then hypocritically claimed to have faith. They are the ones who incurred the sealing of hearts by disbelieving to begin with, so the True Lord *Glorified is He* sealed their hearts because of the sickness within them. Had they not disbelieved in the first place, Allah would not have sealed their hearts. Therefore, the verb is given in the passive voice because they were involved in it.

As for the verse which we are currently examining, He says therein, 'and Allah has sealed over their hearts, so they do not know.' When the act of sealing is attributed to Allah, this shows that the hearts have been sealed in the most powerful way. The sealing comes from Allah *Glorified is He* as a final verdict upon them. Neither the slightest amount of hypocrisy will leave their hearts, nor will a single atom of disbelief nor a single atom of faith creep into their hearts; for they do not know the value of true faith.

A person might not understand something, but someone else might be able to explain it to him and teach him about it. Therefore, to deny that someone understands or grasps the truth of something does not deny that he might know it; but when knowledge is negated, this negates both personal understanding and appeal to understanding by someone else. When Allah says, 'they do not understand', this refers to their personal understanding, but they might be taught to understand by someone else. In contrast, when Allah says, 'they do not know', this means that they neither understand, nor will they come to learn. The negation of their knowledge is mentioned alongside the attribution of the sealing of their hearts to Allah, whilst the negation of their grasping the truth is given a general attribution using the passive verb. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* denied that they grasped the truth by using the passive verb, He explained that their hypocrisy is what caused them to fail to grasp the truth. Allah, however, did not negate the possibility that they might learn from someone else in the future. But when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'so that they do not know', He further negated that they had personal knowledge, and negated their ability to learn from someone else; this is a more powerful effect. Therefore, the sealing of their hearts was even more powerful because they refused to have personal knowledge or learn it from anyone else.

That is why we find 'they do not understand' in one place, and 'they do not know' in another; and each one is appropriate to its individual context. Allah says:

يَعْتَذِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ قُلْ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا لَنْ تُؤْمِنَ لَكُمْ قَدْ
 بَيَّنَّا اللَّهُ مِنْ أَخْبَارِكُمْ وَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَى
 عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

When you return from the expedition they will carry on coming to you [believers] with excuses. Say, 'Do not make excuses. We do not believe you: God has told us about you. God and His Messenger will watch your actions now, and in the end you will be returned to the One who knows the seen and the unseen. He will confront you with what you have done' [94] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 94)

'To make an excuse' means to present a justification which absolves one of blame or censure. If it is said that someone offers an excuse, it means that

he has done something which is deemed to be bad and now wishes to be excused of it. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'They will make excuses to you when you have returned to them.' In a previous verse, He said to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* 'If Allah should return you to a faction of them.' (*at-Tawba*: 83) Thus, we may observe that when Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the returning of the companions and the warriors, He says, 'you have returned,' and when He attributes it to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He says, 'If Allah should return you.' This indicates that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was solely in the control of his Lord, whilst his followers were controlled by their own free wills. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'They will make excuses to you when you have returned to them' after which comes a plain response to the hypocrites' attempts to excuse themselves, 'Say, "Make no excuse..."'. This is a decisive response. When someone offers an excuse to you, you might listen to his excuse but not accept it; and the mere fact that you listen to his response indicates that there is a possibility that his excuse could either be accepted or rejected. But when you refuse to even listen to his excuse, this means that he is inexcusable.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says to His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Say, "Make no excuse - never will we believe you..."'. It is as if when the hypocrites approached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers began to make excuses, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* made it clear to them, 'Do not make excuses' refusing to even allow them to begin making excuses. He then took them by surprise by giving the final verdict, 'never will we believe you.' The word *believe* has several meanings: it means to have faith, as in 'I believe in Allah', and it means to accept something as being true, as in 'I believe this'. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'But no one believed Musa (Moses).' (*Yunus*: 83). The brothers of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* said to their father, 'But you would not believe us, even if we were truthful.' (*Yusuf*: 17) And in the verse which we are currently examining, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Say, "Make no excuse - never will we believe you..."'. That is, we shall not accept that what you say is true. The hypocrites came with the intention of offering false excuses, but Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* refused even to listen to these excuses, and told them, 'We shall not believe that what you say is true'.

Had the hypocrites possessed even the slightest bit of intelligence, they would have understood that Muhammad's Lord had told him everything, even what was in their hearts before they spoke it. And had they possessed the least sagacity, they would have abandoned their hypocrisy and embraced true faith. But they have not learned their lesson, and so the True Lord *Glorified is He* spelled it out for them directly by saying, 'Allah has already informed us of your news.' So it was not a matter of astute deduction, but rather, a divine inspiration.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says, 'and Allah will observe your deeds, and [so will] His Messenger.' What was the action which Allah *Glorified is He* and His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* would observe, after the Prophet refused to hear their excuses and informed them that Allah had told him about the lies they concealed in their hearts? Allah *Glorified is He* knows what the hearts contain, and He did not wish to close before them the door of repentance. After all this, they should have restrained themselves and rest assured that nothing could escape the True Lord *the Exalted* even their intentions. As long as you know that everything Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has told you is true, you must therefore restrain yourselves and abandon hypocrisy for true faith. If, however, you insist on continuing as you are, this means that you have benefited nothing from the miraculous way in which Allah informed His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* of your deceit.

Out of mercy, Allah has opened the door of repentance to you, so take this opportunity; for Allah *Glorified is He* will see all that you do in the future, and what He sees will be the basis of how you will be requited for your deeds.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'then you will be taken back to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform you of what you used to do.' As long as Allah *Glorified is He* knows all that is beyond the reach of our perception, it is all the more obvious that He also knows all that we can witness.

The unseen or unknown, as we know, is that which you cannot perceive so that you know nothing about. But if it is unknown to you but known to others, then it is only relatively unknown because there are things which veil it from your knowledge. For example, if something is stolen from you, then you do not know who stole it, whereas its place is known by the thief as well as his accomplices including the one with whom the thief hides the stolen

goods and the one who sells the stolen goods. In this case, it is unknown to you but known to others. As for the absolute unknown, it is that which is unknown to you and to everyone else. There are people who go to fraudsters who claim to read minds and are called ‘psychics’. The psychic tells someone to take all the money from his pocket and count it, and then he tells him how much is there. If you want to discover his trickery, put your hand in your pocket and take out some money the value of which you do not know, and then ask him to tell you how much is there. He will not know. Why? Because you have changed it from a manner of something unknown to one person but known to others into a matter of the absolute unknown.

The absolute unknown is that which is unknown to you and to everyone else as well. Also, it is that for which you have no clues to help you determine it. If you give your son a geometry problem to solve, the solution is unknown to him when he first reads it, and then he uses the given information and the appropriate formulas until he finds the solution. So, anything that has clues leading to their solutions are not unknown, and therefore it cannot be said that the people who discovered electricity and atom-splitting had knowledge of the unknown. There were clues in the universe which led them to discover certain laws which already existed but were previously unknown to us.

In some exercises, you find that the one who sets them writes the correct solution next to them because he does not want to know the solution but rather wants to teach the pupil the right method to reach it.

Therefore, if you want to solve a geometry problem, for example, you must have certain given information to reach the solution. If you are required to prove that two lines are parallel, this requires that every two opposing angles be equal, and that each two reciprocal angles be equal. So, you take given information or clues to lead you to the solution. In the same way, the equality of two or three sides of a triangle is proved by the equality of its angles. In such cases, can it be said that you have attained knowledge of the unknown? Or have you merely used clues to lead you to solutions? When you seek to prove the accuracy of a theorem, you say for example, that this equals that according to the theorem of number nine, and that this corresponds to that according to the new theorem; and once your proofs take you to theorem number one, this is the theorem which has no antecedent, and it must be self-evident. Thus, we find

that all the knowledge in the universe is based on self-evident theories or antecedents, which then developed into discoveries of the secrets which Allah placed in His universe. As for the True Lord *Glorified is He* He says of Himself that He is the 'Knower of the unseen and the witnessed.' That is, He has knowledge of the absolute unknown for which there are no clues to guide us to it. We cannot ever hope to know the absolute unknown because it is not known to some and unknown to others, and there are no clues to lead us to it, for it is known only to the True Lord *Glorified is He*.

We find that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, '[He is] Knower of the unseen, and He does not disclose His [knowledge of the] unseen to anyone. Except whom He has approved of messengers, and indeed, He sends before each messenger and behind him observers.' (*an-Naml*: 26-27) Allah *Glorified is He* has knowledge of the absolute unknown, which is different from those things which are unknown to some and the True Lord *Glorified is He* says of the discovery of these partially unknown things, 'and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills.' (*al-Baqara*: 255)

When Allah wills to reveal some of the secrets of the universe, He determines the time when He wishes this to occur, and everything in this universe has its proper time to come forth. For example, electricity, atoms, man's journey to the moon and the exploration of space all had their proper times to come forth, and the scientists investigated them by utilising the prior knowledge available to them. But they cannot cause any discovery to come forth without the permission Allah gives them by directing them towards this secret, either by scientific investigation or by pure happenstance. We see that mankind only encompass knowledge of these things after following their clues, and by Allah's leave.

As long as the True Lord *Glorified is He* has knowledge of what we cannot perceive, He must also have knowledge of what we can plainly witness. Someone might think that if he sits somewhere empty and concealed, Allah will not witness what he does there because he can do what he wants without anyone seeing him. But this is not the case since the True Lord *Glorified is He* knows all that is beyond the reach of a created being's perception as well as all that can be witnessed by a creature's senses or mind, and thus nothing in this universe is concealed from Him. The unknown is not unknown to Him, nor is the world we ourselves can perceive.

As long as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says that He is ‘the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed’ it was inevitable that He would then say, ‘and then He will inform you of what you used to do.’ That is, He is informing you in advance of how you will be recompensed for the good or evil you will do, so that no one can say that he did not know about this, or that had he known that his actions would lead him to a bad end, he would not have done them; and so that everyone will be a witness over himself. For Allah told him of the requital which makes it fair, not unjust. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘Sufficient is yourself against you this Day as an accountant.’ (*al-Isra*’: 14)

The True Lord says:

سَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ إِذَا انْقَلَبْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لَتُعَرِّضُوا عَنْهُمْ فَأَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمْ
إِنَّهُمْ رَجَسٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ جزاء بما كانوا يكسبون ﴿٩٥﴾

When you return to them, they will swear to you by God in order to make you leave them alone – so leave them alone: they are loathsome, and Hell will be their home as a reward for their actions [95] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 95)

The phrase ‘they will swear’ comprises a miraculous secret from Allah because the word ‘will’ here indicates that they had not yet sworn, meaning that the verse was revealed, recited and heard by the believers and the hypocrites before the hypocrites swore; and the verses of the Quran would be recited and read in the prayer, and would never change or alter until the Day of Resurrection. Had the hypocrites possessed the ability to reflect, they would not have come forth and sworn, and they would have said, “The Prophet Muhammad said in the Quran which was revealed to him that we would come and swear, but we will not come and will not swear’. But because Allah spoke these words, and He is the Creator and Doer, He willed that all sagacity leave their minds. It is like when He says, ‘The foolish among the people will say, “What has turned them away from their *qibla*.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 142)

They then went ahead and said this, even after the verse was revealed. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘They will swear by Allah to you when you return to them.’ It means to return to Medina, the place of peace and security,

after war. It is as though the balance was restored after the fighting by the return home to Medina. But why would the hypocrites swear by Allah to the believers? The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'that you would leave them alone.' That is, you might refrain from censuring and condemning them for refusing to join you in the struggle. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'leave them alone.' Give them what they want by letting them be. However, it is different in the sense that they will not be blamed nor rebuked. They are left un-blamed as a way of disgrace and humiliation to them without pardoning or forgiving them as a requital for what they did. Censure and rebuke are ways of requiting an act of disobedience, but they are only employed if one has a hope that the disobedient party might come to his senses and repent. If your son does not go to school, for example, you rebuke him, and you do this because you hope that he will fix his behaviour; but if he continues to behave in this way, you end up ignoring him, which shows that you have lost all hope of ever correcting him.

This was the case with the hypocrites. Had it been the case that censure and humiliation might have caused them to wake up and return to true faith, this would have shown that there was some hope that they might be rectified. But they could not be rectified, and in this respect, they differed from the believers. When a believer commits a sin, he deserves to be reprimanded and censured by his fellow believers, and this causes him pain. It is always possible that a believer might be heedless for a moment and commits a sin, and if after this sin he censures himself so that he feels pain for what he did; or if his fellow believers censure him, then he will wake up and feel guilty for what he has done, and this will lead him to repent.

As for those hypocrites, it would have done no good to censure them or make them feel emotional pain because they would never return to true faith. Therefore, the commandment came to leave them be because they did not even deserve to be reprimanded, since you only reprimand someone for a sin if you think that this might make him desist from it, but there was no hope that they would ever desist. The Quran gives the reason for this; 'indeed they are evil; and their refuge is Hell as recompense for what they had been earning.' The scholars say that the word '*rijs*' means that they are vile and filthy, but I say that it means filthiness itself. Do not therefore say that they

are filthy because this would imply that they were once pure and were then made filthy; actually, they were not. Rather, they were filthiness itself, and nothing could cleanse them because whatever comes from filth will be the same as it. So, they were impure, and no amount of censure or reproach could cleanse them. The word *rijs* is used here in the same way as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘O you who have believed, indeed the polytheists are *rijs* (impure)’ (*at-Tawba*: 28) meaning that they were impurity itself.

The word *rijs* also means something which is physically loathsome, like carrion. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘Say, “I do not find within that which was revealed to me [anything] forbidden to one who would eat it unless it be a carrion, or blood spilled out, or the flesh of swine - for indeed, it is impure - or it be [that slaughtered in] disobedience, dedicated to other than Allah.’ (*al-An‘am*: 145) So, carrion is physically loathsome, as is wine, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah] and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan.’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 90) So, alcohol itself is loathsome, i.e. physically loathsome. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* adds to this gambling, idolatry and divining the future, all of which are judged the same way as alcohol. Thus, we understand that alcohol is physically loathsome, whilst gambling, idolatry and divining the future are morally loathsome.

There is also the word *rijz*, which means the whispered insinuations of Satan. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘Remember when He overwhelmed you with drowsiness [giving] security from Him and sent down upon you from the sky, rain by which to purify you and remove from you the evil [suggestions *rijz*] of Satan.’ (*al-Anfal*: 11)

The word *rijs* has different meanings, and here it means disbelief; and the disbeliever is loathsome in his very nature. He is not a person who has been made loathsome. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘So leave them alone, indeed they are *rijs* (evil); and their refuge is Hell as recompense for what they had been earning.’ If the refuge to which they are headed is hell, this means that they will search for an escape and find nowhere to go except to enter hell, which of course is the worst of all places.

Is this a way of deceiving them, or is it a recompense for them? The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'in recompense for what they had been earning.' We know that both good and bad deeds are described with the verb 'earn'. This is because unlawful actions which go against Allah's instructions must involve a certain amount of contrivance, whilst lawful actions are natural, and do not trouble the soul or disturb the faculties. But some sinful people become so accustomed to sin that it becomes easy, and does not trouble them in the least. Such a person sees a sin as an acquisition; for example, someone might tell you about the adventures he had abroad when he travelled to London or Paris, and the sinful things he did there. He imagines that he is telling you about things he has acquired, not knowing that they are calamities into which he fell of his own free choice. This kind of person commits sins habitually so that his action becomes 'acquisition'. This is the opposite of the person who sins but then weeps much and feels regret. He might rebuke himself every time he thinks of the sin, and feel remorse for it.⁽¹⁾ The first rejoices in his sins and ill deeds and sees them as acquisitions, and he becomes proficient in these sins and accustomed to them.

The True Lord says:

يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ لِتَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنْ تَرْضَوْا عَنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ
 اللَّهَ لَا يَرْضَىٰ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾

**They will swear to you in order to make you
 accept them, but even if you do accept them, God
 will not accept people who rebel against Him [96]
 (The Quran, at-Tawba: 96)**

To be pleased means for the heart to feel secure about something which is beneficial? When I say, 'I am pleased with this', it means that the amount of benefit I get from it is enough for me. The levels of pleasure differ from one

(1) 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud Allah be pleased with him is narrated to have said, 'The believer views his sins as though he is sitting beneath a mountain which he fears might fall upon him; and the wicked man sees his sins as a fly which passes by his nose, so he swats it away.' Narrated by Al-Bukhari (6308), Ahmad (i. 383) and At-Tirmidhi (2497) Ibn Hajar says in *Fath al-Bari* (xi. 105), 'The Muslim is always fearful and vigilant, seeing his good deeds as slight and fearing for the smallest of his sins.'

person to another. You might be pleased with a certain benefit, and someone else might have something even better but not be pleased with it. The believer is distinguished by the fact that if anything comes to him without his acquisition to it, he must be pleased with it, because the One Who caused it to come to him is Merciful. Mercy might be contained in something without the believer being able to see it now. Allah might withhold wealth from him because He knows that if he gives him more wealth, he will spoil his children with it, and this wealth will cause them to go astray.⁽¹⁾ The True Lord *Glorified is He* therefore gives him enough wealth to feed his children until they get through their teen years, and then He blesses him with wealth once his children have reached adulthood. For the True Lord *Glorified is He* to withhold from His servants is sometimes the best way He can give to them, and therefore it is said, 'If you do not have what you want, then want what you have'.

Why did the hypocrites swear?⁽²⁾ The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives the answer, 'so that you might *be pleased with them*.' And what would the pleasure of the believers have done for those hypocrites? Could the believers be pleased if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not pleased? And could Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* be pleased if his Lord was not pleased? The only pleasure which is of any good is the pleasure of one who can give benefit. If you were pleased with them after they swore to you, being convinced because of your human nature, your pleasure could not benefit them in any way, nor did the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* have any pleasure other than his Lord's Pleasure. The only truly beneficial pleasure here would be the pleasure of Allah. Beware, then, of being deceived by their sweetened words and artful speech into being pleased with them.

The True Lord says, 'indeed, Allah is not satisfied with a defiantly disobedient people.' That is, if they attain your pleasure, this pleasure is far removed from Allah's pleasure and the pleasure of His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.

(1) The Sheikh said elsewhere that even when Allah withholds, He gives; and when He gives, this might be a curse.

(2) *Al-Qurtubi said in his exegesis (iv. 3157) that 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy swore to the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him that he would not stay behind at wartime ever again, and asked him to be pleased with him.*

It does not reflect the Prophet's pleasure nor Allah's Pleasure. The True Lord *Glorified is He* ends the verse by saying, 'Allah is not satisfied with a defiantly disobedient people.' And if Allah is not pleased with them, then your pleasure cannot avail them. It is foolish for them to seek your pleasure. Your pleasure will not do anything for them at any time unless it reflects the pleasure of Allah and His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Here we might ask, 'Are they disobedient, or are they disbelievers'? We say that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Verily, the hypocrites shall be in the lowest depth of the fire.' (*an-Nisa'*: 145) That is, the destination of the hypocrites in Hellfire is even lower than that of the disbelievers. So how the hypocrite could be called disobedient, given that even a believer might be disobedient? A believer might be disobedient by committing a grave sin. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'As for the thief, the male and the female, amputate their hands in recompense for what they committed as a deterrent [punishment] from Allah.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 38) A believer might steal and might also commit adultery, as Allah says, 'As for the adulteress and the adulterer...' (*an-Nur*: 2).

As long as Allah *Glorified is He* declared the act to be criminal and set a punishment for it, this means it is possible that a believer might commit it. But we must distinguish between the disobedient person and the sinner: the one who commits grave sins is disobedient, and the one who commits venial sins is a sinner. So why does the True Lord call the hypocrites disobedient?

Let us call to mind what we always say, which is that disbelief means to disbelieve in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and Islam, and if iniquity accompanies disbelief, then it is not the iniquity of a person who sins whilst being Muslim, but it means to disobey even the other religions which his own people follow. All religions comprise certain values, and their followers will be accountable for the values which their religion ordains, but even some are also iniquitous in this regard.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* and then says:

الْأَعْرَابُ أَشَدُّ كُفْرًا وَنِفَاقًا وَأَجْدَرُ أَلَّا يَعْلَمُوا حُدُودَ مَا
 أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾

**The desert Arabs are the most stubborn of all peoples in
 their disbelief and hypocrisy. They are the least likely to
 recognize the limits that God has sent down to His
 Messenger. God is all knowing and all wise [97]
 (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 97)**

Before, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* spoke of the hypocrites who were not Bedouins, namely the Arabs to whom Allah's Message was revealed, as it was to all people. In this verse Allah *the Almighty* speaks about the Bedouins (*A'rab*) – and what is the difference between Arabs (*'Arab*) and Bedouins (*A'rab*)? Arabs were those who lived in towns and settled in specific places from which or within which they sought their livelihoods and to which they always returned, living in permanent dwellings and settlements. As for Bedouins, they lived in the wilderness and had no fixed abodes. They would move between grazing sites, having no fixed homes and no special affiliations to any particular place. This meant that none of them had civic laws to govern them in the places they lived and each one of them answered only to himself or to the chief of his tribe. As long as they lived this way, having no homes to inspire them to act peacefully and respectfully with other, they were all considered to be 'wild'; in other word, they had no affiliation to any place, community or civil law.

On the other hand, the one who lives in a town which he calls his home has neighbours, is ruled by laws, and has an affiliation to a place and to the inhabitants of this place. He cooperates with others and gets along well with the other inhabitants of his town and has affinity for them; affinity and affiliation afterwards brings about peaceful relations. This is the opposite of the situation of those who live as nomads; they are filled with harshness, rudeness and boorishness since their environment has stigmatised them and made them accustomed to solitude and isolation.⁽¹⁾

(1) *An example of their harshness is that Abu Hurayra narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him kissed [his grandson] Al-Hasan ibn 'Ali, whereupon Al-Aqra' ibn Habis At-Tamimi, who was sitting nearby, said: 'I have ten sons, and I have never kissed a single one of them.' Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him=*

If one hears the word 'Bedouin', he should know that they are nomadic people infamous for their harshness since they do not have any community spirit which would inspire them to be kind and polite.

The word *a'rab* is the plural of the word *a'rabi*, which is one of the singular-plural forms found in Arabic. Thus, *a'rab* is the plural of *a'rabi*, not *'arab*. Bedouins were of two kinds: some of them had experience of civilisation since every civilised family might have had land in the wilderness to which they would sometimes go so that when they went there they would be treated as guests; these were known as *ma'arif* (acquaintances). On the other hand, some who lived in the wilderness might have had relations in the civilised world, so that when they had to go to the town or city, they would stay with them. There was another kind of Bedouin who neither owned land in the wilderness nor in the towns.

After speaking about Arabs and their hypocrisy, Allah *the Almighty* speaks here about Bedouins by saying: "[The hypocrites amongst] the Bedouin are more tenacious in [their] refusal to acknowledge the truth and in [their] hypocrisy [than are settled people] and more liable to ignore the ordinances which Allah has bestowed from on high upon His Prophet – but Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.' (*at-Tawba*: 97)

Why were they more tenacious in their disbelief and hypocrisy? This was due to them living far away from centres of knowledge and religious teaching,⁽¹⁾ and they are harsh and rough-natured.

Allah's Words '...and more liable to ignore the ordinances which Allah has bestowed from on high upon His Apostle...' (*at-Tawba*: 97) mean that they are less likely to know the limits which Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* has ordained

= looked at him, and then said: {He who has no mercy shall be shown none.} Narrated by Al-Bukhari(5997) and Muslim (2318)

(1) Someone might ask: 'How can this be, when we use their poetry and rhetoric as evidence in our scholarly research, and linguist such as al-Asmai and others used to interview the Bedouin tribes to learn their languages?' Abu Yahya al-Ansari answers this in (*Fath ar-Rahman*) (p. 172) by saying: 'Their ignorance concerned the rulings of The Quran, not its vocabulary. We do not use their language as proof for the elucidation of rulings, but rather to show what certain words mean, because The Quran and *Sunna* were revealed in their languages.'

since knowledge of the limits that He has ordained in the form of commandments and prohibitions, and the lawful and unlawful, comes from being connected to centres of knowledge, and this cannot occur when a person moves from place to another constantly, rather, it requires him to be settled. True knowledge, as we know, means that a scholar possesses immense knowledge of the universe, whereas each one of us has knowledge commensurate with his experiences in life and with the time he spent studying under the tutelage of well-learned scholars; only Allah *the Exalted* encompasses the knowledge of everything.

Human knowledge might be utilised, or it might not be; many people have knowledge but do not utilise it, and if someone has knowledge but does not utilise it, his knowledge is to his detriment. As for those who utilise their knowledge, putting commandments, prohibitions, the lawful and the unlawful in their proper places, and making appropriate judgements for doubtful matters, they are the ones who can be called ‘wise’ since they put everything in its proper place.

When Allah *the Almighty* ordains a commandment, He does it with knowledge and wisdom; as long as He ordains it, we must not disobey Him since every law that He sends down to His messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is meant to regulate the motions of life. It is Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* the One Who created life and created all created beings. Beware of spiting yourself by ordaining laws which incur Allah’s Wrath, for all the corruption in the world is caused by those who want to enact laws for man even though they did not create him. We advise them to leave the making of laws to the Creator of man, for Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* is their Maker and therefore knows best the limits of what He has made, and He has ordained laws for the good of man, and only He can repair them if they are damaged or corrupted.

Amongst these Bedouin, there were those who were more tenacious in their disbelief and hypocrisy, and thus, more liable to ignore the ordinances which Allah *the Almighty* bestowed from above upon His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. Also, there were others of whom Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَيَتَرَبَّصُّ بِكُمْ الدَّوَائِرَ
 عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾

Some of the desert Arabs consider what they give to be an imposition; they are waiting for fortune to turn against you, but fortune will turn against them. God is all hearing and All Knowing [98] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 98)

For example, if a caller to Allah preaches to them about Islam, some of them might openly claim that they follow Islam. Yet, once they learn that the zakat (poor-due) exists in Islam, they give the collector the due amount, but they would consider it as a 'loss', i.e. a waste, and thus give it reluctantly. As long as you give it reluctantly, this means that you do not really believe in the wisdom behind giving it, and you reckon what you give as being taken from you. Also, you would be more apt to say, 'They took from me the fruits of my labour and gave it to someone who does not work for a living.' You forget that what is taken from you is insurance for your life since when you are disable to work, you will find others to support you in the same way. Islam takes from you when you are able to work and gives to you when you are disabled, and this is insurance for your life.

It is widely known that everything in this universe is unsustainable; power, illness, health and disability are unsustainable. If you are able bodied, it is possible that you may become incapacitated; and likewise, if you are healthy, you may get ill. Therefore, when the Lawgiver assures you that in the event of your fellow man being incapacitated, that something will be taken from you to help him when you are able bodied, you will face life with strong faith and courage. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* is telling you that you do not live on your own, rather, you live in an interdependent society; if you become incapacitated, the strength of others will be your reference. One Bedouin would pay the poor-due reluctantly and reckon it as a loss, and others amongst them would hope that Muslims would be beset by a disaster, so that they would not take the poor-due from him. Thus, one of them would wait for misfortunes to encompass Muslims, as Allah *the Almighty* says: '... and wait for misfortune to encompass you ...' (*at-Tawba*: 98). This means that some

hope and wait for a disaster to befall Muslims so that they would not collect from him the poor-due which he considered to be a loss.

Why does Allah *the Almighty* say 'misfortune' (*dawa'ir*)? We know that when a calamity befalls a man or a community and it is very strong, Arabs say that misfortune (*dawa'ir*) has encircled (*darat*) them which means that it has encompassed them to an extent that there is no way for them to escape from. Some of Bedouins would wait for misfortune to encompass Muslims since they hated paying the poor-due and saw it as a loss; they did not understand that the poor-due is added to a person's account of good deeds, that it is a means of purifying wealth and causing it to grow, that it looks after those who are incapacitated and that if any of them were to become incapacitated, they would find others to look after them.

The one who waits for misfortune to encompass you does not understand the wisdom of what is taken from him will be the one whom evil shall encompass, as Allah *Glorified is He* says '... it is they whom evil fortune shall encompass – for Allah is the All-Hearing, All Knowing.' (*at-Tawba*: 98) This is due to them not understanding and appreciating the value of living in a faith-based society, which would give the poor-due to them if they became incapacitated. If you wait for misfortune to encompass the one who takes from you, and you do not realise that the one who takes from you can also give to you if you were to become incapacitated, then misfortune will be yours.

Allah's Words '...it is they whom evil fortune shall encompass...' (*at-Tawba*: 98) appear to be a claim, and who is making this claim? Allah is. There is a difference between the claim of a powerless being and the claim of a powerful being. It is as though Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* Himself is saying '... it is they whom evil fortune shall encompass ...' (*at-Tawba*: 98) which means that evil fortune shall certainly encompass them, without any doubt.

Allah *the Exalted* ends the verse by saying: '... for Allah is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.' (*at-Tawba*: 98) So, He hears their words when the collector comes to collect his share of the poor-due and how they would receive him rudely. Or they might have harboured a grudge deep in their souls without speaking. If they spoke, then Allah *the Almighty* is the All-Hearing; and if they did not speak and concealed the hatred in their hearts, then Allah is All Knowing. Thus, they were encompassed by Allah's Knowledge and His Hearing.

After this Allah *the Most High* comes to the second kind of Bedouin: those who were at least partly civilised, being either Bedouin with family in the towns or with townspeople with Bedouin families. He *Glorified is He* says:

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرْبًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
وَصَلَوَاتِ الرَّسُولِ أَلَا إِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَهُمْ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٩٩﴾

But there are also some desert Arabs who believe in God and the Last Day and consider their contributions as bringing them nearer to God and the prayers of the Messenger: they will indeed bring them nearer and God will admit them to His mercy. God is most forgiving and merciful [99] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 99)

Some of these people believed in Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* and the Last Day, and when they gave the poor-due or charity, they did so in order to draw nearer Him since they believe in Him and see it as a treasure for them in the Hereafter. The word *qurba* in this verse means '... a means of drawing them nearer to Allah ...' (*at-Tawba*: 99), which would be stored up for them until the Last Day. Allah's Words 'and of [their being remembered in] The Prophet's prayers' (*at-Tawba*: 99) mean that they considered what they spent as a means of drawing nearer to Allah *the Exalted* and also a way of asking Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to supplicate for them since 'prayer' (*salah*) in essence means 'supplication'. When charity for weak Muslims reached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from those who considered them as a means of drawing nearer to Allah, Prophet Muhammad would supplicate to Him for those who gave.

For example, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'O, Allah, forgive the family of Abu Awfa and bless them!' when the poor-due and charitable contributions of Abu Awfa were brought to him. Also, the supplications of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were always answered, unless Allah *the Almighty* announced that He would not answer them for some reason.⁽¹⁾

(1) For example, when He *Glorified and Exalted is He* said: 'Ask forgiveness for [O Muhammad], or do not ask forgiveness for them. If you should ask forgiveness for them seventy times - never will Allah forgive them. That is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger, and Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.' (*at-Tawba*: 80).

Someone might say, 'Does the giver of the poor-due and charity who does so as a means of drawing nearer to Allah not know that He does not benefit anything from this? Does he not know that it is only a means of devotion for himself personally?' Indeed, he does know this, and he knows that Allah will reward him for something that benefits the poor. This indicates that every responsibility ordained by Allah benefits the assignee rather than the obligator. As long as the assignee is the one who benefits from it, Allah *the Exalted* calls him to what is best for him and what brings him goodness.

Concerning those who consider what they give a means of drawing closer to Allah *the Almighty* He says: '... Oh, verily, it shall [indeed] be a means of [Allah's] nearness to them, [for] Allah will admit them unto His grace ...' (*at-Tawba*: 99). Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* said this to the Bedouin who gave in order to draw closer to Him, and also, who hoped that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would supplicate for him. Allah is telling those like this that indeed it would be a means of Allah's nearness for them since they would benefit from it and Allah *Glorified and Exalted is he* would admit them into His Grace. Allah's Grace and Mercy is an everlasting blessing. As for paradise, it is eternal as long as Allah *the Exalted* keeps it in existence. Therefore, to be admitted into Allah's Grace and Mercy is even better than being admitted into His Paradise. Therefore, when it is said that someone has been 'admitted into Allah's Mercy', this means that he will be covered by grace forever.

Furthermore, when any Bedouin hears Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* say: 'However, amongst the Bedouin there are [also] such as believe in Allah and the Last Day and regard all that they spend [in Allah's cause] as a means of drawing them nearer to Allah and of [their being remembered in] the Prophet's prayers. Oh, verily, it shall [indeed] be a means of [Allah's] nearness to them, [for] Allah will admit them unto His Grace...' (*at-Tawba*: 99), he will speak to himself about Allah's Gifts and will relinquish all evil impulses from his mind, namely any tendencies to want to sin, along with any evil slips of tongue he might have been tempted to utter. Also, this Bedouin might say to himself, 'I fear that Allah might not forgive these impulses, sins and evil slips.' Thus, the verse reassures him that as long as he committed these sins heedlessly or forgetfully, he should know that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* is Forgiving and

Merciful, and there is no need for him to torment himself by imagining that he will not be admitted into Allah's Grace and Mercy.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy!...' (*at-Tawba*: 99). Perhaps, someone who hears what came before this might imagine that reward, nearness and admittance to Allah's Grace and Mercy are only given to those who have never sinned, so these words tell him, 'Be reassured that if you have ever been guilty of sin and heedlessness, know that Allah *the Almighty* is Forgiving and Merciful. Do not let your sin destroy your faith that you will be admitted into Allah's Grace and Mercy.'

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* then says:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ
 يَأْتِيهِمُ الرِّيحُ عَنِّي مُبْتَذِئَةً
 فَسَبَّحُوا بُحْبُوحَةَ الْأَزْوَاجِ
 وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

God will be well pleased with the first emigrants and helpers and those who followed them in good deeds, and they will be well pleased with Him: He has prepared Gardens graced with flowing streams for them, there to remain for ever. That is the supreme triumph [100] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 100)

We are all believers, praise be to Allah, both 'the forerunners' and those who believed later. However, there were people who believed first –were they forerunners in the chronological sense or in the sense of being the most faithful followers? The chronological sense of being forerunners only applies to the contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Mistakenly, one assumes that 'forerunners' in this verse means those who came before us

(1) Abu Hurayra narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: {God says: '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.'} Narrated by al-Bukhari(7405) and Muslim (2675)

chronologically; thus, someone might wonder: 'What fault did we commit, not to be distinguished as those who are chronologically forerunners?' Therefore, we say that the issue of being forerunners only applies in relation to one's contemporaries meaning that there were other people during their times whom they outstripped, which is why Allah says in this verse '... amongst the Muhajireen and the *Ansar*...' (*at-Tawba*: 100). We know that those who emigrated with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were not all the Muslims of Mecca. Furthermore, when He *the Most High* says '... amongst the Muhajireen and the *Ansar*...' (*at-Tawba*: 100), this means that not all of the inhabitants of Medina who were *Ansar* (Helpers) were necessarily of 'the forerunners'. This means that the forerunners of those who embraced faith in Mecca and those who aided the Muslims in Medina are the ones meant by 'the forerunners'.

In chapter of *al-Waqi'a*, Allah *Glorified and Exalted be He* says: 'And the forerunners, the forerunners those are the ones brought near [to Allah] in the Gardens of Pleasure.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 10-12) Then, the next rank after them is 'The companions of the right - what are the companions of the right?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 27) Allah *the Exalted* specifies who the forerunners are by saying: 'a good many of those of olden times, but [only] a few of later times.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 13-14) Therefore, when someone says, 'None of the Ummah, or followers, of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who followed his time could possibly reach the lofty status of the Companions since Allah *the Almighty* called them the 'forerunners'.' We say to him, 'No, you must also understand that Allah *the Almighty* also says: "A [large] company of the former peoples. And a few from amongst the latter."' (*al-Waqi'a*: 14) This shows that some of those who came after the time of Prophet Muhammad could attain the highest rank; therefore, Allah *Glorified and Exalted be He* did not deny any member of Muhammad's followers until the end of time to reach the lofty status of the Companions.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave reassurance to those who are not contemporaries of his lifetime by saying, 'I would have loved to meet my brethren.' The Prophet's companions said to him, 'Are we not your brethren?' He said, 'You are my companions, but my brethren are they who shall believe in me without having seen me.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (iii. 155) on the authority of Anas ibn Malik

This was a true word spoken by Allah's chosen one, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for there are those of us whose dearest wish is to perform the pilgrimage and visit the Noble Tomb of the Prophet. Furthermore, the Prophet went on to describe his beloved ones, 'The deeds of one of them shall be like that of fifty men.' They said, '[Fifty men] of them, or of us, O, Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'Of you, for you have much help in the good you do, yet they will have no help in the good they do. This is indeed what is happening in our times.

However, who are the forerunners meant in the verse we are currently examining? 'And the first forerunners [in the faith] amongst the Muhajireen and the Ansar...' (*at-Tawba*: 100). We know that the first of the Muhajireen (Emigrants) were those who fought at Badr and participated in the first battle in the history of Islam, even though they had not set out from Medina with the intention of going to war, rather, they intended to raid a caravan transporting goods and claim battle-spoils. Yet, despite this they went to war, not with caravans guarded by sentinels and shepherds,⁽¹⁾ but with the army of the Quraysh that came from Mecca, led by the leaders of the Quraysh.⁽²⁾ Thus, the rank of those who fought at Badr was that of the forerunners who struggled in the first battle in Islam's history.

Therefore, when Hatib ibn Abu Balta'a⁽³⁾ divulged the news that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would attack Mecca, the Prophet sent for him and said, 'What made you do this?' for Prophet Muhammad wanted to conquer Mecca without anyone knowing, so that the Muslims would not fight the believers who still lived in Mecca as they came out to defend it with the others, and the Muslims would not know that they were believers.

(1) *This was because Abu Sufyan took the coastal road with the caravan when one of his scouts told him that he had seen two riders halt on the hill and draw some water and then depart. Abu Sufyan went to the spot they had halted and took some of the camel dung there and broke it up, and saw that there were date-stones in it. He said, 'By God, this is the fodder of Yathrib', and returned quickly to his companions, and turning the caravan away from the road they pressed on at full speed along the shore by the sea, leaving Badr on their left. See Ibn Hisham's Sira (ii. 618).*

(2) *They were Abu Jahl, Umayya bin Khalaf, and others.*

(3) *The story of Hatib Ibn Abu Balta'a sending a message to Quraysh in the pigtail of a woman informing them of the intention of Prophet Muhammad to conquer Mecca*

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to conquer it by surprise so that the disbelievers' ferocity would be dampened, but Hatib ibn Abu Balta'a wrote a message to some of the Quraysh, and Allah *Glorified and Exalted be He* told His Prophet about this. Therefore, the Prophet told 'Ali and his companions to go to a place called Rawdat Khakh, which was along the road between Mecca and Medina, where they would find a female traveller with a message to the Meccans hidden in her braids. When 'Ali went with his companions and searched for the woman in the place Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had told them, they found the woman, but she denied she had the message. So, they threatened her, and she brought out the message from her braids. They found that it was addressed to some Qurayshi idolaters from Hatib ibn Abu Balta'a. They took the message back to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* who sent for Hatib and said to him, 'What made you do this, Hatib?' He replied, 'O, Messenger of Allah, I have familial and land connections with the Quraysh, but I am without standing amongst them. Thus, I sought to win their favour, so that they would recognise me and look after my family and my property. Also, I knew that this would not harm you in any way, that Allah would aid you and that what I did would help me but not harm you.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'You have spoken the truth. You have spoken the truth.' 'Umar Allah *be pleased with him* wanted to strike him with his sword, but the Prophet said, 'He fought at Badr, and for all you know it may be that Allah looked upon the men of Badr and said, "Do as you wish, for I have forgiven you."'

This is due to the men of Badr having gone to battle unprepared and ill-equipped, yet, they were willing to do so; thus, it is as though Allah *Glorified and Exalted be He* said, 'You did what you had to do, and I have forgiven all the sins you might do.'

Thus, the forerunners amongst the Emigrants were those who fought at Badr, those who were present at the Treaty of Hudaibiyya and those who made the Pact of Goodly Acceptance after returning with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from the lesser pilgrimage, after which he made treaties with the Quraysh.

Furthermore, the forerunners amongst *Ansar* (the Helpers) were the ones who came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in Mecca and

gave him their backing, promising him security and alliance; there were twelve of them at the first Pledge of Al-'Aqaba and seventy-five at the second Pledge of Al-'Aqaba. They were the forerunners. Also, Allah *Glorified is He* adds to them: '...as well as those who follow them in [the way of] righteousness...' (*at-Tawba*: 100). What this means is that those who would come after them 'in [the way of] righteousness ...' (*at-Tawba*: 100).

Allah *the Exalted* said: 'and [to cause this message to spread] from them unto other people as soon as they come into contact with them...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 3).

Also, He says in the chapter of *al-Hashr*: 'And so, they who come after them pray: "O, our Sustainer! Forgive us our sins, as well as those of our brethren who preceded us in faith ..."' (*al-Hashr*: 10). Furthermore, in these cases, the pertinent phrase is also added;

In the verse we are currently examining, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment.' (*at-Tawba*: 100). These words give a reassurance to the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that Allah *Glorified and exalted be He* did not only tell us about the hideous group of hypocrites amongst the Arabs and the Bedouin, but He also informed us that there were people who conveyed unto us the beauty of this religion.

Allah *Glorified and exalted be He* then says:

وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُم مِّنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنَافِقُونَ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ مَرَدُّوا عَلَىٰ الْإِنْفَاقِ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّوْنَ إِلَىٰ عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

Some of the desert Arabs around you are hypocrites, as are some of the people of Medina – they are obstinate in their hypocrisy. You [Prophet] do not know them, but We know them well: We shall punish them twice and then they will be returned to [face] a painful punishment [in the Hereafter] [101] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 101)

Allah *the Most High* clarified in this verse, 'Prepare yourselves for the fact that around you, amongst the Bedouin and the people of Medina, there are hypocrites' Likewise, this preparation would give the immunity of vigilance

so that none of these hypocrites could take advantage of any of the good believers who happened to be heedless. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* alerts them, 'Beware, for you are living in a society surrounded by hypocrites.' Vaccination against the diseases which afflict nations is one of the ways of fighting the enemy; we do this on a material plane when we hear that there is a rampant epidemic, taking vaccinations which immunise us from it. Even though the vaccination itself is a form of disease, it gives us immunity against the disease. In the same way, Allah *the Almighty* wishes to give us immunity so that the believers will not be attacked, whilst they are heedless, so He says: 'And amongst those around you of the Bedouin are hypocrites, and [also] from the people of Medina. They have become accustomed to hypocrisy. You, [O, Muhammad], do not know them' (*at-Tawba*: 101). They become accustomed to something and experienced with it so that they become adept at it; it is as though they are extremely skilled at hypocrisy. All of this is meant to give immunity to the Islamic community so that a believer can face anything with his eyes wide open, and if he detects any behaviour which involves hypocrisy, he can spot it immediately. Alertness protects a person from what is harmful, but does not keep him from what is good.

Suppose that someone says to you, 'This road is dangerous, so do not traverse it alone at night.' Then, another person says, 'It is a safe road, and we traversed it without anything happening to us.' If you are cautious and take a weapon or a companion with you, thereby, you prepare for the worst and guard yourself against it; thus, if nothing happens, then what have you lost? You have not lost anything. This is a logical philosophical position, by means of which we may respond to those who try to raise doubts about the religion, such as astrologers and so-called 'philosophers' by claiming that there will be no Reckoning no Resurrection, nor Last Day. A poet says:

The astrologer and the doctor both claim

The dead will not be regained:

If you are thought to claim,

Then I have nothing to claim

But if I am plain!

then you have no one to blame!

This means that if what you say is true and there will be no resurrection – Allah is our refuge – then I shall not lose anything since I do good deeds. Therefore, if indeed there will be a Resurrection – which is the truth – then I shall be rewarded in Paradise, so I shall not lose, but gain. However, suppose that you commit all kinds of evil acts and then the Resurrection comes: you will be the losers. So, the logical philosophical position is that even if I do not gain, I shall not lose out; on the other hand, even if you do not lose out, you will not gain.

Allah *the Exalted* says in this verse: 'And amongst those around you of the Bedouin are hypocrites and [also] from the people of Medina. They have become accustomed to hypocrisy. You, [O, Muhammad], do not know them,' (*at-Tawba*: 101). The Words 'amongst those around you' indicate that you are surrounded, and not only by those who dwell around you, but also by those who dwell in your midst in Medina; these are the ones who are so adept at hypocrisy as if they have an affinity with them.

These verses, as we know, were revealed to give an account of the state of the hypocrites. Hypocrisy causes the different faculties of a person to be in conflict since disbelief dwells deep in the heart, whilst belief is only uttered by the tongue; thus, the heart does not agree with the tongue. Those who believe speak words which agree with what is in their hearts, and those who disbelieve do the same.

As for the third category, those who express faith with their tongues, whilst their hearts conceal disbelief, these are the hypocrites. The word *munaḥfiq*, or 'hypocrite', is derived from the word *naḥḥa* which means the tunnels of the jerboa, a desert animal that resembles a mouse and deceives those who hunt for it by making several entrance holes in its nest or its burrow; thus, if a man or animal pursues it, it enters one hole so that the hunter thinks it will come out of this same hole and stays there waiting for it to come out, but in the meantime the jerboa comes out of a different hole. It is as though it deceives the hunter; the hunter thinks that its burrow only has one hole, but in fact the burrow has more than one entrance and exit. With this image in mind, we can say that hypocrisy entails two aspects: an aspect of sickness on the part of the hypocrite and an aspect of health on the part of the object of his hypocrisy. This is why the phenomenon of hypocrisy did not arise in Mecca, but only in Medina.

It seems strange that hypocrisy arose in Medina, where Islam found refuge and from where it began to spread until it had reached the whole world. Yet, it did not arise in Mecca whose inhabitants wanted to suppress Islam and whose leaders and rulers waged war on the Divine Message.

Therefore, we are able to recognise two aspects of hypocrisy: the first is the aspect of sickness, as Allah *Glorified and exalted be He* says: 'In their hearts is disease, and so Allah lets their disease increase...' (*al-Baqara*: 10). As for the second aspect, it is the aspect of health. Islam became strong in Medina unlike how it had been in Mecca at the beginning of the message. Only those who are strong are faced with hypocrisy since a hypocrite wants to benefit from the strength of others, and furthermore, a hypocrite knows that he is unable to confront the strong or stand in open enmity against them. Thus, when hypocrisy arises, it only arises in areas of strength, not weakness. No one cajoles the weak man; rather, the strong man is prey for people's hypocrisy. So, hypocrisy arises from an aspect of sickness on the part of the hypocrite and an aspect of soundness on the part of the target of his hypocrisy.

Allah *the Almighty* wanted to reveal to the believers the malicious intents of the hypocrites who spied on them, behaving like thieves in that they only came out into the open at night, and they tried stealthily sneaking into places without being noticed, seeking out those entrances that were concealed, along with concealing things which contradicted what they revealed.

As for a confrontation with a disbeliever, it is open and plain since he candidly unearths what is in his chest and confronts you with open enmity. You are, therefore, able to confront him with all your strength and intelligence since his movements are plain to see. As for a hypocrite who claims to have faith, whilst his heart is filled with disbelief, he creeps up on you, and you must be cautious and aware of the ways he can gain access to you since he is waiting for an opportunity to stab you in the back.

Allah *the Most High* alerts us to the necessity of caution, along with the need for believers to have wisdom, awareness and discernment, so that they see things as they truly are and are not deceived by them. Therefore, He *the Almighty* revealed to us all the different aspects of hypocrisy: He revealed the hypocrites of Medina, where both hypocrites and non-hypocrites were present, and He revealed the hypocrites amongst the Bedouin who were composed of both

hypocrites and non-hypocrites. Also, He taught believers how to detect hypocrites by recognising the signs which reveal what their hearts conceal. Furthermore, He says about hypocrites: 'And if we willed, we could show them to you, and you would know them by their mark, but you will surely know them by the tone of [their] speech ...' (*Muhammad*: 30).

However, there was another form of hypocrisy which was skilful and subtle that even an intelligent person was unable to spot. Therefore, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* clarifies for us: 'I do not leave it up to your intelligence to identify the hypocrites, rather only I know them with certainty, whereas you do not know them since they are especially skilled in their hypocrisy.': '... You do not [always] know them, [O, Muhammad – but] We know them...' (*at-Tawba*: 101). Despite the wisdom and intelligence of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah *the Exalted* made it clear to him that even he would sometimes be unaware of their identities due to their skill in hypocrisy was such that they revealed no sign of it.

The Quran was especially precise in its expression saying that they had been 'accustomed to hypocrisy', derived from the root letters *m-r-d* which describe something soft and smooth that is without cracks; the word *amrad* means a young boy whose face has not grown any hair. Thus, the root of this word centres on the concept of constancy and the lack of anything to disturb this constancy.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* is saying: 'Be on your guard, for amongst the Bedouin who dwell around you there are hypocrites.' Allah's Words 'who are around you' give the impression that they were surrounded by hypocrisy. Why was this the case? The reason for this was that new revelations from Heaven did not come unless an environment became steeped in corruption.

We know that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* placed in the soul means of resisting falsehood so that if falsehood presses itself upon the soul for a while, the soul will recognise it and drive it away.⁽¹⁾ These people are the ones who repent: they commit a sin, and then their faith returns to them, and they renounce

(1) Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'Indeed, those who fear Allah - when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember [Him] and at once they have insight.' (*al-A'raf*: 201) *That is, they come back to righteousness and correct their prior error. (Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, ii. 279).*

it. Therefore, the deterrence either comes from within the soul itself, or it comes from society to the soul which does not restrain itself; this is the ‘soul which enjoins evil’, which does not only enjoin evil a single time, rather, it continues to enjoin it ceaselessly becoming skilled at this task; this is indicated by the Arabic word *ammara* which indicates constancy and persistence.

If a soul has immunity, then this is an easy matter, and a ‘self-reproaching soul’ acts on its own. Thus, if a soul is weak in some way, then the society around it will restrain it, in which case the immunity is present in society itself. However, if society too becomes steeped in corruption, then not only will a soul possess no self-restraint, but society will not offer any restraint either. At this point, Heaven must intervene, and Allah *the Almighty* must send His Message with its signs, its proofs and its messenger’s miracle. When this happens, the people of corruption – who possess ‘souls which enjoin evil’ – will take a hypocritical stance in order to infiltrate the new power, whilst their souls will continue to enjoin evil upon them; thus, the phenomenon of hypocrisy emerges.

Allah's Words *Glorified is He* 'And amongst those around you of the Bedouin are hypocrites and [also] from the people of Medina. They have become accustomed to hypocrisy. You, [O, Muhammad], do not know them,' (*at-Tawba*: 101) mean ‘You are both infiltrated and surrounded, for hypocrisy exists in the place where you live, as well as the area around you.’

The worst thing a person can fear is for a harmful force to be around him and in his midst, for if the harmful force exists in the place where he lives, those around him might save him, or he might leave the place. However, if he is surrounded by harm from those around him as well as in the place where he lives, then where will he go?

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* wanted to alert the believers to the fact that the phenomenon of hypocrisy was widespread; the believers were able to identify some instances of it by observing the behaviour, character and speech of the hypocrites,⁽¹⁾ whilst other instances would be so subtle and hidden that

(1) *Abu Hurayra is narrated to have said: ‘The hypocrites have signs by which they may be known: Their greetings are curses, their food is pilfered, and their booty is stolen. They never approach mosques unless they are fleeing, and they are always late for prayer. They are arrogant, neither friendly nor befriended. They are lazy as boards of wood by night and boisterous by day.’ Narrated by Ahmad (ii. 293) and Al-Bazzar (Kashf al-astar, 85).*

they would not recognise them – but He would know them. Since they were not left to their own devices, rather they had a Lord who could teach them what they knew not, they could rest assured that He, would expose hypocrites to them. The result of this knowledge would be that they would see hypocrites punished, as Allah *the Exalted* says: '... We shall cause them to suffer doubly⁽¹⁾ [in this world], and then they will be given over to awesome suffering [in the life to come].' (*at-Tawba*: 101) Thus, they would be made to suffer twice in this worldly life, and then be given over to the suffering of the Hereafter. The first cause of suffering for the one who conceals his hypocrisy is that his hypocrisy is exposed, which is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* once addressed the people thus: 'Stand up, so-and-so, for you are a hypocrite. Stand up, so-and-so, for you are a hypocrite. Stand up, so-and-so, for you are a hypocrite!'⁽²⁾ Or it may mean that misfortunes would come to him in this worldly life.

Someone might say, 'But would these misfortunes be for a hypocrite alone, or would they befall a believer, too?'

We reply that misfortunes befall a believer in order to benefit him; however they befall a hypocrite in order to destroy him. When a believer encounters misfortune, Allah *the Almighty* either erases one of his sins by means of it or else He raises his rank because of it.⁽³⁾ On the other hand, when misfortune befalls a hypocrite, it is nothing but a loss since a hypocrite does not hope for anything in the Hereafter. This is why it is said, 'The misfortunate one is not the one who loses what he loves; the misfortunate one is the one who is deprived of the Hereafter's rewards.'

(1) Once in this world, and once in the grave by being shown the punishment which awaited them in the Hereafter.

(2) *Abu Mas'ud Al-Ansari said: 'Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him addressed a sermon to us, first praising and lauding God and then saying: {There are hypocrites amongst you, so those whom I name must stand. Stand, so-and-so! Stand, so-and-so! Stand, so-and-so!} He went on like this until he had named thirty-six men.'* Narrated by Ahmad (v. 273) and Al-Bayhaqi (*Dalai'l An-nubuwwa*, vi. 286).

(3) '*A'isha narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: {A believer is not afflicted, even by a thorn or anything more than it, save that God raises his rank or effaces one of his sins by means of it.}* Narrated by Muslim (2572), Ahmad (vi. 42) and at-Tirmidhi (965)

If a believer accepts misfortune with patience and satisfaction, knowing that it was sent to him by the All-Wise, Who knows what, is good for him even if he does not know himself, he will be rewarded for his patience and his contentment. Therefore, he will be spared any serious pain. The non-believer, on the other hand, wants to rebel against fate, and because of his lack of faith, he goes unrewarded.

Or, the twofold suffering might not mean that their hypocrisy is exposed but might be manifested in their attempt to act as though they are believers and Muslims. This means that each one of them has to pay the poor-due, and wealth is beloved to the soul, so he pays the poor-due grudgingly and feels that he has lost his money since he does not believe in Allah, and therefore, his misfortune is great. Also, the hypocrite might send his son to war even though he knows he will gain no reward for this, which is another form of suffering.

This suffering is mentioned explicitly when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And let not their worldly goods and [the happiness which they may derive from] their children excite thy admiration. Allah but wants to chastise them by these means in [the life of] this world ...' (*at-Tawba*: 85).

Or the suffering of this worldly life might be what they see when in their death throes when the spirit reaches the throat and the dying man sees the angels. This point is elucidated when Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'And if you could but see when the angels take the souls of those who disbelieved. They are striking their faces and their backs and [saying], "Taste the punishment of the Burning Fire."' (*al-Anfal*: 50) These are all forms of worldly suffering.

As we know, there are three times clearly marking human life: his lifetime, his death time and his Hereafter time. When a believer encounters misfortune in his lifetime, this worldly life, he is consoled by the rewards of his later times, his Hereafter. However, when a disbeliever or a hypocrite is beset by misfortune in his worldly life, there is nothing which can console him since he does not believe in Allah, along with not hoping for any of the good things Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* has to offer. Thus, when the clock of his second time strikes, namely death, he is encountered by 'the torture of the grave' (*'adhab al-qabr*).

Torture only exists in two forms: either to be shown the suffering which awaits one, or to actually experience this torture which will take place in the Hereafter. As for the presentation of the torture, this occurs in the grave.⁽¹⁾ It is as though Allah *the Almighty* says to one: 'Behold what awaits you!'⁽²⁾ Thus, if a man sees the evil which awaits him, will this not cause him to suffer? Indeed, it certainly will. '... We shall cause them to suffer doubly [in this world], and then they will be given over to awesome suffering [in the life to come].' (*at-Tawba*: 101) Had Allah *Glorified is He* only said 'We cause them to suffer doubly' with saying 'shall', the meaning would be completely different and would convey that once one of them had been made to torture, his account would be settled. However, His Words '...We shall cause them to suffer ...' (*at-Tawba*: 101) affirm for us, every time we read them, that the suffering will be ongoing.

Allah *the Almighty* ends this noble verse by saying: '... and then they will be given over to awesome suffering [in the life to come].' (*at-Tawba*: 101) The words 'they will be given over' are like the words 'they will be brought back' or 'they will return'. Sometimes we say 'they will be brought back', and other times we say, 'they will return'; it is as though the words 'they will return' mean that the human soul will be pleased to gain its requital, whereas the words 'they will be brought back' mean that a higher power will force them to return without delay.

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- (1) *Allah Glorified and Exalted is He* says: '...And Allah preserved him from the evil of their scheming, whereas suffering vile was to encompass Pharaoh's folk [Gafir: 45] The fire [of the hereafter – that fire] which they had been made to contemplate [in vain], morning and evening: for on the Day when the Last Hour dawns [Allah will say], 'Make Pharaoh's folk enter upon suffering most severe!'[46]' [Gafir:45-46] Ibn Kathir says in his exegesis (iv. 81): 'This verse indicates that the souls will be shown their punishment morning and evening in Barzakh [a realm of life between this world and the Hereafter], but does not indicate that they will feel physical pain in their graves, since this refers specifically to their spirits; as for the pain which will afflict the body in Barzakh, it is only mentioned in the Sunna, by way of sound Hadith.'
- (2) Ibn 'Umar narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: {When one of you dies, his destiny shall be shown to him morning and evening; if he is of the denizens of Paradise, then [he will be shown that he is] of the denizens of Paradise; and if he is one of the denizens of hell, then [he will be shown that he is] of the denizens of hell. And it will be said, 'This is your destiny, until Allah Glorified and Exalted is He summons you forth on the Day of Resurrection!'} Narrated by al-Bukhari (1379) and Muslim (2866)

Thus, we find that either the one who is punished will be compelled by a higher power, or else something within him will compel him to go to receive his punishment. A man might behave in a certain way, and then return to his senses and be displeased by his action, along with rebuking and chiding himself, since something within the soul itself insists that there be punishment.

Furthermore, one might live his entire life with a 'soul which incites evil', committing evil acts, and then when the punishment befalls, he says to himself: 'Take this punishment, my soul, for what you have done!' Therefore, the one who is punished might be compelled to go to receive his punishment, or he might compel himself to go. '... And then they will be given over to awesome suffering [in the life to come].' (*at-Tawba*: 101) As we said before, there are different kinds of suffering: it can be awesome, grievous, shameful or lasting. Grievous suffering can either be caused by means or by the Creator of means Himself. The suffering of this worldly life is always caused by means: the punishment might be carried out by a cane, a lash or by humiliation. These means differ in their strength or weakness. The suffering of the Hereafter, however, is caused by the Creator of all means, and the punishment of the Hereafter is meted out by One Alone Whose Power is Infinite. If the suffering of the Hereafter is compared to the suffering of this worldly life, it will certainly be seen that the suffering of the Hereafter will be awesome.⁽¹⁾ Allah says:

وَأَخْرُونَ أَعْتَرَفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا
عَسَىٰ اللَّهُ أَن يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

**And there are others who have confessed their wrongdoing,
who have done some righteous deeds and some bad ones:
God may well accept their repentance, for God is most forgiving
and merciful [102] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 102)**

Allah's Words 'And amongst those around you of the Bedouins are hypocrites and [also] from the people of Medina. They have become accustomed to

(1) *Abu Hurayra* narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: {Your [earthly] fire is but one seventieth of the fire of hell.} It was said, 'O Messenger of Allah, if it were [only akin to the fire of this world], it would be enough!' He said: {It is sixty-nine times hotter than [the fires of this world].} Narrated by *al-Bukhari* (3265) and *Muslim* (2843)

hypocrisy ...' (*at-Tawba*: 101). Would they all remain in their hypocrisy, or would some of them return to their senses and realise that their position was shameful, even to their own selves? For the first estimation in which a hypocrite falls is his own, for he acts underhandedly, being too weak to act directly, and thus, he considers himself to be lower than those he seeks to confront and despises himself. Some hypocrites must surely have been displeased by this condition and desired to bring an end to it, either by believing or by disbelieving, and then by preferring faith and ridding themselves of their hypocrisy by acknowledging their sins. By doing this, they would become those of whom Allah *the Exalted* says: 'And [there are] others – [people who] have become conscious of their sinning ...' (*at-Tawba*: 102). What this means is that those who have not persisted with their hypocrisy and become conscious of their sin, their becoming conscious of sin is a way of confessing it. There are different ways of confessing sin. One person confesses his sin with regret, whilst another confesses it impudently. For example, when one says to someone, 'Did you hit so-and-so?' Then, he says, 'Yes, I did.' He is confessing his sin. However, if he then adds, 'And I will hit anyone who defends him, too!', then this is an impudent confession. Then, there is the one who confesses his sin regretfully; he admits that he committed the sin and asks to be pardoned. This is the confession which Allah *the Almighty* accepts. They had '... become conscious of their sinning ...' (*at-Tawba*: 102) regretfully, which is implied by the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* says that they had 'done righteous deeds side by side with evil ones' (*at-Tawba*: 102). In this verse, their righteous deed is that they confessed their sin and recognised that to be exposed in this life is easier than to be exposed in the Hereafter; as for their evil deed, it was that they declined to join the struggle and spend in Allah's Cause.

Their consciousness of their sinning was a regretful confession, and the scholars have differed as to whether this constituted repentance or not. We say that when Allah *the Exalted* said '...[they] have become conscious of their sinning after having done righteous deeds side by side with evil ones...' (*at-Tawba*: 102), and then said '... [and] it may well be that Allah will accept their repentance, for verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy' (*at-Tawba*: 102); this means that He might turn to them in Mercy, for this is only the beginning of repentance and not repentance itself. If it was

accompanied by regret for the past transgression accompanied with determination not to repeat it in the future, then the matter is determined by whether they did this in fear of being exposed or in a genuine attempt to follow Allah's Way of Guidance. Also, if they were genuinely seeking to follow Allah's Way of Guidance, then their repentance was sincere.

The words 'done...side by side' (*khalatu*, literally translates to 'mixed') mean to combine two things which were separate, and this action may take two different forms. The first form is that they are mixed together whilst still being distinct, such as if things which do not mix are combined together; an example of this is mixing chickpeas, grains and beans together in one container, for nevertheless, each will retain its individual and separate form. One does not cause a grain to enter a chickpea, and they do not join together to make a single thing, for if this were to happen it would be a blend, not a mix; an example of a blend is when milk is added to tea, for when they are put together, they make a single liquid which cannot be divided again.

Therefore, when they mixed righteous deeds with evil ones, they did not make a single blend of these deeds, rather, the righteous deed remained righteous, and the evil deed remained evil.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: '... it may well be that Allah will accept their repentance ...' (*at-Tawba*: 102). The word '*asa*' ('it may well be') implies hope, which further implies that something good is likely to happen; also, it is an expression of expectation of something desired. Hoping is not the same as wishing since wishing is loving something and desiring that it existed although it cannot possibly exist, as when a poet said:

If only youth were to return one day,
So I could tell it what old age has done!

He wishes that his youth could return, which implies that his youth was beloved to him; however, this will never happen. Therefore, to express something one desires had two forms: one form is possible, and the other is impossible; the one which is possible is called 'hope', and the one which is impossible is called 'wish'. A poet said:

If only the stars would come down so I could string them
Into a necklace of praise for you, for words are not enough!

This poet wishes that this would happen, but it will not. As for hope, it applies to that which could possibly happen, and hope has different levels and degrees in the human soul. When you hope something for someone and were to say, 'It may be that so-and-so will give it to you', you are expressing hope to someone concerning someone else, who is the person who can actually give the thing hoped for, so there are three parties involved here.

However, do you have authority over the person who might give? No, you do not. If you were to say, 'Maybe I will give it to you', you are expressing hope to someone else about what you might give him, so this is more likely to actually happen. If you were to say, 'Maybe I will give it to you', you might say this whilst you are feeling well-natured towards the person to whom you are speaking, but then you might hear something about him that changes your feelings towards him, or you might intend to give him but not find anything to give him; in this case, the hope goes unfulfilled.

However, when you say, 'Maybe Allah *Glorified is He* will give you', you express hope in Allah *the Almighty* for him, and Allah is well able to do all things, and no vicissitudes can affect Him. Also, if Allah *the Exalted Himself* says, 'It may well be that Allah will do it', this is the strongest possible expression of hope.

Thus, we have four different levels of hope: to say 'So-and-so might give you', to say 'I might give you', or to say 'Allah *the Most High* might give you', to which He might either assent or not – but when the Allah *the Almighty* says 'I might do it', this is the fourth kind of hope. Furthermore, they say that if Allah *the Exalted* hopes for something, it is inevitable. '... It may well be that Allah will accept their repentance' (*at-Tawba*: 102). This is an expression of hope that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* will accept their repentance; as for a servant's repentance itself, this requires that he regret what he has done, return to Allah's Way and resolve not to incur Allah's Wrath in the future. As for Allah's accepting repentance, it includes all the different forms of repentance. Allah's legislation of repentance is a mercy to those who sin and also a mercy to those who are the victims of such behaviour that requires repentance. Furthermore, if you repent, then the acceptance of your repentance is a second mercy, for had Allah *the Most High* not established repentance,

everyone who sinned would increase their sin and fill society with his evils. However, when Allah *Glorified is He* established repentance, this created hope that a servant would return to Him, that society would thereby be spared his continued sin and that he would cease to cause trouble for others.

Furthermore, when Allah *the Almighty* accepts repentance, it is said that He 'turned (*taba*) to them in mercy'; so Allah has more than one form of repentance (*tawba*) which is why we read His Words: '... He turned again unto them in His mercy, so that they might repent ...' (*at-Tawba*: 118). What this means is that Allah *the Exalted* established repentance for them so that they might repent, and if they repented, He accepted their repentance. Thus, repentance has three stages: first it is legislated, then it occurs, and then it is accepted. The Arabic word *tawba* literally means 'to return' from something, for a man it means to return from a sin, while for Allah *Glorified is He* it means to return from and forego the punishment that a sin would have deserved had a sinner not repented.⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* ends the verse by saying: '... for, verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy' (*at-Tawba*: 102) since forgiveness is difficult for a man. For example, if someone steals something from you, he harms you, and the desire for vengeance nags at you because of how he harmed you. However, does anyone harm his Lord by sinning? No, he does not because if he harms anyone, it is himself, not Allah; He is in no way harmed by his sin, rather, the sin harms him alone.⁽²⁾

(1) Imam Abu Ḥamid Al-Ghazzali says in his commentary on the divine Name (*at-Tawwab*) (*The Most-Relenting*): 'He is the One who returns to facilitating repentance for His servants again and again by means of the signs He sends to them and the warning, cautions and admonitions He gives them, so that by His direction they come to recognise the dangers of sin and by His admonition they come to feel fear, so they repent, whereupon Allah's grace returns to them in the form of His acceptance.' (*Sharh Asma Allah al-Ḥusnaa*, p. 123).

(2) Abu Dharr related that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says in a *Qudsi* Ḥadith: {O My servants, you are incapable of harming Me, and you are incapable of benefiting Me. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, and the human and the jinn of you, were as pious as the heart of the most pious man amongst you, it would not increase My dominion ought. O My servants, and if the first of you and the last of you, and the human and the jinn of you were as wicked as the heart of the most wicked man amongst you, it would not decrease My dominion ought.} Narrated by Muslim (2577), Ahmad (v. 145), at-Tirmidhi (2495) and Ibn Majah (4257)

When Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says 'Oft-Forgiving', He is Oft-Forgiving of him, and 'a Dispenser of Mercy' to him. There are two kinds of misfortunes or calamities: those in which one has an adversary and those in which he does not. If one becomes ill, he has no adversary in this illness, whilst if he is robbed, then the robber is the adversary. These misfortunes for which one has an adversary drive the soul to react and punish the adversary, but when a misfortune involves no adversary, it is attributed to Allah. This is why it is said that a misfortune which involves no adversary is the one which requires greater faith. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'But withal, if one is patient in adversity and forgives – this, behold, is indeed something to set one's heart upon!' (*ash-Shura*: 43)

He emphasises this in this verse that the adversary disturbs one's soul, and whenever one sees him, he remembers what the adversary did to him, and he is, therefore, incited to do evil.

In His Statement: 'Bear with patience whatever befalls you. These are the most honourable traits!' (*Lugman*: 17), the context needs no emphasis, for no one cares to harass a person held in adversity. Those who became 'conscious of their sinning' (*at-Tawba*: 102) are those who were left to stay behind the army without having any excuse and then they came and said, 'We have no excuse.' They did not try to concoct false excuses. We know that some persons did not offer any excuse, while others offered true excuses, and there are still others who proffered false excuses. Those who became 'conscious of their sinning' (i.e. declared that their excuses for staying behind the Prophet and forsaking fight were untrue as they had no good reason for their action) had their repentance accepted earlier as Allah *the Exalted* corrected their faith, whilst Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was still in Tabuk.

After the battle, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* returned to Medina, and he first went to the mosque to offer his two-unit prayer as he would usually do upon returning from journeys.⁽¹⁾ He found some people had tied themselves to the pillars of the mosque. He asked about them. In

(1) Muslim, *Saheih*, (Hadith: 2769) in the long narration of Ka'b ibn Malik's about his repentance after staying behind the Prophet during the Battle of Tabuk; see also Ahmad, *Musnad*, 3:455; Abu Dawud, *Sunan*, (Hadith: 2773).

response, some told him that those were the ones who falsely offered false excuses to stay at home and did not join the battle. Now, they acknowledged their sin and vowed not to release themselves until Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself declares his acceptance of their apology and releases them. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'I do swear by Allah that I will not release or pardon them until I am commanded to do so. They spurned me and refused to join Muslims in battle.'⁽¹⁾ When Allah *Glorified is He* revealed this Quranic verse, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* untied them. Abu Lubabah was one of those persons. Therefore, those who visit Medina will find a column named after Abu Lubabah who was the first to tie himself to that column before others followed him. Evidently, when a believer is firm in faith and deeply concerned with the matters of faith, he does not wait for the Divine punishment to befall him but punishes himself at once. For example, a woman and a man⁽²⁾ who committed adultery both came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked for the due penalty.⁽³⁾ They did not wait for Allah *the Most High* to punish them, rather, they gave themselves up. When 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* expressed his reluctance at one of them, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Hold back, 'Umar! She has offered such repentance that if it were divided between seventy of the inhabitants of Medina, it would be sufficient for them.'⁽⁴⁾ Abu Lubabah ad himself tied to the pillar in affirmation of his firm faith, remorse and truthful desire for atonement. Certainly, the

(1) *See the causes of revealing this verse, Al-Qurtubi, Tafseer, 4: 3168; al-Wahidi, Asbab al-Nuzul, p. 148.*

(2) *The man is Ma'iz ibn Malik Al-Aslami (Al-Bukhari, 6815; Muslim, 1691) and the woman is Al-Ghamidiyyah (Muslim, 1695).*

(3) *That man was Ma'iz ibn Malik al-Aslami whose story is narrated by al-Bukhari (6815) and Muslim (1691). A narration of Muslim states that he went to Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and said, 'I have wronged myself and committed adultery; I want you to purify me!' As for the woman, she was from Ghamid Tribe (1695).*

(4) *When the woman was stoned, Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him offered funeral prayers for her. 'Umar may Allah be pleased with him said, 'Will you offer prayers for her, O Prophet, and she was an adulteress?' Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him replied: "She has offered such a repentance that if it was divided between seventy of the inhabitants of Medina, it would be sufficient for them; is there any repentance greater than to give one's life to Allah Almighty?" Muslim (1696) and Ahmad, 4:440*

punishment of the Hereafter is worse than that of this world. These sinners became conscious of their sin and questioned their actions, refrainment from the battle and false excuses! They found that the battle of Tabuk took place in extreme heat when Arabs enjoyed the shade of orchards and ate ripe dates. Thus, they solemnly vowed to take the wealth that kept them from the battle and led them to sin and give it in charity. It was not the obligatory charity of the poor-due, but a voluntary charity they paid to expiate their sins. They said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Take that wealth which kept us from joining the struggle!' In reply, Prophet Muhammad refused it until Allah accepted it:

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ
صَلَوَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾

In order to cleanse and purify them [Prophet], accept a gift out of their property [to make amends] and pray for them – your prayer will be a comfort to them. God is All-Hearing, All Knowing [103] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 103)

It was not an obligatory charity. Simply, if it were obligatory, it would not need a new directive. Rather, it was a voluntary charity for expiation. The Lord's Words 'that [part] of their possessions' (*at-Tawba*: 103) designated the possessions of those who acknowledged their sins; Allah *the Exalted* declared them owners of their possession, though He is the Owner of all things. He *the Most High* says, 'Give them [their share] of the wealth of Allah which He has given you' (*an-Nur*: 33). The Lord *the Most High* transfers graces to His servants and He *the Almighty*, clarifies, 'If I tell you to give something from the wealth I have given to you, I do not thereby reclaim what I gave to you.' Therefore, if a believer needs anything from his fellow believer, the True Lord *the Exalted* says, 'Who is it that will offer up unto Allah a goodly loan' (*al-Baqara*: 245). Allah *Glorified is He* is the Giver of all possessions and honours the gifts He grants. In reflection on this verse: '[Hence, O, Prophet,] accept that [part] of their possessions which is offered for the sake of Allah' (*at-Tawba*: 103), the scholars observe that when possessions are attributed to their owners, it means to encourage them to work in life more than they need

to and to make savings. In this way, a man earnestly works and extends benefits to others even if he does not intend it. It is divine assurance that any earning a man makes from work beyond his needs will be their possession and should not be taken from them unless he is legally incompetent. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Do not entrust to those who are weak of judgment the possessions which Allah has placed in your charge for [their] support’ (*an-Nisa*: 5). Clearly, the weak-minded persons are not competent for legal actions and disposition of their possession; their unwise acts might squander their wealth. So, Allah *the Most High* the All-Wise, gives the ruling to keep the possessions of the weak-minded person out of their charge until they attain maturity, for the possessions also belong to the community. The Lord *the Most High* teaches, ‘If you find them to be mature of mind, hand over to them their possessions’ (*an-Nisa*: 6). Their possessions should be returned to them once they reach maturity and qualify for ownership.

In this Quranic verse, Allah *the Exalted* says, ‘[Hence, O, Prophet,] accept that [part] of their possessions which is offered for the sake of Allah, so that you may cleanse them thereby and cause them to grow in purity’ (*at-Tawba*: 103). Allah *the Most High* owns all things and releases thereof by the means He chooses for mankind in their life’s work; He entrusts unto them the fruits of their labour and their possessions. Hence, no one will decline to work. If everyone receives only his basic needs in return for his work and is not allowed to keep possessions, people would be disinclined to work, along with those who are unable to work would not receive any benefits. Allah *the Almighty* decrees to allow people to take possession of all things beyond their needs since a human soul naturally yearns for possessions. Evidently, Allah *the Exalted* imposes some shares to be taken from possessions and promises multiple returns for that through the growth of possessions.

The Lord’s Words ‘Accept that [part] of their possessions’ (*at-Tawba*: 103) attribute possession to owners so long as they are free from weak-mindedness or immaturity, e.g. a minor heir who is disqualified for financial actions. Thus, the Lord *the Most High* explains that the possessions of the weak-minded/infants do not belong to them to take action, and then, a wise guardian should look after the possessions. Allah *the Almighty* warns a guardian against transgression

of these possessions. A guardian only had them to look after them properly until a minor reaches adulthood or a weak-minded person retains sound mind: 'Do not entrust to those who are weak of judgment the possessions which Allah has placed in your charge for [their] support' (*an-Nisa'*: 5).

Beware, guardians, of thinking that Allah has given you these possessions; He only entrusts you with guardianship. He *the Most High* says, 'Then, if you find them to be mature of mind, hand over to them their possessions' (*an-Nisa'*: 6). He did not say, 'hand over to them your possessions!' Scholars *Allah be pleased with them* observe that since one's possessions contain an acknowledged share due to the begging poor and the deprived, he should not be regarded as the only owner; there are others who have shares in it—the begging poor and the deprived. The shares of the poor and the deprived are exceptions from ownership. According to another Quranic verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And in whose possessions there is a due share, acknowledged [by them], for such as ask [for help] and such as are deprived [of what is good in life]' (*al-Ma'arij*: 24-25).

A 'due share' means the poor-due which is a specific amount that must be paid from the wealth. The other kind of charity is set by the donor himself; it is voluntary. Therefore, the chapter of *adh-Dhariyat* does not mention 'acknowledged'; Allah *the Exalted* says, 'Behold, the God-conscious will find themselves amid gardens and springs, enjoying all that their Lord will have granted them. Verily, they were doers of good in the past. They would lie asleep during but a small part of the night and would pray for forgiveness in the watches of the night and [would assign] in all that they possessed a due share unto such as might ask [for help] and such as might suffer privation' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-19).

Allah *the Exalted* spoke of the due share without saying that it is 'acknowledged', for the owner of wealth held in the rank of spiritual excellence (*ihsan*), which requires him to do more good deeds beyond the obligatory ones. Allah *the Most High* did not command man to spend all night in prayer or to spend it beseeching Allah for forgiveness. Rather, a Muslim may pray the evening prayer and sleep until the dawn prayer. If he is willing and able, he may pray through the night in pursuit of the rank of *ihsan*. Likewise, a Muslim must pay the poor-due—a specific due share; but if he wants to rise to the rank

ihsan, he gives more than the poor-due. He gives Allah His due share but not specific so those whose intentions are noble may give more than just the specific due share. Instead of giving only 2.5%, one who wishes for the rank of *ihsan* may give double this or more.

Scholars *Allah be pleased with them* say that the Lord's Words 'accept that [part] of their possessions' (*at-Tawba*: 103) imply that the money taken for the poor does not belong to the poor, rather, it belongs to the giver. Had Allah specified the share due to the poor, it would mean its loss when the money is lost, so the poor person will have no right. Conversely, since wealth belongs to a rich man, a poor man's right is payable, and the possessor of the wealth must pay it, which is better for the poor. For example, if a rich man does not give the poor-due at its proper time and the money is lost, then the rich man must repay for the poor their due share.

'[Hence, O, Prophet,] accept that [part] of their possessions which is offered for the sake of Allah, so that you may cleanse them thereby' (*at-Tawba*: 103). Charity cleanses and purifies their souls from the taints of disobedience. As long as they sullied their souls with disobedience, they needed to purify themselves by means of charity from their wealth which held them back from the battle. We may observe here the rhetorical style of the Quran. The Lord *the Most High* instructs the Prophet 'accept that [part] of their possessions which is offered for the sake of Allah' (*at-Tawba*: 103) which means from the possessions of the wealthy. The charity will go to the needy. We have four elements here:

- The one who takes—Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*,
- The giver—the owner of the possessions,
- The thing which is taken—the part of the possessions,
- The one for whom it is taken—the needy person.

As long as this instruction is being given to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* it is also applicable to all those in charge of a Muslim community. Someone might say, 'It is charity, not poor-due.' In response, we say that as long as Allah makes it a means of purification, it must be obligatory. The Quranic verse is unambiguous. It imposes a legal authority for

the rulers to take from the rich and give the poor and other legal recipients.⁽¹⁾ Allah *the Almighty* does not will to humiliate the poor by forcing them to beg for charity from equal human beings. If He takes from a ruler who is responsible for the poor, then there is no shame in this. Moreover, the Lord *the Most High* wants to protect poor families from knowing that a certain household has given them poor-due, lest their children feel humiliated before the children of the giving families who may also act arrogantly. When a ruler gives, no one feels arrogant or humiliated.

If there is no Muslim authority and one does not know where to give his charity, every individual becomes responsible for the distribution of the poor-due. In this case, there will be one who gives—the owner; he gives a given share of the wealth to the recipient—the poor person. When reading Allah's Words: 'so that you may cleanse them thereby and cause them to grow in purity' (*at-Tawba*: 103), some maintain that the verse speaks of purifying the giver of charity and growing their wealth. However, a deeper understanding leads us to highlight three elements who enjoy cleansing (i.e. removal of sins and impurity) and growth (increase) in the verse:

- the owner of the wealth from whom the charity is taken,
- the wealth given is also cleansed and made to grow and,
- the taker of charity—the poor person.

Impurity is accidental to the pure essence, so we wash and remove it. Growth is something additional that causes increase. In this way, charity results in purification and growth to all elements involved. For the giver of poor-due, he may have heedlessly allowed some doubtful gains to come into the wealth, so the poor-due cleanses the wealth. Now, how does growth take place? When taking from the wealth of a healthy and able person, it ensures

(1) Allah (God) explains the recipients of the poor-due when He said: 'The poor-due shall only go for the poor and the needy, and those who are in charge thereof, and those whose hearts are to be won over, and for the emancipation of human beings from bondage, and [for] those who are overburdened with debts, and [for every struggle] in Allah's Cause, and [for] the wayfarer: [this is] an ordinance from Allah – and Allah is All Knowing, Wise.' (*at-Tawba*: 60) Sheikh already commented on this Quranic verse. A Shari'a-led ruler may take some of the Muslim wealth to establish social justice following the Guidance of the Quran.

that he will also receive help when he is in need. In this way, the giver of charity knows that he is not living alone nor has no need to fear the loss of wealth. Give and when you need, be assured that you will have your necessary means. In this way, the social trust grows and the wealth becomes pure from doubtful gains. You might imagine that paying the poor-due results in partly loss of the wealth and that usury increases it. For example, usury might turn 100 into 110 pounds whilst after giving the poor-due, 100 pounds becomes 97.5. Following the superficial human standards, the poor-due decreases the wealth whilst usury increases it. However, the Divine Standard of the Possessing Lord maintains that poor-due, which we see a loss, causes growth and the usury which we see as a gain actually causes loss. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Allah deprives usurious gains of all blessing, whereas He blesses charitable deeds with manifold increase’ (*al-Baqara*: 276).

In other words, human beings have their standards of judgement and Allah *the Almighty* has His own. What you see a loss Allah sees an increase and what you consider a gain is actually a loss. How is that? Simply, people only consider the positive provision, thinking that this is the only sustenance. They forget all about all invisible graces. The positive grace may increase the wealth from 100 to 110, but the invisible graces lie, e.g. in being full sustained by 70 instead of 100 or in keeping a person from spending on evil things.

The Lord *the Most High* says, ‘Whatever you may give out in usury so that it might increase through [other] people’s possessions will bring [you] no increase in the sight of Allah, whereas all that you give out in charity, seeking Allah’s countenance, [will be blessed by Him]. Those who seek His countenance shall have their recompense multiplied!’ (*ar-Rum*: 39)

However, how can charity be a means of cleansing for the needy recipient if he did not commit a sin? In reply, when a needy person takes from others while being unable to earn for himself, his heart becomes clear from bitterness towards those blessed with wealth, since they have their due shares in their wealth. He feels no bitterness or envy towards them. Furthermore, if he sees them doing well, he prays that they do even better since parts of their gains will come to him. The Egyptian farmers, for instance, give milk and milk products to one another. When one of their dairy animals passes by villagers,

they pray for Allah to protect it. This is how the soul of a needy person gets rid of bitterness and envy.

Now, what about growth and increase? When a poor person sees the faithful society looking after and supporting him, and the wealthy people vying with one another to help him, his soul grows in tranquillity, for he is in a faithful and kind society. Allah's Words 'so that you may cleanse them thereby and cause them to grow in purity' (*at-Tawba*: 103) refer to all the elements included. Allah *the Exalted* then says, 'and pray for them' (i.e. supplicate for their good). Whenever anyone brought charity to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* he would say, 'O, Allah, send blessings upon them!' Once Abu Awfa brought charity to him, so he said, 'O, Allah, send blessings upon the family of Abu Awfa!'⁽¹⁾ Everyone loves this verbal encouragement and loves to give more and more. Even those who had nothing to give would work hard to give and hear such sweet words from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah *the Almighty* then says 'Behold, your prayer will be [a source of] comfort to them' (*at-Tawba*: 103). This means that it gives them tranquillity and serenity. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prays for a charity-giver, it is a sign that this charity has been accepted; Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* rewarded it with supplications. When the one who receives the charity hears this, he is also motivated to work for livelihood and charity to win such prayers from the Prophet? The Lord *the Most High* concludes the verse by saying: 'for Allah is All-Hearing, All Knowing.' He hears everything you call 'speech' and He knows everything you call 'action'. The Lord *the Most High* then says:

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾

Do they not know that it is God Himself who accepts repentance from His servants and receives what is given freely for His sake?

He is always ready to accept repentance, most merciful [104]

(The Quran, at-Tawba: 104)

'Do they not know' (*at-Tawba*: 104) is composed of the question word 'do', the negation word 'not' and the verb 'know'. Does Allah want us to

(1) *Al-Bukhari (1497); Muslim (1078) on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn Abu Awfa*

deny that they have knowledge or to affirm it? Allah *the Exalted* is making a 'rhetorical question', which implies negation. Why did He not simply say 'Know that' in the imperative mode? In response, when the Lord *the Most High* presents something in the interrogative form, it implies that the one who responds has no option but to concur. In this case, rather than being a statement from Allah, it will be an admission from the hearer.

'Do they not know that it is Allah alone who can accept the repentance' (*at-Tawba*: 104). Why does Allah *the Almighty* say 'alone' here? He *the Most High* wants to use this specific wording to exclude the possibility that anyone else can do it. This wording implies uniqueness and precludes all others from that area. Was there any suspicion that anyone else can accept the repentance but Allah? No! Simply, everyone knows that we repent to Allah and not to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The rhetorical styles of the Quran show particular wordings, such as (in Arabic is called) 'the affirmative pronoun of separation' used between the subject and the verb to deny all possibilities to share the action. It is also seen in the account of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: '[How it was] when he asked his father and his people, "What is it that you worship?" They answered, "We worship idols, and we remain ever devoted to them." Said he, "Do [you really think that] they hear you when you invoke them, or benefit you or do you harm?" They exclaimed, "But we found our forefathers doing the same!" Said [Abraham], "Have you, then, ever considered what it is that you have been worshipping – you and those ancient forebears of yours? Now [as for me, I know that,] verily, these [false deities] are my enemy, [and that none is my helper] save the Lord of all the worlds."' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 70-77)

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did not say 'they are enemies' (*a'da'*, using the plural form), but he gathered them all together in a single unit and said (*innahum 'aduwwun li*) which literally means 'verily, they are an enemy unto me.' He used the singular to combine them as though they are a single thing. Some of Ibrahim's (Abraham's) people worshipped the One Allah, whilst others worshipped idols and claimed that they were Allah's 'associates'. The people of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) had two different ways of worshipping. Since some worshipped Allah *the Almighty* and others

associated partners with Him, Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's), words might have been taken to mean that Allah is included in enmity. For this reason, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) made an exemption saying, 'These [false deities] are my enemies [and that none is my helper] save the Lord of all the worlds' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 77). Allah *the Most High* was not an enemy to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Only the idols were his enemies. If his people had only worshipped deities other than Allah and had not worshipped Allah at all, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* would not have needed to make an exception, which indicates that some of his people were like those who said, 'We worship them for no other reason than that they bring us nearer to Allah' (*az-Zumar*: 3). Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* dissociated himself from the false gods and said, 'these [false deities] are my enemies [and that none is my helper] save the Lord of all the worlds' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 77). The words are precise and well-considered. He added, 'Who has created me and is the One Who guides me.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 78) He did not say, 'Who has created me and guides me', rather, he left 'created me' without any additional pronoun, but specified that Allah Alone *the Exalted* guides by saying, 'and is the One Who guides me'. This is due to the addition of 'the One Who' only being necessary if it could possibly be suspected that the action is shared with another; as for creation, no one claims that he has created anyone else, and therefore he did not say, 'the One Who created me.'

The True Lord *the Most High* says, 'Now if you ask those [who worship any being other than Allah] as to who it is that has created them, they are sure to answer, "Allah"...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87). Thus, there is no creator but He *the Exalted*. For things attributed to none but Allah, there is no need to say, 'the One Who'; but in things attributed to others besides Allah, He specifies the matter by saying 'the One Who' to affirm that the action is Allah's Alone: 'Who has created me and is the One Who guides me.' No one has a claim to this matter; no one has ever claimed to have created anyone. Therefore, the specification is made to show that Ibrahim's (Abraham's) guidance was a grace from Allah alone. It is possible to claim making laws for human happiness, social welfare and cure of social ills. However, we deny it and say the One Who creates us is the One Who guides us according to His own laws. To sum up, things never claimed by other than Allah need no emphasis, e.g. 'the One Who', whereas

things claimed by someone else need that emphasis. Allah *the Most High* then says, ‘And is the One Who gives me to eat and to drink’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 79). Another pronoun is used; one sees his father bringing him food and drink and imagines that his father is a partner to Allah, so the words ‘And is the One’ are used here. If you trace the chain of any provision that your father brings you, finally you will return to Allah. This is why Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said: ‘And is the One Who gives me to eat and to drink, and when I fall ill, is the One Who restores me to health’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 79-80). Therefore, no one would imagine that doctors can heal and forget that Allah Alone is the Healer; the doctor is just a means. We sometimes take someone to a doctor only for him to die in the doctor’s care. A poet said about death:

If it leaves you alone, any medication leads to cure

But if it leaves you not, then medicine will be a means to it.

Doctors might give medicine to the patient only to cause his death. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* declared that healing is only from Allah Alone, lest anyone may think that anyone but Allah *the Almighty* can heal. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* then says, ‘And Who will cause me to die’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 81). He did not say, ‘Who is the One Who will cause me to die’; this is due to that only Allah causes death. Someone may object and feel that indeed he should say, ‘Who is the One Who will cause me to die’. In reply, we say to be aware that death is different from killing; death occurs without the body being destroyed, whilst killing occurs by destroying the body. The Lord *the Most High* tells us that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said: ‘And who will cause me to die and then will bring me back to life’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 81). It is a well-said speech. Allah *the Exalted* did not say, ‘The One Who will bring me back to life’ since there is no doubt that this power belongs to Him Alone. Only ‘the One who’ is used when something is suspected to involve others. ‘And Who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on Judgment Day!’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 82) He did not say, ‘the One Who’ in this verse either, for only Allah has the power to forgive.⁽¹⁾ In conclusion, every matter wherein it is known that He has no associate, the

(1) He *the Most High* says, ‘Who but Allah could forgive sins?’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 135)

words 'the One Who' are not used, but they are used for matters wherein others are involved.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Do they not know that it is Allah alone Who can accept the repentance of His servants' (*at-Tawba*: 104). He may say, 'Do they not know that it is Allah alone Who can accept repentance *from* His servants', instead, He says, 'of' ('*an*') rather than 'from' (*min*). Some people say that Arabic prepositions can replace one another. Therefore, the preposition '*an*' really means '*min*', but we say that no this is not the case, for this is the speech of Allah *the Almighty* and no preposition needs to do the work of another. Repentance implies that a punishable sin has been committed, but if Allah accepts the repentance, He relieves (*tajawaza 'an*) a sinner from punishment. Therefore, when Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Do they not know that it is Allah alone Who can accept the repentance' (*at-Tawba*: 104), it means that accepting repentance relieves a person from punishment. The proposition '*an*' exactly means that He *the Most High* accepts the repentance and excuses the punishment of the sin.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'And is the [true] recipient of whatever is offered for His sake' (*at-Tawba*: 104). Truly, Allah told the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to 'accept', but the Messenger only takes for the sake of Allah. The 'recipient' here means 'the One Who accepts.' The Lord *the Most High* says, '[But,] behold, the God-conscious will find themselves amid gardens and springs, enjoying (*akhidhin*, from the verb *akhadha*, 'to take') all that their Lord will have granted them' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16), which means that they receive all the Divine Graces that the Lord grants to them. For example, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to see Fatima *Allah be pleased with her*, he found her polishing a silver coin. Indeed, the silver does not rust, but it is soft and, thus, mixed with hard metals when minted into coins to make it harder. The metal mixed with it does rust. This is why Fatima *Allah be pleased with her* was polishing the silver coin. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to her, he asked her what she had. She said, 'It is a silver coin.' He asked her why she was polishing it. In response, she said, 'I have decided to give it in charity. I know that before charity falls into the hand of the needy man, it falls into

Allah's hand, so I want it to be gleaming.' Fatima *Allah be pleased with her* did that because she knew that Allah Alone is the true recipient of charity.

'Do they not know that it is Allah alone Who can accept the repentance of His servants and is the [true] recipient of whatever is offered for His sake – and that Allah alone is an Acceptor of Repentance, a Dispenser of Mercy?' (*at-Tawba*: 104) This verse removes all traces of doubt that may befall them about the acceptance of their repentance after the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* took their charity. The One Who accepts repentance and receives charity is Allah; He is All-Repenting and Merciful, The Lord the Most High says,

وَقُلْ أَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَسَتُرَدُّوكَ إِلَى
عَلِيمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

Say [Prophet], 'Take action! God will see your actions – as will His Messenger and the believers – and then you will be returned to Him who knows what is seen and unseen, and He will tell you what you have been doing [105] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 105)

They announced their repentance after admitting their sins; they had their righteous deeds tainted with evil deeds and tied themselves to the pillars of the mosque vowing not to release themselves until Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* unties them. They even said, 'Take our wealth as charity to cleanse us.' Their action placed a dividing barrier between the past they regretted and the future they initiated. A new page is open, so will you act in accordance with this repentance or not? Do not think that your affairs will all be private; rather, some would be public. Allah sees your private affairs; He says, 'Allah will behold' (*at-Tawba*: 105). As for those matters which require the wisdom of prophecy, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will see them by his penetrating insight into your behaviour. As for the public matters, 'the believers' will see them. We have three kinds of watch:

- the public watch: All believers see your deeds. As such, adhere to the way of guidance for believers to bear witness for you according to their sight.

- the Prophet's watch: Beware of attempting to deceive believers, for the Prophet's wisdom, insight and purity will see through your deception.
- the Divine watch: If you escape the sight of believers and the Prophet, Allah knows about it.

‘And say [unto them, O, Prophet]: "Act!"' (*at-Tawba*: 105) which means act in a new way which accords with your confession of sins, claims of repentance, tying yourself to the pillars of the mosque and charity. Act in a way that will allow you to turn a new page in your lives and know that we shall be watching over you. Allah *the Exalted* will see those things which no human could know, namely your intentions. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will know what his illumination and insight show him, and believers will know about your ordinary public actions. This Divine beholding along with that of the Messenger and believers is worthless unless it leads to some sorts of reward or punishment. It is not only a beholding, but it is the Beholder Who has the ability to reward or punish. You shall all return to Him without doubt. In this world, you have the means equally used by believers and disbelievers, the righteous and the sinner. However, there is also the Unseen World whose knowledge and dominion rests with Allah Alone: ‘With whom will sovereignty rest on that Day? With Allah, the One Who holds absolute sway over all that exists!’ (*Ghafir*: 16) The one who repents will receive kind treatment. After repentance, he may heedlessly sin in forgetfulness of the Last Day, so he needs to a reminder of faith. Therefore, Allah *the Most High* says, ‘And say [unto them, O, Prophet]: "Act! And Allah will behold your deeds, and [so will] His Messenger, and the believers’ (*at-Tawba*: 105). When He says, ‘will behold’, He mentions the verb only once which implies that it will be a single look by which they will see whether you follow the way of Allah or not. ‘And [in the end] you will be brought before Him who knows all that is beyond the reach of a created being’s perception as well as all that can be witnessed by a creature’s senses or mind’ (*at-Tawba*: 105). Allah *the Almighty* alone has the knowledge of the Unseen. As for the perceptible world, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knows certain things about you, and so do believers. However, the Lord knows it all. Wisely, Allah does not punish a person based on His Knowledge

but according to a person's own records and deeds. He *the Exalted* says, 'Sufficient is your own self today to make out your account!' (*al-Isra*: 14)

The Lord *the Most High* concludes this verse by saying: 'Then He will make you understand what you have been doing' (*at-Tawba*: 105). Those who confessed their sins, tied themselves to the pillars of the mosque and gave in charity, Allah accepted them and then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* untied them and accepted their charity. They were not alone in that sin. Others did the same sin but did not tie themselves to the mosque's pillars or confess their sins. Allah *Glorified is He* says about them:

وَأَخْرَجُوا مَرَجُونَ لِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِمَّا يُعَذِّبُهُمْ وَإِمَّا يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾

And there are others who are waiting for God's decree, either to punish them or to show them mercy. God is all knowing and wise[106] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 106)

The verse refers to three men whose account is told later in another verse: 'And [He turned in His Mercy, too,] towards the three who had fallen prey to corruption, who eventually after the earth, despite all its vastness, had become [too] narrow for them and their souls had become [utterly] constricted—came to know with certainty that there is no refuge from Allah other than [a return] unto Him, and thereupon He turned again unto them in His Mercy, so that they might repent. Verily, Allah alone is an Acceptor of Repentance, a Dispenser of Mercy' (*at-Tawba*: 118).

The three men were Ka'b ibn Malik,⁽¹⁾ Hilal ibn Umayyah and Murarah ibn Al-Rabi'; they failed to attend the battle of Tabuk⁽²⁾ without having any good excuse for doing so. Indeed, each one had his mount, wealth and other

(1) Ka'b ibn Malik al-Ansari was a famous poet who attended the second 'Aqaba pledge, did not attend the battle of Badr, and then attended every battle after it until the Battle of Tabuk which he did not attend. He died in the year 50 AH during the rule of Mu'awiyah. See, *Al-Isabah* 5:309.

As for Hilal ibn Umayyah, he was present at Badr and all the battles which followed it, and died during the rule of Mu'awiyah; he is known for having been proved honest when he accused his wife of adultery (*Al-Isabah*, 4:289); Murarah ibn Al-Rabee' was also a famous Companion who fought at Badr (*al-Isabah*, 4:76).

(2) The story of the three who defaulted from the battle of Tabuk.

belongings. One of them⁽¹⁾ told his story later and made it clear that he had no good excuse. He said, 'I was never more equipped with wealth and mount than I was at the time of that battle. I would say, "I shall get ready tomorrow!" The morrow would come, yet I would not get ready. When the riders had all set out, I said I would follow them, but I did not.' These were the three of whom Allah *the Almighty* says, 'and [there are yet] others – [people whose cases are] deferred until Allah wills to judge them' (*at-Tawba*: 106). The word 'deferred' means that their judgement had not yet been pronounced since Allah wanted to show people something. It is worth noting that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not establish a prison wherein criminals would be incarcerated. It was for a wise reason to take a criminal and keep him away from the society by detaining him somewhere is possible, but the stricter punishment is to let him go free in a big prison when all the society deserts him.

The greatness of faith is manifested here. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* issued a commandment for all people to ostracise these men, neither speaking to nor taking care of them. The command was also in effect concerning their relatives. No one would mix with them in the marketplace or the mosque. One of them would try to pray near Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and then steal furtive glances to see if Prophet Muhammad looked at him or not, and then go to his cousin's house and climb the wall, saying, 'Do you know that I love Allah and His Messenger?' His cousin would reply, 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' In this way, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* took the society away from them instead of taking them away from society. He also took them from their wives, a very difficult issue to control. He *peace and blessings be upon him* warned their wives not to go near them until Allah *the Exalted* manifested His Will. 'And [there are yet] others – [people whose cases are] deferred until Allah wills to judge them. He will either chastise them or turn again unto them in His mercy' (*at-Tawba*: 106). For all we knew, Allah might either chastise them or turn to them in mercy, but the Lord *the Most High* Alone knew what the fate of each of them would be. Therefore, the doubt was on our part since Allah *the All-Wise* had deferred their judgement, and He had not declared

(1) *It was Ka'b, as Muslim relates (2769).*

whether they were destined for Hell or Paradise, or whether they would be forgiven. The decision of their fate rests with Allah *the Most High* alone; Allah's judgements are wisely manifested at particular times.

There are people for whom Allah gave His verdict immediately and others for whom He deferred it in order to purify and educate those whose judgement was deferred, for their own sake and for the sake of those who witnessed their affair. This matter went on for more than fifty days so that they could receive their reprimand from the society of faith; Allah did not want to make His judgement clear until they were completely reprimanded, and people saw and heard about their case to learn from their example.

Had Allah *the Almighty* given their judgement immediately, there would have been no reprimand for those who gave false excuses and others besides them; He says, 'And [there are yet] others – [people whose cases are] deferred until Allah wills to judge them...' (*at-Tawba*: 106). Since He *the Most High* postponed their judgement, we had no right to rush their matter until Allah finally told: '[He turned in His Mercy, too,] towards the three who had fallen prey to corruption' (*at-Tawba*: 118).

Allah *Glorified is He* tells us another story about the hypocrites:

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَكُفْرًا وَتَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَإِرْصَادًا لِّمَنْ
حَارَبَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَيَحْلِفُنَّ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

Then there are those who built a mosque — in an attempt to cause harm, disbelief, and disunity among the believers — as an outpost for those who fought God and His Messenger before: they swear, 'Our intentions were nothing but good,' but God bears witness that they are liars [107] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 107)

The Quran tells us here about another incident involving the hypocrites.⁽¹⁾ Their incidents with Muslims are many. Allah *the Almighty* spoke about many

(1) They were twelve hypocrites, who established a mosque to cause mischief, harm Muslims of Qubaa' mosque and promote apostasy among them. They built it by the command of Abu 'Amir, 'the Monk' to be a rallying-place for him and his fellow conspirators. He had gone to bring troops from the Emperor of Byzantium to fight Prophet Muhammad *peace and* =

of their incidents in the chapter of *at-Tawba* introducing each segment with His Words 'And among them', 'And among them', 'They will swear to you' and 'They will swear to you'. The scholars call the chapter of *at-Tawba* 'the chapter of among them'. For example, Allah says,

- 'And among them are such as vow unto Allah...' (*at-Tawba*: 75).
- 'And among those [enemies of the truth] there are such as malign the Prophet ...' (*at-Tawba*: 61).
- 'And among them there was [many a one] who said, "Grant me permission [to remain at home], and do not put me to too hard a test"' (*at-Tawba*: 49).

The Lord *the Most High* also says of them several times, 'They will swear to you' which the scholars call the 'the chapter of "They Will Swear"'.⁽¹⁾ In

= *blessings be upon him* and divide the believers who prayed in Qubaa'. As a way-station for those who sought to wage war on Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. They would surely swear falsely that they only built it with "the best of intentions", such as sheltering the poor from the rain and heat and making room for Muslims; "Allah bears witness that they are lying" (*at-Tawba*: 107).

(1) They are seven in number as follows:

- 'They will swear by Allah, 'Had we been able to do so, we would certainly have set out with you' (*at-Tawba*: 42)
- 'And they swear by Allah that they do indeed belong to you—the while they do not belong to you but are [only] people ridden by fear' (*at-Tawba*: 56).
- '[The hypocrites] swear to you by Allah [that they are acting in good faith], with a view to pleasing you [O believers] – the while it is God and His Apostle whose pleasure they should seek above all else...' (*at-Tawba*: 62).
- '[The hypocrites] swear by Allah that they have said nothing [wrong]; yet most certainly have they uttered a saying which amounts to a denial of the truth' (*at-Tawba*: 74).
- 'When you will have returned to them, [O believers,] they will swear to you by Allah, [repeating their excuses,] with a view to your letting them be' (*at-Tawba*: 95).
- 'They will swear to you with a view to making you pleased with them' (*at-Tawba*: 96).
- 'And they will surely swear [to you, O believers], 'We had but the best of intentions' (*at-Tawba*: 107).
- The expression also appears elsewhere in the Quran:
- 'Whereupon they will come to thee, swearing by Allah, 'Our aim was but to do good and to bring about harmony' (*an-Nisa*: 62).

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this chapter, Allah *the Almighty* tells us of another incident of the hypocrites. After telling us similar things, the hypocrites have conflicted faculties. Their tongues utter words of faith, whilst their hearts harbour disbelief. The conflict of faculties is difficult for the soul. It requires great emotional, mental and physical effort. When they were alone with their demons, they said one thing, but when they were with believers, they said another. The Lord *the Most High* tells us how they would claim faith with tongues: ‘And when they meet those who have attained to faith, they assert, "We believe [as you believe]"’ (*al-Baqara*: 14). Yet, when they are alone, Allah tells us this about them: ‘When they find themselves alone with their evil impulses, they say, "Verily, we are with you."’ (*al-Baqara*: 14)

Their faculties of speech were repressed when they spoke in the presence of believers, but when they were with their own evil fellows, they would vent their faculties and say something different. This is a contradiction, which is why the Quran tells: ‘If they could but find a place of refuge, or any cavern, or a crevice [in the earth], they would turn towards it in headlong haste’ (*at-Tawba*: 57). If they had a safe place where believers could not see them, they would vent their feelings and insult Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and believers, expressing their innermost. However, they had no such place. They wished they had a refuge to hide or a cave to enter in order to vent to their true selves. Thus, ‘they would turn towards it in headlong haste’ (*at-Tawba*: 57). In this verse, the Lord *the Most High* tells us another story of their doings by saying: ‘And [there are hypocrites] who have established a [separate] house of worship in order to create mischief, to promote apostasy’ (*at-Tawba*: 107). We know that the word *masjid* (i.e. mosque or a place of prostration) is a place where prayers and prostrations are made. If one intends the literal meaning, then the whole earth is a *masjid*;⁽¹⁾ one can pray

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- = - ‘They are neither of you [O believers] nor of those [who utterly reject the truth]: and so they swear to a falsehood the while they know [it to be false]’ (*al-Mujadala*: 14).
- ‘They will swear before Him as they [now] swear before you, thinking that they are on firm ground [in their assumptions]...’ (*al-Mujadala*: 18).

(1) *Jabir related that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: ‘The whole earth has been made for me a clean and purified place of prayer’ (Al-Bukhari: 335; Muslim: 521)*

anywhere and thus making it a 'place of prostration', not since one built it but due to one prostrating there. After that, one may continue his worldly affairs there. One might pray in the school classroom, the office, the factory, the field or any other place where he carries out worldly affairs. Therefore, the place where one prays becomes a place of prostration.

There is also the mosque built and devoted for prayer in which no worldly activities should be undertaken therein except prayers. We know that the first mosque built in Islam was that of Qubaa' by the tribe of Banu 'Amr ibn 'Awf. Then, the hypocrites wanted to have themselves a space in the guise of being righteous, so they built a mosque for corruption which was built by the tribe of Banu Ghunm ibn 'Awf. They built it to compete with the mosque of Qubaa'. We are well aware of disputes arising between competitors in our times and hearing people say, 'Why has that neighbourhood built a mosque, yet we have not built one?'

Every mosque built for the sake of vain reputation and rivalry between different parties or for ostentation is thereby a mosque of mischief. All these things cause dissent amongst Muslims. Someone might say, 'It is a healthy phenomenon' to which we reply that it is not, for we should realise that it is a disease which afflicts faith. When we see a mosque which does not even have two full rows in congregation, and then a few metres away, there is another mosque, and then a third nearby, and then a fourth, these are all mosques of mischief.⁽¹⁾ The word *masjid* in its specific sense means a place devoted and reserved for worship in which nothing takes place except worship. Whenever Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw someone asking people about lost property in the mosque, he would say to him, 'May Allah not return to you what you have lost!'⁽²⁾ Simply, when one enters a mosque, he intends to remain in sincere devotion to enjoy his Lord's presence. Outside the mosque, he has enough time to speak about worldly things. The hypocrites wanted to have a place to vent their hypocrisy and hide their evil in righteous masks. They said, 'Let us build a mosque to divide Muslims. One group will pray here and another there. When we are praying in this mosque, we will be

(1) *Al-Qurtubi says something similar in his exegesis.*

(2) *Al-Naasa'i, al-Darimi and Al-Tirmidhi from Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him*

free to say what we like. Yet, when we pray in the other mosque, we repress ourselves and are unable to speak there, but we want to speak our minds.’

They built the mosque and asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to pray with them in the new mosque, whilst he was on the way to the Battle of Tabuk. He declined to do so and made it clear to them, 'We cannot do so now, but if Allah wills it, then we shall pray here when we return from battle.' After his return from battle, they tried to make him keep his word and asked him again, but Jibril (Gabriel) *Allah be pleased with him* conveyed unto him the verses which spoke about this mosque and how it was a mosque of mischief. Allah *the Almighty* knew what they truly intended. The word *diraran* (mischief) literally means ‘harm’. They wanted a place for rest to avoid the company of the believers in the mosque where Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed and planned to be alone with each other to speak about their desire to harm and disunite Muslims. Then, Allah *the Most High* says, ‘To promote apostasy and disunity among the believers’ (*at-Tawba*: 107).

Whenever Muslims become divided, their disunity harms Islam. Islam wants people to remain united and to keep their power visible. Allah *the Exalted* permits us to pray anywhere but places an obligation upon us to pray the Friday Prayer in congregation in a single place. Therefore, Muslims rejoice when they willingly adhere to the religion and meet one another, whereas the mosque of mischief aims to promote disunity amongst believers. He *the Most High* then says, ‘And to provide an outpost for all who from the outset have been warring against Allah and His Messenger’ (*at-Tawba*: 107). The Arabic word '*Irsadan*' implies the act of waiting and keeping an eye on someone (to eliminate him for the sake of hatred) which is entirely different from waiting for someone to meet him solely for the sake of love.

The ones who built the mosque of mischief made it an outpost where they could wait for a deadly enemy of Prophet Muhammad who advised them to build the mosque.⁽¹⁾ It was Abu ‘Amir Al-Rahib (‘the Monk’) whom Prophet

(1) *For instance, he dug holes for Muslims to fall into them. Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him fell into one of them until ‘Ali and Talha Allah be pleased with them helped him get out, as Ibn Hisham related in his Sira.*

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called 'the Dissolute One' (*Al-Fasiq*). He embraced Christianity during the irreligious sphere of ignorance. For example, if a man travelled somewhere and heard of a religion, he would go home, claim to follow it and gather followers around himself. Abu 'Amir was one of those who became Christian and lived in Medina. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to bring an end to all these falsehoods, his authority was lost, making him become an enemy to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He became such an enemy to the Prophet that he said to the Prophet at Uhud, 'If any people would fight you, I will fight you alongside them.' When Islam took hold in Medina, he fled to Mecca. When Mecca was conquered, he fled to Ta'if; when the people of Ta'if embraced Islam, he had nowhere left to go, so he fled to the Byzantines in the Levant. Then he sent a message to the hypocrites telling them, 'Build a mosque, for I shall bring you forces from the King of Byzantium to attack Muhammad and drive him out of Medina.'⁽¹⁾

They built the mosque to cause mischief, apostasy and disunity providing an outpost for Abu 'Amir who went to the Levant to mobilise an army for war on Allah and His Messenger. Despite that they did all that, they had the nerve to ask Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to pray with them in the mosque to make it an 'official' mosque where the Prophet had prayed, so Muslims would pray there too. They thought that their ruse would succeed. However, Allah Who protected His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and religion from them revealed the truth of this mosque to the Prophet.

For good reasons did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* overlook and tolerate the hypocrites. After professing Islam, they had attained a kind of companionship with him, and he did not expose them at first, lest it should have been said, 'Muhammad is fighting his Companions.'⁽²⁾ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew things that others did not know, and he wanted to protect Islam from the tongues of those who did not know what he knew. After the truth of the matter came to light, Prophet

(1) *The story of this hypocrite is narrated by Al-Wahidi in his Asbab An-Nuzul (p 149), and in the exegeses of Ibn Kathir and al-Qurtubi, and in the Sira of Ibn Hisham.*

(2) *Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him himself said this.*

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent Malik ibn Al-Dukhsham, ‘Amir ibn Al-Sakan, Wahshi (the killer of Hamza) and Ma‘n ibn ‘Adiy *Allah be pleased with them* to demolish this mosque and put a garbage dump in its place. The hypocrites were exposed, and they endured it silently. If one sees his enemy doing something he truly dislikes, he must first try to stop it; this is the first stage. If the enemy continues forcefully, he must put him in his proper place. The hypocrites wanted this mosque to undermine Islam and cause destruction. Once the Lord *the Most High* exposed them, they should have restrained themselves from doing such things. Conversely, they did not stop, instead they continued their opposition to Islam. Therefore, just as the plot was removed, the plotter had to be removed. They became afraid lest the deterrence would move from the deed to the doer. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘[Some of] the hypocrites dread lest a [new] *sura* [chapter of the Quran] be revealed [in evidence] against them, making them understand what is [really] in their hearts. Say: "Go on mocking! Behold, Allah will bring to light the very thing that you are dreading!"’ (*at-Tawba*: 64)

We know that the guilty person sometimes seems to be doing everything but crying aloud, ‘Take me!’; his behaviour reveals what his soul conceals. The Quran also describes hypocrites as having an outward pleasing appearance, so when they speak, we listen to what they say, as if they were propped-up timbers, along with them thinking that every cry they hear is against them: ‘And when you see them, their figures please thee; and when they speak, you listen to their speech. They are as though they were blocks of wood propped up. They think that every cry is against them. They are the enemy, so beware of them. Allah’s curse be upon them. How are they being turned away from the truth?’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 4)

They act like this because of the guilty disquiet that fills their every depth, and each time one of them sees a believer coming his way, he thinks he has come to either strike him or kill him.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says here: ‘...an outpost for all who from the outset have been warring against Allah and His Messenger...’ (*at-Tawba*: 107) ‘From the outset’ in this verse indicates that they have already fought against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in an attempt to hurt him,

but Allah *the Exalted* always protected him, and they no longer had any plot or aggressive tactic by which they might harm him.

There are many examples for this. When the Quran tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the Jews who killed prophets contrary to what is right: '...they incurred the wrath of Allah; that was because they rejected the signs of Allah and sought to slay the prophets unjustly...' (*al-Baqara*: 61). Would this not make him think that they might slay him as well? Indeed, since they had the nerve to slay the other prophets, what would stop them from slaying him too? However, Allah *Glorified is He* reassures him, and restrains them by exposing their pretenses and reminding them that they would have never killed Allah's prophets had they been believers: '...Say, "Why, then, do you seek to slay the prophets of Allah before this, if you were believers."' (*al-Baqara*: 91) '...Before this' means that this would not happen this time, for the situation was different. Thus Allah reassures Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and their evil plots are thwarted whenever they occur to them.⁽¹⁾

Also, when the Quran spoke of things they intended but had not done yet, thus exposing their intention that they would still stupidly go ahead and do what was exposed. Had they possessed even the slightest acumen, they would have refrained from doing what the Quran had said they would do.

Even when they intended to swear, had there been a single wise or smart man amongst them, he would have said to them, 'you are planning to swear "...We had but the best of intentions!"' (*at-Tawba*: 107), but do not do so, and the Muslims will have doubts about the Quran.' What compelled them, other than their utter stupidity, to take an oath about something they were completely free to do or not do? Also, when Allah *the Almighty* said that the weak-minded people will say, 'What has turned the Muslims away from the prayer direction they used to face?' (*al-Baqara*: 142)

(1) 'A'isha—Allah be pleased with her – narrated that prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to have a guard until the verse '...And Allah will protect you from (unbelieving) people...' (*al-Mai'da*: 67) was revealed, upon which prophet Muhammad raised his head and said, {Be gone, people, for Allah has protected me.} Narrated by At-Tirmidhi, Abu Na'im and Al-Hakim.

When it was revealed, they had not said this yet, and Allah *the Exalted* revealed it in the Quran which would be recited in every prayer and known to every Muslim. Therefore, what compelled them then to go ahead and say just what the Quran had predicted they would say? The Jews did this, and by doing this, they chose to be weak-minded, and not a single smart man amongst them encouraged them to do otherwise.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And they will surely swear [to you, O, believers], "We had but the best of intentions!"' (*at-Tawba*: 107), affirming this by using the word 'surely'. Thus, they indeed did swear, and said, 'We only made this mosque for the benefit of Muslims and to make it easier for those who were too sick or otherwise unable to attend the other mosque, so that when it rained or was very cold, people would find a second mosque to pray in.'⁽¹⁾ Yet, Allah's Verdict was stark clear: '...while Allah [Himself] bears witness that they are lying.' (*at-Tawba*: 107)

Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

لَا تَقُمْ فِيهِ أَبَدًا لَمَْسْجِدٍ أُسِّسَ عَلَى التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُومَ
فِيهِ فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَتَطَهَّرُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهَّرِينَ

[Prophet], never pray in that mosque. You should rather pray in a mosque founded from its first day on consciousness of God: in this mosque there are men who desire to grow in purity – God loves those who seek to purify themselves [108] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 108)

Do the True Lord's Words 'never pray in that mosque' (*at-Tawba*: 108) mean that the mosque itself would continue to stand but must not be prayed in? Is 'never pray in that mosque' (*at-Tawba*: 108) a prohibition in the sense of 'Never pray in it', or is Allah stating that no prayer would ever be held in it

(1) Ibn Ishaq said in his *Sira*: "When they finished building this mosque, they went to the Messenger of Allah (who was prepping himself for the expedition of Tabuk), and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, we have built a mosque for the sick and needy and for rainy and cold nights, and we would like you to visit us and pray for us in it.' [The Prophet] said that he was on the verge of travelling, and was preoccupied, or words to that effect, and that when he returned, Allah willing, he would come to them and pray for them in it." Then the verse in hand was revealed. (*The Sira of Ibn-Hisham* 4/530)

again since it would no longer exist? These words of Allah *the Exalted* meant that the mosque should no longer exist, and He *the Most High* then says: '...You should rather pray in a mosque founded from its first day on consciousness of Allah ...' (*at-Tawba*: 108). So, it is not simply a matter of building a mosque, but it is also a case of who attends the mosque. There is one mosque, and there is another: the first one (Quba'⁽¹⁾). Quba' was founded on consciousness of Allah and was filled with those who desired to grow in purity, while the latter was founded on intent of harm by hypocrites who desired to grow in impurity; this was the exact opposite of those who desired to grow in purity.

'Love' is the inclination of the heart towards something providing expansion and joy to the soul. When this verse was revealed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'O, Ansar! Allah has praised you for your cleanliness. What is the nature of your cleanliness?' They said, 'We perform ablution for prayer, and we take a bath to cleanse ourselves of impurity after sexual activity. Also, we clean ourselves with water (after urinating).' He said, 'This is it then. So adhere to it.'⁽²⁾ One of them would take a stone and clean himself after relieving himself and would use water only sparingly since water was precious to them; then, he would use water after the stones⁽³⁾ to make himself completely clean. They added, 'Plus, we do not sleep in a state of major ritual impurity, and we do not persist in sins. If a sin overcomes us, we are quick to repent.' 'There are men who love (*yuhibbuna*) to grow in purity-Allah loves (*yuhibbu*) those who seek to purify themselves.' (*at-Tawba*: 108) The love (*hubb*) in this verse is mutual, for there is nothing more painful to the soul than one-sided love, and this is the worst kind of misery. A poet said:

You are my beloved, but I seek refuge in You

Lest I be a lover, but not loved in return

It is miserable for those who are in love when their emotions are one-sided; however, when love is mutual, it becomes the greatest joy. Likewise,

(1) First mosque to be built in Islam, even before the Prophet's mosque

(2) Narrated by Ibn Majah (355), *Ad-Darqatnei* (i. 62) and *Al-Hakim* (i. 155)

(3) Three stones would be used according to the Prophet's instruction, as narrated by Ahmad (vi. 108), Abu Dawud (40), An-Nasa'i (i. 41), and *Ad-Darqatni* (i. 54).

when enmity is mutual, it augments and burns up to antagonism and hostility; unlike one-sided enmity, which can end quickly.

Therefore, when love is mutual, one finds that whenever a lover sees an expression of love from his beloved, he reacts to it, and that is how love grows and increases. This can only be the case if the love of the hearts is channelled through an unwavering factor, that is to say 'a love for Allah's sake'. On the other hand, when one sees the love between two people ebbing as time goes, know that this love is not for Allah's sake; it is unlike love that grows every day since this is love for Allah's sake.

Allah *the Most High* tells us that the Pharaoh's household picked Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* so he could become an enemy and a source of grief for them: '... one of the family of Pharaoh picked him up so that he became for them an enemy and a source of sorrow.' (*al-Qasas*: 8) This does not mean that they wanted him to become an enemy for them! Had this possibility ever occurred to the Pharaoh's household, they would have killed him right away. Rather they rescued him so that he would become a source of joy for them; however, behold how Allah *the Almighty* utilises the ignorance of those who disbelieve in Him.⁽¹⁾ Pharaoh's household were, in fact, the ones to raise Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. This is why Pharaoh reminded Musa (Moses) how he brought him up as a child among his family and how he stayed with them for many years: 'Pharaoh said, "O, Musa (Moses), did we not bring you up amongst us as a child? And you did stay amongst us many years of your life.' (*ash-Shu'ara*': 18)

However, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* made no concessions when it comes to right and wrong since, in reality, it was Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* who brought him up. As for the upbringing of Pharaoh, it was of no account on the scales of right and wrong. This enmity might have been inconsequential had it been from Musa's (Moses's) side only, but Allah *Glorified is He* willed that the enmity becomes mutual between Musa (Moses) and Pharaoh. Allah *the Exalted* decreed that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* would be brought up

(1) Allah also says of this: 'and Pharaoh's wife said, 'Here is a joy to behold for me and for you! Do not kill him: he may be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son.' (*al-Qasas*: 9)

by one who is enemy both to Allah and to him: 'one who is an enemy to Me and also an enemy to him will take him up.' (*Ta Ha*: 39)

As for mutual love, Allah *Glorified is He* tells that in time he will bring forth people whom He loves and who love Him: 'Allah will soon bring in his stead a people whom He will love and who will love Him.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54) Thus, when they love Allah, He responds to their greeting of love by loving them all the more,⁽¹⁾ and they respond to His greeting of love by loving Him even more; so love keeps increasing and growing until it reaches a pinnacle. However, Allah's love remains infinite. Listen to Allah's saying in the Quran that all praise is due to Him and that peace is upon those servants of Him whom He chose: 'Say, "All praise belongs to Allah, and peace be upon those servants of His whom He has chosen. Is Allah better or that which they associate with Him?"' (*an-Naml*: 59) Likewise, listen to Him saying that on the Day when they meet Him, they will be welcomed with the greeting of 'Peace' (*al-Ahzab*: 44). 'Peace' in this verse does not come with the definite article (*al*) (the). Had the definite article been used, this would restrict the word to one kind of peace only. When one says, 'I met the man', he restricts the identity of the man in one person, but when one says, 'I met a man', the identity of the man is open. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks about Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* He tells us that the peace of Allah was upon him on the day he was born and on the day of his death, and it will be upon him on the day when he shall be raised to life again: 'And peace was on him the day he was born, and the day he died, and peace will be on him the day he will be raised up to life again.' (*Maryam*: 15) Allah wants peace to be manifold upon Yahya (John). Same applies with 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* when he spoke about himself and said that peace was upon him on the day he was born, on the day of his death and that it will be upon him on the day when

(1) *Abu Hurayra narrated that the Prophet said: {Allah Almighty says: 'I am as My servant thinks of Me. I am with him when he remembers Me. If he mentions Me within himself, I mention him within Myself. If he mentions Me in an assembly, I mention him in a better assembly. If he comes near to Me a hand-span, I come near to him the distance of a cubit. If he comes near to Me the distance of a cubit, I come near to him the distance of two outspread arms. If he comes to Me walking, I come to him running.'} Narrated by Al-Bukhari (7405) and Muslim (2675)*

he shall be raised to life again: 'And peace was on me the day I was born, and peace will be on me the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised up to life again.' (*Maryam*: 33) (In this verse, the word used is literally 'the peace' as in *as-salam*, with the definite article, unlike in the instance mentioned above.)

When someone meets you, he says, 'Peace be upon you' (*Salamu 'alaykum*, with the indefinite noun), and you answer him, 'And upon you be peace' (*wa 'alaykum As-salam*, with the definite noun). Why is this? The reason is that *salamun 'alaykum* means that the peace I give you is for you and others, whilst your response *wa 'alaykum As-salam* means that you wish this peace upon this person in particular.

In the verse which we are currently examining, the greetings are amplified when Allah says: '...in this mosque there are men who love to grow in purity-Allah loves those who seek to purify themselves.' (*at-Tawba*: 108) This is for this is that the one who loves to be pure at all times is at peace with the blessings which Allah *the Exalted* sends to him. As long as he is entirely purified from both spiritual and physical impurities, he will be in a constant state of readiness to receive Allah's blessings. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* sends His blessings and graces the whole time, never ceasing to send them to mankind. Allah *Glorified is He* calls Himself the Self-Sustaining – so be rest assured; if you want to sleep, then sleep soundly, for slumber or sleep never overcomes your Lord. Therefore, the purpose of faith is to put us at peace, not distress. This is why Allah describes His Hands as wide-open and that He gives as He pleases: '...both His hands are wide open. He spends as He pleases.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 64) What this means is that He is telling mankind to be rest assured that it is simply their faith which will cause His graces and blessing to come to them, both spiritually and materially. Thus, make sure that you are able to decode them by not allowing yourself to be contaminated by impurities, whether physical or spiritual. Therefore, if you see a person blessed with a surplus of righteousness from Allah, know that his cells have been nourished from a lawfully-earned income⁽¹⁾ and that he is not tarnished by spiritual or physical

(1) *The Messenger of Allah said: {By Him in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, the likeness of the believer is as unto a bee: It eats what is good, and produces what is good.} Narrated by Ahmad (ii. 199) on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr Allah be pleased with him*

impurity. This can be clearly seen on his face, in his words and in his good comportment; even if his skin is dark, you find that he captures your heart with his luminosity and brightness. Another man might have white skin, but with no light in his face at all since the Lord's graces are deflected from him.

Therefore, how do these graces come? They come from the soul's purity; if a man misses divine graces, he must look to see if he is even prepared to receive them. Consider the example of the radio transmission: The station sends out the transmission, and the one who has a sound receiver can listen to the broadcast; but if the receiver is broken, this does not mean that the station is not broadcasting its programmes. That is why Allah describes His Hands as wide-open and that He gives as He pleases: '... both His hands are wide open. He spends as He pleases.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 64)

So, be eager always to take from your Lord's Hand the graces which never cease. A Qudsi Hadith says: 'Allah stretches out His hand by night, so that he who sins by day may repent. Also, He stretches out His hand by day, so that he who sins by night may repent, (and He shall do so) until the sun rises from the West.'⁽¹⁾

The night might end for one person and begin for another, as might the day, for it is always night somewhere, and always day somewhere. Thus, His hands are always outstretched, and they will never be withdrawn.

Allah says:

أَفَمَنْ أَسَّسَ بُيُوتَهُ عَلَى تَقْوَىٰ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٍ خَيْرٌ أَمْ مَنْ أَسَّسَ بُيُوتَهُ
عَلَىٰ شَفَا جُرُفٍ هَارٍ فَاتَّخَذَ فِيهِ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

Which is better, the person who founds his building on consciousness of God and desire for His good pleasure, or the person who founds his building on the brink of a crumbling precipice that will tumble down into the Fire of Hell, taking him with it? God does not guide the evildoers [109] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 109)

The words 'Which then' are phrased as a question, as though He were saying: 'How can you imagine that a mosque founded on Allah's Consciousness from

(1) Narrated by Muslim (2759) and Ahmad (iv. 395) on the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari

the first day is equal to a mosque which was established for the sake of mischief, disbelief, disbanding Muslims, along with giving an outpost to those who wage war on Allah?' They could never be equal. Furthermore, when Allah *the Exalted* poses this rhetorical question, He is certain that His servant will give the answer which He wants to hear.

In the True Lord's Words 'Which then is better, the person who founds his building ...' (*at-Tawba*: 109), we find that the word *bunyan* (building) is the gerund of the verb *banayabni* (to build), but it is also used to mean something which has been built, like 'This building "*bunyan*" is nice', or, 'This building "*bunyan*" is on the Pharaonic style.' There is a difference between the act of building and the result of the act. The Arabic word *bunyan* is a collective noun, meaning that it can also be used as a plural. However, there is still a singular form for it, which is '*bunyana*' with an *-a* at the end, as in other Arabic nouns like *rumman/rummana* (pomegranate), and so on. Thus, the added *-a* makes the word singular. Allah *Glorified is He* decreed that they should not pray in the mosque of mischief, and that they must pray instead in the other mosque at Quba'. Then, He presented the matter to the believers, so that they could see that Allah's Verdict was the logical one and that their own verdict would have been the same as His.

Allah says: '...or the person who founds his building on the brink of a crumbling precipice that will tumble down into the Fire of Hell taking him with it?...' (*at-Tawba*: 109). There are three words in this verse: 'brink', 'crumbling' and 'precipice'. The word *shafa* (brink) is derived from the word *shafa* (lip), and it means the edge or rim of something. People who live on the coast know that sea water eats through the earth making tunnels under the ground by way of erosion leaving behind cliffs and abysses that people could slip and fall off from with nothing under them to act as support.

A 'brink of a crumbling precipice' means one which will soon slide since 'crumbling' means that it is not stable. What happens is that the water erodes the coast making overhanging cliffs with nothing underneath them, and this is what is called a 'brink of a crumbling precipice'. The Quran reminds us elsewhere, about how Allah *the Almighty* brought our hearts together, and we became brothers by His Grace when we were just about to fall into an abyss

of fire, but He saved us from this fate: '... remember the favour of Allah which He bestowed upon you when you were enemies, and He united your hearts in love, so that by His Grace you became as brothers. You were on the brink of a pit of fire, and He saved you from it.' (*Al-Imran*: 103) What does an abyss of fire look like? It must be horrifying!

We know that in digging water wells, the walls of the well must be retained to prevent any landslides or collapsing; however, if a well does not have a retaining wall, it might collapse when soil crumbles from its sides. Thus, retaining walls keep the sides of wells from crumbling. The same happens with a mosque of mischief; it is like a well with no retaining walls, tumbling down with those within it into the Fire of hell.

Allah *Glorified is He* ends the verse by saying: '... Allah does not guide the evildoers.' (*at-Tawba*: 109) They were wrongdoers due to their hypocrisy, and thus, Allah *the Exalted* did not guide them to good deeds since He does not guide the wrongdoer. Allah *the Almighty* says more than once in the Quran that He does not bestow His guidance upon immoral people: 'And Allah guides not the disobedient people.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 108) Nor does He guide disbelieving people. (*al-Baqara*: 264), nor those who deliberately do wrong: 'And Allah guides not the unjust people.' (*al-Baqara*: 258) Guidance, as we have seen before, is of two kinds. There is the guidance of direction, which is for all mankind: Allah *the Almighty* guides all people to the direction of goodness (the dos and don'ts), and they are free to choose whether to follow or not. But the type of guidance which Allah negates in these verses is the guidance of assistance.

Allah says:

لَا يَزَالُ بُنِيَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي بَنَوْا رِيبَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَّا أَنْ
تَقَطَّعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

**The building they have founded will always be a source of
doubt within their hearts, until their hearts are cut to pieces.
God is all knowing and wise [110] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 110)**

The building that they built was a mosque for causing harm, mischief, disbelief, and discord, along with giving an outpost to those who fought Allah

and His Messenger. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had told them he would pray in it, but the True Lord *the Most High* revealed to him that they only wanted him to pray in the mosque by way of an acknowledgement, so as to make the prayer therein official.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* returned from the battle of *Tabuk*, Allah revealed to him: ‘... Never pray in that mosque ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 110). Thus, he sent some of his companions to destroy the mosque. Not only did he command them to destroy it, but he told them to make the place where it had stood a garbage dump, as a signal from him that, due to their intention underlying this mosque, it was spiritually impure. Placing material impurities, which are cleaner when compared to the spiritual impurities, is as though he cleansed the spiritual impurities by means of material impurities. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us here that material impurities are not as important since spiritual impurities are far graver than material impurities. A man might be free of material impurities, but the impurities which tarnish hearts, concepts and consciousness are the cause of all misery.

In this verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘The building they have founded will always be a source of doubt within their hearts...’ (*at-Tawba*: 110). So, after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* destroyed this building, and its location became a garbage dump, they remained dubious about the building and began to fear that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would punish them; they suspected that he would harm them in some way. This anxiety would not leave their hearts until these hearts would be cut to pieces.

The place of doubt and anxiety is the heart, and the heart is the second most important organ in preserving life, after the brain. As long as the cells of the brain are intact, the vital signs could be restored, even for comatose people. However, when the heart stops, the doctors try to make it start again, either by split opening the chest or resuscitating the heart. The chance will always be there as long as the brain cells are intact, since the brain is the maestro of the whole human body. This is why Allah *the Exalted* has protected the brain with the strongest of shields: the skull.

Likewise, Allah *the Exalted* has protected the nerves by which the body is controlled with the shield of the spine, so that they remain guarded. We see in

fossils that long after bodies decay, skulls last longer than anything else, which shows us that Allah has assigned the strongest bone to protect the brain. Therefore, as long as the brain is sound, life can be resumed, and this is how the entire body serves and maintains the organ that controls the whole body.

When a man misses nourishment, his body starts feeding on stored fats which might cause him even to refuse to eat when offered food. Scientifically speaking, this man has been nourished since when one miss his mealtimes without eating, his body takes what it needs from his reserve fats. If the fats are all used up, the body takes nourishment from the muscles, then the flesh, then the bones; thus, all of this so as to keep the 'maestro', or the brain, intact. This is why the Quran tells us that Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* invoked Allah telling Him that his bones have become feeble: 'My Lord, my bones have indeed become feeble, and my head is all aflame with hoariness, but never, my Lord, have I been unblessed in my prayer to You.' (*Maryam*: 4) It is like he was telling Allah that he was closely running out of nourishment from the very last resort.

Plants, on the other hand, are the opposite of mankind: the maestro of the plant is the lowest part of it: the root. Plants always try to look after their roots. When plants get no nourishment from water, their leaves begin to wilt since they give their life force and their moisture to the roots. Then, the stalks dry out since they give their life to the roots so they can stay alive until a little water or a little nourishment comes by, whereupon the stalks become strong again.

In mankind, the heart is the abode of convictions and beliefs which are originally derived from concrete concepts developing in the heart into deep-seated creeds which never rise to the surface for debate or negotiation. As for the mind, it debates everything, and as soon as it is convinced of an idea, this idea settles into the heart. In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* explains to us that the effect of this building will remain in their hearts, and it will only leave them in one case, and that is '...until their hearts are cut to pieces...' (*at-Tawba*: 110); this means upon their very death. Therefore, the anxiety caused by this building will continue to follow them to their death beds. Or, it could mean 'until they surrender to repentance, sorrow and grief'.

This is a warning to them that the source of their evil is not from outside, but that it resides within them, and the presence of anxiety in their souls would prevent them from furthering their corruption, due to their constant fear of punishment. Allah then says: ‘... Allah is All Knowing and Wise.’ (*at-Tawba*: 110) His Knowledge is all-encompassing, and nothing escapes His vision, and His Wisdom is that He puts everything in its proper place.

The next verse says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِآبٍ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةُ
يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ وَعَدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي
التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ
فَأَسْتَبْشِرُوا بِيَعْيَكُمْ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١١١﴾

Allah has purchased the persons and possessions of the believers in return for the Garden – they fight in God’s way: they kill and are killed – this is a true promise given by Him in the Torah, the Gospel, and the Quran. Who could be more faithful to his promise than God? So be happy with the bargain you have made: that is the supreme triumph [111] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 111)

After speaking about those who stayed behind instead of going out to fight, those who gave false excuses and those whose judgement He deferred, the True Lord *the Most High* makes it clear that their desertion was of no importance since He compensated Islam with something better than them. Do not think that by refusing to fight, you would harm Islam; the opposite is true due to Allah *Glorified is He* always aiding His religion. So, He says: ‘Allah has purchased the lives and possessions of the believers ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 111).

This raises a question: How can Allah buy from believers their lives and possessions when He is the One Who created all souls and gave all possessions? The scholars answer that Allah would not take back His gifts since all wealth belongs to Him. However, when He gives it to man in return for his work, He makes it clear that: ‘It belongs to you, but if your fellow believer needs it, I shall borrow it from you’. Allah did not say, ‘I shall claim it back’. Rather, He says: ‘Who will give Allah a good loan, which He will increase for him many

times over? It is Allah who withholds and Allah who gives abundantly, and it is to Him that you will return. ' (*al-Baqara*: 245)

Allah *Glorified is He* respects the gift He gave to man; and respects his toil and work. It is as though when He gives mankind life and their souls, He makes it clear that they truly own them. Still, He is the true Giver and when He wants to take them from you, He does not say that He is claiming them back; rather, He buys them from you for a price. This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Verily, Allah's commodity is priceless. Verily, Allah's commodity is priceless. Verily, Allah's commodity is Paradise.' This means that we should make it priceless.

'Allah has purchased the lives and possessions of the believers...' (*at-Tawba*: 111). The word 'purchased' indicates that there is a deal, an act of buying and selling. However, since all this belongs to Allah, then He is both the buyer and the seller; thus, this must symbolise something. It is similar to the situation of when we see a guardian of an orphan or a weak-minded individual. An orphan might own something, and his guardian might wish to buy it for him; so he sells this item to himself (in his capacity as the guardian), and then buys it from himself (in his capacity as a buyer seeking to purchase this item).⁽¹⁾ So, one person becomes the buyer and the seller at the same time. It is as if Allah is giving us this allegory: 'Without Allah's Way of Guidance, you are a weak-minded orphan, so let Allah sell and let Him purchase.'

However, what is the price? The True Lord *the Most High* specifies it: '...in return for Paradise ...' (*at-Tawba*: 111). This is the price which never runs out or ceases, and the delights you experience there are up to Allah's infinite powers. As for the delights you experience in this mundane life, they are up to your ability in pursuing Allah's means, and that is how Paradise becomes priceless.

When the Ansar came for the Pledge of 'Aqaba to meet Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Abdullah ibn Rawaha *Allah be pleased with him* said to him, 'Put whatever terms you wish for your Lord and yourself.' The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The terms for my Lord are that you worship Him and associate none with Him, and the terms for myself are

(1) Imam Malik allows this as long as it is done honestly.

that you guard me as keenly as you guard your lives and your possessions.' They said, 'And what shall we have in return for this?'

What did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* say? Did he say, 'You shall conquer the castles of Bosra and the Levant, be kings, and Allah will conquer the East and the West for you'? No, he did not! He did not say any of this, rather, he said, 'Paradise.' This is due to everything in this world fading out when compared to this price. Therefore, they replied, 'A fine deal, and we shall neither repeal it nor seek that it be repealed.'⁽¹⁾

When the pact was made between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Ansar,⁽²⁾ it was likely that one, two or three of them might have died before Islam became victorious; it might be said of this, 'So-and-so died without gaining any of the material goods of life.' However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Paradise', which means that the price has been earned just by settling the deal. '...in return for Paradise...' (*at-Tawba*: 111) means that this is the price, but it is a promise of something which will come in the future, and a promise made by One Who is well able to fulfil it. The thing which spoils promises that people make to one another is that one might promise something but then live his life without ever fulfilling it, or without having the ability to fulfil it.

However, the true promise is that which is made by the One Who has the power to fulfil it and Who is Alive and can never die, and this is why He says: 'Allah has purchased the lives and possessions of the believers in return for Paradise ...' (*at-Tawba*: 111).

After that, He says: 'a true promise given by Him'. The word *wa'd* (promise) is a gerund, so where is the verb? (In the Arabic for this verse, there is no verb, but it literally says 'a true promise given by Him', *wa'dun 'alayhi haqq*.) We can understand that this means that Allah *the Exalted* has promised them Paradise as a promise from Him, and He possesses the power to fulfil it; therefore, it is a true promise. When the Quran states something as a fact, a

(1) This verse was then revealed, according to *As-Suyuti in Asbab An-Nuzul* (p 101), and by *Ibn Kathir and Al-Qurtubi in their exegeses*.

(2) There were seventy men and two women from the Aws and Khazraj in all.

believer accepts that it will definitely come to pass, and when its time comes and it happens, it becomes an established fact. An example of this is when Allah vows that His hosts will indeed be victorious: 'And that it is Our host that will, certainly, be victorious.' (*as-Saffat*: 173)

This is a Quranic statement of fact which indeed occurred and was confirmed by real events in this life. So, what comes next after Allah *the Almighty* has purchased the lives and possessions of believers? The True Lord *the Most High* then states the mission ahead of them: '... they fight in Allah's Way. They kill and are killed ...' (*at-Tawba*: 111). The word *qatala* (to 'fight') is in the verb form *fa'ala* and is distinct from the verb *qatala* (to kill). Killing is a one-sided act, while fighting requires reciprocity, like the verb *sharaka*, which means 'to cooperate', and every verb in the *fa'ala* pattern indicates reciprocity, and that all who participate therein are both active and passive. The Arabs have ways of phrasing this so that one party is more active and the other is more passive, but upon impartial review we see that both parties are active in one respect and passive in another.

For example, a man travels in the desert where snakes and serpents are present, and the man does not disturb the snakes or serpents but avoids them. As long as you do not disturb a snake, it will not spew its poison since it only does so in self-defence. However, when a snake senses danger, it uses its poison. Therefore, when the man passes through and has the ability to avoid disturbing the snakes, it is said that he has 'left them in peace'.

One poet says:

The snakes left his foot in peace,

And his foot left the snakes in peace.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... in return for Paradise – they fight in Allah's Way ...' (*at-Tawba*: 111). The one who fights will either slay or be slain, and in the canonical reading of Al-Hasan Allah *be pleased with him* it is mentioned the other way around: ⁽¹⁾ 'they are killed, and they kill.' Since the deal says '... in return for Paradise...' (*at-Tawba*: 111), then their being

(1) *Al-Qurtubi gives the details of this in his exegesis of this verse.*

killed comes (according to this reading) first since it is closer to the concept of this particular deal. On the other hand, since, 'the believers together are like a building, each part of which holds up the other',⁽¹⁾ so when believers come on one side and disbelievers on the other, believers act like a solid building, and Allah tells us that He loves those who fight in solid lines for His cause, like a well-compacted wall: 'Verily, Allah loves those who fight in His cause arrayed in solid ranks, as though they were a strong structure cemented with molten lead.' (*as-Saff*: 4) Consequently, if some of the believers are killed first, this will mean that they have all been killed.

Therefore, when we read the words of the True Lord *Glorified is He* according to Al-Hasan: 'and are killed, and they kill', we will understand that when they enter battles, their only thought is to be killed, without assuming their own survival.

We all know the story⁽²⁾ of the Companion who said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Is there really nothing standing between me and paradise save that I engage those men, and they kill me?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said that indeed this was the case. Thus, the companion took a date from his mouth, cast it aside, and entered the battle, as though he was eager to get to paradise as soon as possible.⁽³⁾ '... this is a true promise given by Him in the Torah, the Gospel and the Quran...' (*at-Tawba*: 111). This emphasises that paradise will be theirs, and it is a promise made by Allah *Glorified is He* in the Torah, the Gospel and the Quran for all those who enter battles to defend Allah's Cause.

Every religion in its time has those who believe in it and who fight to defend it. Therefore, fighting for the cause of aiding and defending religion is not something restricted to Muslims only, although it was not generalised for all Messengers since the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* would directly intervene, in cases, to punish those who persisted in disbelief. The Messenger

(1) *This is a Hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari (2446) and Muslim (2585) on the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari Allah be pleased with him.*

(2) The story of the companion who threw away the dates on the day of Uhud to enter heaven speedily at his martyrdom

(3) *This story was narrated by Al-Bukhari (4046) and Muslim (1899) on the authority of Jabir Allah be pleased with him?*

would convey the message, and if his people did not respond to him, then Allah *the Almighty* would punish them. Allah tells us how He punished the peoples in various ways using deadly sand storms, blasts, being swallowed by the earth, drowning, etc.: 'So each one of them We seized for his sin; of them were those against whom We sent a violent sandstorm, and of them were those whom a roaring blast overtook, and of them were those whom We caused the earth to swallow up, and of them were those whom We drowned. And Allah did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves.' (*al- 'Ankabut*: 40)

Fighting in Allah's Cause was only ordained after the time of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when the Jews requested permission to fight in Allah's Cause. They asked him to call Allah to send them a king so they can fight in Allah's Cause: '... when they said to a Prophet of theirs, "Appoint for us a king that we may fight in the way of Allah?"' (*al-Baqara*: 246) Thus, Allah made this promise in the Torah to those who believed in Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and they requested permission to fight in Allah's Cause; He made it in the Gospel to those who believed in 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and finally in the Quran to those whom believe in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.⁽¹⁾

Either that or this promise is specifically given to the people of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since they are the people who have been given the trust of defending Allah's Word by utilising human effort. This would mean that the promise made in the Torah, Gospel and Quran was a promise to the people of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as well. It is as if the Torah came with glad tidings of these Muslims who would believe in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and likewise, the Gospel contained glad tidings of this same promise made to Muslims. The proof for this is found in the final verse of the chapter of *al-Fath*, where Allah tells us that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah and that those who follow him are harsh towards the disbelievers and compassionate towards each other: 'Muhammad

(1) *Al-Qurtubi says in his interpretation of this verse that this principle existed in all these scriptures, and that fighting the enemies of religion began in the days of Musa peace be upon him. Allah tells us that Musa peace be upon him said: 'My people, go into the holy land which Allah has ordained for you- do not turn back or you will be the losers.'* (*al-Ma'ida*: 21), until He says: 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.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 24)

is the Messenger of Allah. And those who are with him are hard against the disbelievers but tender among themselves.' (*al-Fath*: 29)

Therefore, Islam does not entail being either constantly harsh or constantly compassionate; it only entails possessing a temperament of being harsh when harshness is needed, and being compassionate when compassion is needed. If harshness became a believer's second nature, he would be harsh the whole time, and if compassion became his second nature, he would be compassionate the whole time. However, Allah *the Exalted* decreed for a believer the temperament of being harsh towards disbelievers and compassionate to one another. Hence, religion does not format its followers on constant humility or constant might; rather, it encourages them to be mighty with disbelievers and humble with each other.

A man must train his soul to be thus: harsh and compassionate, mighty and humble. He obeys Allah's teachings, and when Allah's Way requires him to be harsh, he is harsh; when it requires him to be compassionate, he is compassionate; when it requires him to be humble towards his fellow believers, he is humble, and when it requires him to be mighty towards disbelievers, he is mighty. Allah describes, in His Noble Quran, believers as being harsh towards the disbelievers and compassionate towards each other. They are seen kneeling and prostrating, seeking Allah's bounty and His good pleasure. On their faces they bear the marks of their prostrations. This is how they are pictured in the Torah and the Gospel: 'Their marks are upon their faces, being the traces of prostrations. This is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is like unto a seed-produce that sends forth its sprout, then makes it strong; it then becomes stout and stands firm on its stem, delighting the sowers' (*al-Fath*: 29).

Therefore, the Torah revealed the glad tidings of the coming of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his community who would possess spiritual and moral tributes which Jews themselves did not possess. Jews were overcome by materialism, and their essence was never promoted by the religious values. If you look at the forged Torah, which they have today, you will not find any mention of the Last Day since everything in it is materialistic.

As for the Gospel, it imparted values of monasticism, but the material side was under-emphasised. Hence, the Quran came as a comprehensive way of

guidance to govern all the affairs of life; imparting moral values which safeguard material values. The world is ruined when material values are allowed to overrule moral values or when there are morals with no material power to protect them which empowers the advocates of evil to use their material power in dominating the spiritual values, leading to the uprooting of the society.

Thus, we have a constant need for morality which is protected materially, and materiality which is protected morally. Allah *Glorified is He* told the people of Musa (Moses) that they do not possess spiritual values and that they hold their material values dear, so the community of Muhammad shall possess both the spiritual and material values; they will be kneeling and prostrating, seeking Allah's bounty and His good pleasure: on their faces they bear the marks of their prostrations.

Next, He told the people of 'Isa (Jesus) that by sending forth the community of Muhammad, He shall provide them with a way of guidance which shall secure for them the material values they do not possess, leading them to withdraw from life and invent a monasticism which Allah did not ordain.⁽¹⁾

So, the Muslims are pictured in the Torah and the Gospel: like a seed that puts forth its shoot, becomes strong, grows thick, and rises on its stem to the delight of its sowers (*al-Fath*: 29). Thus, Muslims have every right to say to disbelievers that they do not have any material advantage over them since the teachings of Islam seek to establish a balance between the material side and the spiritual side on the earth; it is spirituality which protects the civilisation, whereas the material power protects spirituality. When Muslims possess material power, no one will dare to persecute them for their religious beliefs. This is why the True Lord *the Most High* commands Muslims to prepare whatever forces and war mounts they are able to muster, so as to deter the enemies of Allah, who are their enemies as well: 'And make ready for them who fight you whatever

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...We caused them to be followed by Jesus, the son of Mary, upon whom We bestowed the Gospel; and in the hearts of those who (truly) followed him We engendered compassion and mercy. But as for monastic asceticism – We did not enjoin it upon them: they invented it themselves out of a desire for Allah's goodly acceptance. But then, they did not (always) observe it as it ought to have been observed: and so We granted their recompense unto such of them as had (truly) attained to faith, whereas many of them became iniquitous.' (*al-Hadid*: 27)

you can of armed force and of mounted pickets at the frontier, whereby you may frighten the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you know not, but Allah knows them.' (*al-Anfal*: 60). Therefore, when disbelievers see that Muslims are prepared for them, they will be afraid.

In the verse we are now examining, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...this is a true promise given by Him in the Torah, the Gospel, and the Quran...' (*at-Tawba*: 111). Since Allah *the Almighty* gave the promise, no one can be more faithful to a promise than Him, so He says: '...Who could be more faithful to his promise than Allah?...' (*at-Tawba*: 111). With this, He reassures us that His promise will surely be kept because a 'promise' is like a contract between two parties, one of which makes the promise and the other receives it, and this contract can only be broken by one of these two ways.

The first way is that the one who made the promise turns out to be pretentious, and his intention was not to honour it, or he was just using it as a ruse to lead on the other party.

The second way is that the one who made the promise knows that he is unable to keep it, so he is a liar. However, Allah is far above lying or deceiving, for He is utterly absolved beyond all that; therefore, no one is more faithful to his promise than Allah.

A promise might be broken by someone's inability to keep it, but the power of the True Lord *the Most High* is utterly self-sufficient. Thus, true promises are only taken from Allah, and He presents this issue in the form of a question, '...Who could be more faithful to his promise than Allah?' (*at-Tawba*: 111) to which the answer is, 'No one' since promises can only be broken by breaching, lying or their likes.

Allah *Glorified is He* is utterly above deception since only dishonest people engage in it. Therefore, if anyone hears the words '...Who could be more faithful to his promise than Allah?...' (*at-Tawba*: 111), and then he tries to find an answer, he will have nothing to say, but 'There is no one more faithful to his promise than Allah.' After all it is Paradise which is promised here, and no one possesses paradise except Allah, so His promise is nothing but truthful and irrevocable. Therefore, He says: '... So be happy with the bargain you have made. That is the supreme triumph.' (*at-Tawba*: 111)

Allah *the Almighty* has bought from believers their lives and their possessions in return for paradise, and this was His true promise in the Torah, Gospel and Quran, coming as recorded testimonies of the glad tidings of the bargain believers have made with Allah. He is beyond comparison, but we may say that a man only records what is in his benefit and does not record what is in his enemy's benefit. When one has an IOU stating what someone owes him, he becomes so keen on it, and he take good care of it since it is in his interest.

Yet, the True Lord *Glorified is He* tell us that it is He Who has sent down the Quran and that it is He Himself Who shall truly guard it: 'Verily, it is We Who have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We are its Guardian.' (*al-Hijr*: 9), since the Quran is the complete and perfect argument for all the affairs of this life and the following. The truthfulness of the Quran is so great that mankind might establish a certain cosmological truism, and then later this 'truism' is proved to be wrong; thus, when they return to the Quran, they find that what it says about this matter is true. So, Allah *Glorified is He* guards the Quran since the facts of the universe which He created can never contradict the facts of the Quran because the One Who sent down the Quran is also the One Who created the universe, and therefore nothing can contradict it.

'... So be happy with the bargain you have made. This is the supreme triumph!' (*at-Tawba*: 111) The word *istabshara* (to be happy) is derived from the word *bashra*, which literally means 'complexion' in a general sense, and more specifically refers to the face.

When the True Lord *the Most High* says 'Allah has purchased the lives and possessions of the believers...' (*at-Tawba*: 111), someone might understand that lives will be lost and possessions will be spent, and this might make one feel troubled since it involves death and loss of wealth, so the normal reaction is that the face becomes 'contorted' with fear. However, when Allah *Glorified is He* says 'Allah has purchased ...' (*at-Tawba*: 111), the face of a believer brightens with joy and happiness, and he becomes radiant. Even if his life will end, a believer knows that Allah *Glorified is He* only ends a temporary life to replace it with an eternal life. Hence, all the matters of faith must never cause us any fear, we should be happy instead, and this is why Allah tells us, 'So be happy'; let the effect of this show on your faces with delight and radiance.

‘... So be happy with the bargain you have made...’ (*at-Tawba*: 111). Do we become happy with a bargain? Yes, we do. A person usually only sells what he does not need and buys what he needs; thus, happiness is consequence of a sale, not a purchase since a believer sells something fleeting in return for something eternal. ‘...So be happy with the bargain you have made: that is the supreme triumph.’ (*at-Tawba*: 111)

If one looks at those who breach their agreements, he will find that they usually need to breach them since honouring the agreements would inconvenience them. However, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is self-sufficient, and free of any need. Hence, He could never have the slightest reason for breaking His promise.

The words ‘that is’ indicate the bargain which you have made with your Lord. ‘... that is the supreme triumph!’ (*at-Tawba*: 111) To triumph means to reach a goal which is sought by a sound mind; for example, you might say to your son, ‘Study so as to triumph and succeed’, or to the merchant, ‘Work hard and honestly, and you will triumph and profit.’ So, there is a ‘triumph’, and then there is a ‘supreme triumph’. Triumph in this life means for a man to enjoy health, wealth and peace of mind; yet, there is a triumph which is superior to this; when you are guaranteed that the blessings you attained shall never leave you, nor shall you leave them, this is the greatest of all triumphs.

Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ
الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ
وَالَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ
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وَالَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ
وَالَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ

**[The believers are] those who turn to God in repentance;
who worship and praise Him; who bow down and prostrate
themselves; who order what is good and forbid what is
wrong and who observe God’s limits. Give glad news to such
believers [112] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 112)**

Now that the True Lord *the Most High* has offered this bargain, who will accept it? The repentant will. Repentance means turning away from what is false towards what is true. From what do these believers repent?

We know that faith is a natural disposition of mankind. Allah tells us in the Quran that He took out the offspring from the loins of the children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He asked them, 'Am I not your Lord?', and they replied, 'Yes, we bear witness.' Allah did this so we cannot say on Judgment Day, 'We were not aware of this', or 'It was our forefathers who, before us, ascribed partners to you, and we were only the descendants who came after them' (*al-A'raf*: 172-173).

Faith is a natural disposition, and disbelief is a subsequent intrusion. Also, we said before that disbelief is the ultimate proof to belief since *kufir* means 'to cover'. Thus, those who disbelieve in Allah only attempt to conceal His existence which means that His existence is established, and disbelief intruded to conceal it. However, when someone comes to rouse our natural disposition of faith, we start believing in Allah once the veil which had cloaked our natural disposition has been removed.

'[Such believers are] those who turn to Allah in repentance...' (*at-Tawba*: 112); this includes those who repent from disbelief which had displaced their natural disposition of faith and who adopted the Way of Allah in which they believed. It is from here that worship emerged, necessitating the presence of a worshipper and an object of worship. Worship means that the worshipper surrenders fully to the commandments and prohibitions of the one whom he worships. '[Such believers are] those who turn to Allah in repentance; who worship and praise Him...' (*at-Tawba*: 112). All worship is obedience, which is manifested in implementing the 'dos' and 'don'ts' Allah stipulated. It could be true that the Way of Allah might bear on your freedom a little, but with the power of faith, you will consider this to be a blessing for which you must give praise to Allah. Had He left you to your whims, it would have been like a parent leaving an offspring to his whims till he fails in his studies. However, when a father encourages his son to study and forbids him from fooling around, he will certainly succeed.

Therefore, these commandments and prohibitions are blessings for which we should praise our Lord; everything which Allah sends upon His believing servant should be received by the servant as a blessing.

As for those who repented from the disbelief which took over their natural disposition of faith, they did so by accepting the way of faith from the object of their worship, transforming them into true worshippers of Allah, obeying all His commandments and abstaining from all His prohibitions. They know that these commandments and prohibitions restrict the soul's whims, and they believe the words of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'The road to paradise is strewn with burdens, and the road to hell is strewn with whims.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, when you find that worship requires you to do things which are burdening, know that this is for your own good and that you must praise Allah for it, so as to join the ranks of those who praise Allah *the Almighty*.

When you believe in Allah, He will be present in your mind, and His universe will cease to distract you from Him. Remember that you must never let any blessings distract you from Him who gives them to you; rather keep Allah always in your mind. The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us that man exceeds all bonds when he thinks that he is self-sufficient: 'Nay, man, indeed, transgresses because he thinks himself to be independent.' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7) Therefore, a believer should always think of Allah and thank Him for His blessings, along with acknowledging the tranquillity those blessings bring to his home, his children and his career.

Those who 'praise' Allah must also accept every act of fate He sends them with satisfaction since the One Who sends these acts of fate upon them – since He never commands them to do anything beyond the power of their free will – is Wise, and He only sends them things which are for their own good. And as soon as the soul accepts what has been sent to it, it will recognise the wisdom in it. That is why Allah tells us to remain conscious of Him, since it is He Who teaches us: '... And Allah teaches you and Allah knows all things quite well.' (*al-Baqara*: 282)

Allah *Glorified is He* continues to describe those who accept the bargain of faith by saying: '...the travellers [for His cause]' (*at-Tawba*: 112) or *as-sa'ihun*. Now the word *sa'ih* literally means 'traveller' which is someone who leaves

(1) Narrated by Ahmad (iii. 153), Muslim (2822), At-Tirmidhi (2559) and Ad-Darimi (ii. 339), on the authority of Anas Allah be pleased with him

the place which he calls home (his house, family, children and acquaintances) and travels to a place where he had nothing and where he might encounter perils. A believer can do this because nothing in the world distracts him from the Creator, and the True Lord *the Most High* encourages us to walk all over the earth and to observe: 'Say, "Go about in the earth and see what was the end of those who treated the Prophets as liars."' (*al-An'am*: 11)

The word *siyaha* means to travel in a general sense, and one might travel all over the world to learn more about the heavens and earth along with seeing the signs of Allah which fortify his faith; one might also travel for business and seek the provisions and bounties of his Lord.

So, travelling may either be undergone with the intent of learning or business, and travelling for business is for those who (by nature) seek to pursue work; namely men. Traveling for learning, on the other hand, is something which both men and women can engage in since Allah describes some women as being 'believing, devoutly obedient, repentant, worshipping, and travelling (*sa'ihat*) ...' (*at-Tahrim*: 5). Therefore, 'travelling' in this verse means those who travel for the sake of learning or to accompany their husbands who travel in pursuit of work.

It is also said that *siyaha* in this aforementioned verse means 'fasting' since travelling takes you away from familiar things such as your home, your possessions and your family; in the same manner that fasting takes you away from familiar habits like eating, drinking and your whims.⁽¹⁾ Thus, the types of *siyaha* in which both men and women engage are learning and fasting.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says: 'those who bow and prostrate [in prayer]' (*at-Tawba*: 112). This means those who perform the prayer. He only alluded to two particular elements of the prayer, although prayer is composed of various things like standing, sitting, bowing and prostration. However, bowing and prostrating are the two actions which are reserved for prayer only, and as for standing and sitting, they are done outside the prayer as well. Therefore, the two distinctive actions are bowing and prostrating, and this is why Allah *the Exalted* commands Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her* to be devout to her Lord,

(1) Ibn Manzhar mentioned this linguistic possibility in his dictionary (*Lissan Al-'Arab*).

and to specifically prostrate herself and bow down with those who pray: 'O, Maryam (Mary), be obedient to your Lord and prostrate yourself and worship the one God with those who worship Him" (*Al- 'Imran*: 43).

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O, Maryam (Mary)! Keep obeying your Lord and humble yourself and bow down with those who bow.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 43) What this means is that He *the Most High* orders her to offer prayers with those who do so. Thus, we find that bowing and prostration are the only two pillars involving action in prayer.

He *the Almighty* then says: 'those who enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong' (*at-Tawba*: 112). In this verse, we should be fully aware of the fact that the act of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is the main reason why the *ummah*, or followers, of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is judged as the best nation raised up for the benefit of people; a point which is quite clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in Allah ...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 110). This brings up a very important point which is that in case a person enjoins what is right and forbids what is wrong, this clearly means that he himself must be away from committing the wrong which he forbids for it would not make sense for one to forbid others from committing something which he himself does.⁽¹⁾ That is to say that one will be unable to enjoin what is right and forbids what is wrong unless he himself is righteous.

Yet, there is a very important point which we should take into account which is that one is not allowed to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong unless he is well versed in the knowledge of the *Shari'a* (Islamic Law), that is, people who are not specialised in the *Shari'a* knowledge are not allowed to do that act.

(1) Usama ibn Zayd Allah be pleased with them narrated that Messenger Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him said: 'A man will be brought and put in Hell (Fire) and he will circumambulate (go around and round) in Hell (Fire) like a donkey of a (flour) grinding mill, and all the people of Hell (Fire) will gather around him and will say to him, O so-and-so! Did you not use to order others for good and forbid them from evil?' That man will say, 'I used to order others to do good but I myself never used to do it, and I used to forbid others from evil while I myself used to do evil.'" [*Narrated by Al-Bukhari*]

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...and those who observe the limits set by Allah ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 112). The Arabic word *Hudud* (limits) is the plural of *Had* (limit) is used in the Quranic context to indicate two meanings. One meaning is that is that of carrying out and of having firm adherence to the Divine Commands, which is why Allah *the Almighty* under this meaning, orders us not to breach them; Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘These are the limits of Allah, so do not exceed them ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 229).

This particular word in question, *Had*, may also give the meaning of keeping away from what He *the Almighty* prohibited; a fact which is proven the saying of Allah, ‘...these are the limits of Allah, so do not go near them ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 187). Allah *the Most High* then concludes the verse with His saying, ‘.... And give good tidings to the believers’ (*at-Tawba*: 112). In this particular part of the verse, Allah *the Almighty* orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to give glad tidings to believers who acquired the characteristics of true faith. This is to say that he *peace and blessings be upon him* will not give good news to hypocrites who may unfaithfully offer prayers and observe fasting. Concerning the Arabic words *Bashshir*, *Istabshar*, *Al-Bushra* and *Al-Bashir*, they all refer to the good news which causes happiness and joy. As a matter of fact, when one feels happiness and joy, you find his face lighting up.

Having shed light on these characteristics of the true believers, He *Glorified is He* moves to talk about a very important topic, which fully occupied the minds of the believers whose parents were still disbelievers. Due to the fact that children must be righteous towards their parents, the believers wanted to ask Allah *the Exalted* forgiveness for their disbelieving parents, which is why He, in the following verse, tells clearly that not to breach His Limits must be given precedence to the blood ties; in other words, believers’ loyalty to Allah *the Almighty* must be given priority to their loyalty to their disbelieving parents. We thus reach the conclusion that believers’ loyalty must first and foremost be to Islam.

Allah says:

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا
أُولَىٰ قُرْبَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١١٣﴾

It is not fitting for the Prophet and the believers to ask forgiveness for the idolaters – even if they are related to them – after having been shown that they are the inhabitants of the Blaze [113] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 113)

In this aforementioned verse, Allah *the Almighty* prohibiting believers to ask forgiveness for their disbelieving parents, starts with ordering Prophet Muhammad not to do so. That is to say that as long as he *peace and blessings be upon him* is forbidden concerning this matter, then it is all the more clear that believers do not have the right to do it; since even though Prophet Muhammad's relatives have a greater claim on Allah *the Exalted* than the relatives of anyone else, He prevented him from asking forgiveness for them as long as they are disbelievers.

At this point, we should take into account that there is a difference between the following two Arabic styles, namely *Ma Kan* (it is not fitting) and *Ma Yanbaghi* (it should not). As for the first style *Ma Kan*, it means that one is fully unqualified to do a particular act, whereas the second style *Ma Yanbaghi* means that one is not allowed to do a particular act even though he is able to do it.

For example, it might be said to a very poor person, 'It is not fitting for you to buy a video' since his poverty makes him unable to buy this device. However, if it is said to someone else, 'It is not appropriate for you to buy a video', this means that he has the ability to buy it, but the speaker sees that there is a reason, other than poverty, why he should not buy it. Back to the verse under discussion, Allah *the Most High* says: 'It is not fitting for the Prophet and the believers to ask forgiveness for the idolaters– even if they are related to them– after having been shown that they are the inhabitants of the Blaze.' (*at-Tawba*: 113)

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* tells clearly that it is not fitting for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers present with him to ask Allah Forgiveness for the polytheists and disbelievers who died while

professing disbelief, even if they are relatives of them. Yet, lest any of the believers argue that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* had actually asked Allah forgiveness for his father, Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَمَا كَانَتْ أَسْتَغْفَرُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَا إِيَّاهُ
فَلَمَّا بَيَّنَّ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَأَ مِنْهُ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ

Abraham asked forgiveness for his father because he had made a promise to him, but once he realized that his father was an enemy of God, he washed his hands of him. Abraham was tender-hearted and forbearing [114] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 114)

The Quran recorded in another verse that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* promised his father that he would ask Allah Forgiveness for him; Allah says: ‘He said, "Peace be on you. I will pray to my Lord to forgive you. Surely, He is ever gracious to me."’ (*Maryam*: 47) The Arabic word *Hafiyya* in this verse translated as ‘ever gracious’, means that the Lord *Glorified is He* loved Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), which is why Ibrahim (Abraham) thought that He would accept to forgive his father. Yet, when he *peace be upon him* as recorded in the Quran, realised that his father was an enemy of Allah, he washed his hands of him. This means that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* had acquired all the good virtues and attributes, a fact which is proven by another verse in which Allah says: ‘surely Ibrahim (Abraham) was an exemplar ...’ (*an-Nahl*: 120).

Concerning this aforementioned verse of *an-Nahl*, Allah *the Almighty* shows clearly that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* had uniquely acquired all the good values and attributes which never can all be found in one person, or two, or three, etc. We should thus know that when good virtues are distributed to all of mankind, there is no single person who acquired all of them, which is why we find someone who is described with honesty, while there is another who is described with truthfulness. There are still yet a third who is chivalrous and a fourth who is well versed in knowledge. Thus, it is clear that good virtues are distributed by Allah to all mankind, so that they will all have equal opportunities in the different fields of life. Thus, we reach the conclusion that there is no single person acquiring all the good virtues at the same time.

Yet, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* is a different case, for Allah *Glorified is He* provided him with all of the good virtues which made him worthy of being described as an exemplar. Allah *the Almighty* then tells us the main reason why Ibrahim (Abraham) was seen as an exemplar confirming that he used to devotedly carry out Divine Commands which means that he, due to his love for Allah, carried out these commands. In other words, his offering of the acts of worship was not a matter of throwing them off, rather he, as we said before, devotedly and sincerely carried out Divine Commands.

Let us offer a striking example to illustrate this point; Allah says in the chapter of *al-Baqara*: 'and when his Lord tried Ibrahim (Abraham) with certain words, he fulfilled them.' (*al-Baqara*: 124) This means that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* obeyed these Divine Commands fully and completely, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to reward him. He says: '... He said: "Surely, I will make you an Imam of men ..."' (*al-Baqara*: 124).

This plainly indicates that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was entirely worthy of being a leader of men since he was a role model, meaning that even though he was an ordinary human being; he acquired all the good virtues and thus became most worthy of being a role model. Therefore, no one could say that he *peace be upon him* was only virtuous since he was an angel. No, this was not the case as Ibrahim (Abraham) was merely a human being whom Allah wanted, as shown in the Quran, to reward by making him an Imam for people. That is to say that He *the Almighty* made him a role model confirming meanwhile that he was merely a human being not an angel. Commenting on disbelievers' rejection to the Divine Message on grounds that Messengers and Prophets were mere human beings, Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Yet whenever [Allah's] Guidance came to them [through a prophet,] nothing has ever kept people from believing [in him] save this their objection: "Would Allah have sent a [mere] mortal man as His Messenger?"' (*al-Isra*': 94) This means that disbelievers rejected to believe in the Messengers and Prophets of Allah on the grounds that they were mere mortal human beings, which is why He, in the following verse, refutes their allegation and says: 'Say: Had there been in the earth angels walking about as settlers, We would certainly have sent down to them from the heaven an angel as a Messenger.' (*al-Isra*': 95)

This means that as long as you are human beings, the Messenger sent to you must have been from amongst yourselves so that you can take him as a role model, a fact which is proven by the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'And [even] if We had appointed an angel as Our Message-bearer, We would certainly have made him [appear as] a man – and thus We would only have confused them in the same way as they are now confusing themselves.' (*al-An'am*: 9)

Let us offer an example to know fully well how Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* devotedly offered acts of worship to Allah *Glorified is He*; Allah says: 'And when Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) were raising the foundations of the House ...' (*al-Baqara*: 127). This means that the mission of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* in this regard, was restricted to adding the third dimension of the *Ka'ba*, which is height. We know that the Sacred House, like any other building, has length, width and height. Mathematically, when we multiply these three dimensions by each other, we get the surface area. Some people mistakenly believe that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* is the one who built the *Ka'ba*; this is not correct, for he (is not the one who built the *Ka'ba*; rather, his mission was conclusively restricted to raising the foundations by means of which the volume of the *Ka'ba* is defined. This is proven by the fact that when he *peace be upon him* took his wife Hajar along with her son Ismail (Ishmael) to the remote area of the land, Ibrahim (Abraham), as clearly mentioned in the Quran, said, 'O, our Lord! Surely, I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit near Thy Sacred House ...' (*Ibrahim*: 37).

This aforementioned part of the verse of the chapter of *Ibrahim* definitively proves that the Sacred House was already built and known before Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* came there. In addition, when he left them there, Hajar and her baby, Ismail (Ishmael) settled in the place until Ismail (Ishmael), Hajar's son, grew up and was able to help his father to raise the foundations of the House. At this point, we should be fully aware that there is a difference between the two following words, *Makan* (location) and *makin* (the building(s) in a location). Once again, we heavily stress that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did nothing but raising the foundations of the Sacred House, whereas the location of the building of the *Ka'ba* was already known.

In this regard, let us suppose that a flood were to destroy the *Ka'ba*. where would we face in our prayers? Of course, we would pray towards the location until its contents were rebuilt. This point may also be supported by another fact; Allah *Glorified is He* describing the Sacred House, says: 'In it are clear signs ...' (*Al-Imran*: 97).

This raises another good point which is even though Allah *the Almighty* mentions the word 'signs' in plural, He does not mention any sign but that about which He says: '... In it are clear signs, the standing place of Ibrahim (Abraham) ...' (*Al-Imran*: 97).

This certainly means that 'the standing place of Ibrahim (Abraham)' is viewed by Allah as encompassing all the clear signs, but why? It is due to the fact that when Allah *the Exalted* commanded him *peace be upon him* to raise the foundations of the Sacred House, he had to search for something by means of which he would be able to carry out the Divine Order of raising these foundation, for had he only raised them as far as his hand could reach, he would not be able to exceed the reach of his hands. This is why Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* thought of something whereby he could fulfil the mission and thus brought a stone upon which he could stand. In this way, he was able to make the walls of the *Ka'ba* higher. This clearly shows how he *peace be upon him* devotedly and perfectly carried out the divine legal obligations. In the same respect, man, based on this verse of *Al-Imran*, is supposed to take Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* as a role model and devotedly and completely fulfil the divine obligations imposed upon him, not otherwise.

Back to the verse of *at-Tawba*, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Ibrahim (Abraham) asked forgiveness for his father because he had made a promise to him, but once he realised that his father was an enemy of Allah, he washed his hands of him. Abraham was tender-hearted and forbearing.' (*at-Tawba*: 114)

This raises a good point which clearly tells us how Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was a tender-hearted and a forbearing person. As for the Arabic word *Awwah* translated as 'a tender-hearted person', it refers to the one who, out of his deep and great fear of Allah, feels much sorrow and woe for himself and for sinful people to the extent that his mind, out of pity, is fully occupied by the punishment that will be meted out on such people which

means that he is a person who is deeply concerned about others. Thus, we stress that Allah places this compassionate tenderness in the hearts of some of His creation so that they might console others.⁽¹⁾ At this point, the following poetic verses may be quoted:

It is best to complain to a man of virtue:

He will counsel you, or console you, or at least feel sorrowful for you.

What this means is that if a person is afflicted with a calamity, he should complain to a virtuous man, for he will either help him to solve the problem, or console him by showing him tender-hearted compassion and sharing the burden of the calamity with him. Furthermore, this tender-heartedness is a sure sign of the compassion and mercy of the human soul.

It is thus clear that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was a tender-hearted person. Likewise, this was his nature towards all people; so how do you think his behaviour towards his relatives was? He must have been most tender-hearted towards them especially concerning his father. Yet, Allah *the Almighty* wanted Ibrahim's (Abraham's) tender-hearted nature to be properly used, which is why He warns him against asking forgiveness for his father. That is to say Muslims' loyalty to Allah *the Exalted* must be given precedence to any other forms of loyalty.

This also raises a very important point which must be discussed thoroughly and extensively since it is viewed as a source of many problems.

We have just explained that Allah *the Almighty* due to the fact that Ibrahim's (Abraham's) father was an enemy to Him, ordered him *peace be upon him* not to ask forgiveness for him; so if this is actually the case, why did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is from the progeny of Ibrahim (Abraham), say that he was born of the best, who were born of the best, who were born of the best? This means that as long as Allah *the Almighty* ordered Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* not to ask forgiveness for his father, this means that his father was an enemy to Allah. In the same respect, inasmuch as

(1) The word *Awwah* may also be used to refer to that person who supplicates and entreats Allah while having full confidence that He *the Almighty* will answer his/her calls.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is from the progeny of Ibrahim (Abraham), this means that his lineage contains someone who is an enemy of Allah. Based on this premise, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying ‘My parents never committed fornication. Allah kept moving me from the good loins to the pure wombs, purified and refined. Whenever there were two ways to go, I was in the best of them’ may be judged untrue and contradictory!

To derive the answer to this question, we should first understand the meaning of the Arabic word *Abb* (father). Truly, we use this word to refer to the one who sired you, or sired the one who sired you, namely your forefather. That is to say that there is a direct father whose father is also considered a father of you, and so on until we get back to Adam *peace be upon him*. This is how we all understand the meaning of this word in question, ‘father’; but the Quran uses this word in a much deeper sense than our simple traditional understanding, a fact which is quite clear in the chapter of Yusuf in which this word ‘father’ has been mentioned twenty-eight times. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says at the beginning of the chapter of Yusuf ” ‘When Yusuf said to his father, “O, my father! Surely, I saw eleven stars ...”’ (*Yusuf*: 4).

Allah *the Almighty* then tells Yusuf that He will choose him and teach him how to interpret events and dreams; He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of sayings and make His favour complete to you and to the children of Ya’qub (Jacob), as He made it complete before to your fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ishaq (Isaac) ...’ (*Yusuf*: 6).

This aforementioned verse refers to both Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon them*, as the two fathers. In continuation of narrating the events of this story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) with his brothers, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘now [Yusuf’s (Joseph’s) brothers] spoke [thus to one another], “Truly, Yusuf (Joseph) and his brother [Benjamin] are dearer to our father than we ...’ (*Yusuf*: 8). Admitting their error, the brother of Yusuf (Joseph) says: ‘...most surely our father is in manifest error.’ (*Yusuf*: 8). They then hatched the following plot, which is clear in the Saying of Allah: ‘Slay Yusuf (Joseph) or else drive him away to some [faraway] land, so that your father’s regard may be for you alone ...’ (*Yusuf*: 9).

Having agreed upon one opinion, they started paving the way to carry out their plan, which is why they began to deceive their father; Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'They said, "O, our father, what reason have you that you do not trust in us with respect to Yusuf (Joseph)? And most surely we are his sincere well-wishers. Send him with us tomorrow that he may enjoy himself and sport, and surely we will guard him well."' (*Yusuf*: 11-12) Having fulfilled their goal by casting Yusuf (Joseph) into the dark depths of the well, they returned to their father: 'And at nightfall they came to their father, weeping.' (*Yusuf*: 16)

This is actually the eighth time this word in question, 'father', is mentioned in the chapter of Yusuf. In this verse it is the ninth time; Allah *the Almighty* tells us how the children of Ya'qub (Jacob) justified the loss of their brother Yusuf (Joseph) by saying: '[And they] said, "O, our father, behold, we went off racing with one another and left Yusuf (Joseph) behind with our things ...' (*Yusuf*: 17).

Then, the story goes on until our Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* was sent to the jail wherein he met with two other prisoners who told him that they believed that he was virtuous and one of the doers of good. The two prisoners thus asked him *peace be upon him* to interpret their dreams for them, whereupon he said: 'There shall not come to you the food with which you are fed, but I will inform you both of its interpretation before it comes to you ...' (*Yusuf*: 37). Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* then attributes this blessing of being able to interpret the dreams to Allah *the Almighty* by saying: '... this is of what my Lord has taught me. Surely, I have forsaken the religion of a people who do not believe in Allah, and they are deniers of the hereafter. And I follow the religion of my fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham), Ishaq (Isaac) and Ya'qub (Jacob) ...' (*Yusuf*: 37: 38). Therefore, Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* mentioned the names of Ibrahim (Abraham), Ishaq (Isaac) and Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon them* saying clearly that they are all his fathers.

Having been released from prison and given the role of running the affairs of Egypt's economy, his brothers came for trade; Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) recognised them although they did not know him. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'and when he had provided them with their provisions, he said, "[When you come here next,] bring to me that brother of yours from your father's side ..."'

(*Yusuf*: 59). As a result, his brothers answered, ‘We shall try to persuade his father to part with him ...’ (*Yusuf*: 61). Thus, they returned to their father and pleaded with him to allow them to take their youngest brother, Benjamin, with them, yet Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* did not allow them to do so except after they swore by Allah that they would bring him back unless circumstances beyond their control prevented it. They returned to Egypt and asked for provisions.

Commenting on this part of the story, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And [later,] when he had provided them with their provisions, he placed the [King’s] drinking-cup in his brother’s camel-pack. And [as they were leaving the city,] a herald called out, “O, you people of the caravan, verily, you are thieves!” Turning towards the herald and his companions, the brothers asked, “What is it that you miss?” They answered, “We miss the King’s goblet, and he who produces it shall receive a camel-load [of grain as reward]!” And [the herald added], “I pledge myself to this [promise]!” Said [the brothers], “By Allah, well do you know that we have not come to commit deeds of corruption in this land and that we have not been thieving!” [The Egyptians] said, “But what shall be the requital of this [deed] if you are [proved to be] liars?” [The brothers] replied, “Its requital? He in whose camel-pack [the cup] is found – he shall be [enslaved as] requital thereof... ”’ (*Yusuf*: 70-75).

Therefore, when the Egyptians apparently detained Benjamin, the brothers pleaded to them and said: ‘O, chief, he has a father, a very old man, therefore retain one of us in his stead. Surely, we see you to be of the doers of good.’ (*Yusuf*: 78) At this point, Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* replied, ‘...May Allah preserve us from [the sin of] detaining any other than him with whom we have found our property ...’ (*Yusuf*: 79). Then, he *peace be upon him* ordered them to go back to their father and to say to him, ‘Go back to your father and say, "O, our father, surely your son committed theft, and we do not bear witness except to what we have known, and we could not keep watch over the unseen.’’ (*Yusuf*: 81)

When the brothers returned to their father, he censured them and said, ‘...Nay, but it is your [own] minds that have made [so terrible] a happening seem a matter of little account to you...’ (*Yusuf*: 83). Ya'qub (Jacob) then

commanded his sons to return again to Egypt by saying, 'O, my sons, go forth and try to obtain some tidings of Yusuf (Joseph) and his brother...' (*Yusuf*: 87). At this point, when Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* revealed himself to them and learnt that his father has gone blind, he said to them, '[And now] go and take this tunic of mine and lay it over my father's face, and he will recover his sight...' (*Yusuf*: 93). In addition, he ordered them to go back to their homeland and to bring their whole family with them.

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'and as soon as the caravan [with which Ya'qub's (Jacob's) sons were travelling] was on its way, their father said [to the people around him], "Behold, were it not that you might consider me a dotard, [I would say that] I truly feel the breath of Yusuf (Joseph) [in the air]!"' (*Yusuf*: 94)

Telling us about the end of the story, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And he raised his parents to the highest place of honour, and they [all] fell down before Him, prostrating themselves in adoration. Thereupon [Yusuf (Joseph)] said, "O, my father, this is the real meaning of my dream of long ago ..."' (*Yusuf*: 100).

Having shed light on this story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* with his brothers in brief, I would like to stress that the two verses that have to do with the subject of our discussion is (*Yusuf*: 6) and (*Yusuf*: 38). Understanding these two verses in the light of each other, we reach the conclusion that Ya'qub (Jacob) is the father of Yusuf (Joseph); Ishaq (Isaac) is the father of Ya'qub (Jacob), and Ibrahim (Abraham) is the father of Ishaq (Isaac), which means that the three, as mentioned in the Quran, are the fathers of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon them*. In other words, the word 'father' can be used to refer to the grandfather and the forefather, a fact which is also plainly clear in the Saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *al-Baqara*: 'Nay, but you [yourselves, O Children of Israel,] bear witness that when death was approaching Ya'qub (Jacob), he said to his sons, "Whom will you worship after I am gone?" They answered, "We will worship Your God (Allah who is), the God of your forefathers Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac) ...' (*al-Baqara*: 133).

According to this aforementioned verse of *al-Baqara*, we know that Ibrahim (Abraham), is a father of Ya'qub (Jacob); so is Ismail (Ishmael), and so is Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon them*. Therefore, we should take into account

that even though Ismail (Ishmael) was Ishaq's (Isaac's) brother, he was called as a father of Ya'qub (Jacob); this clearly indicates that the word 'father' has been used in this context to mean 'uncle'. Thus, we reached the conclusion that if the Arabic word (*Abb*) is used alongside the name of the person, it could refer to either the grandfather or the uncle; yet if the person's name is not mentioned, it only refers to the direct father.

In another position in the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* commenting on the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* with his father, says: 'And when Ibrahim (Abraham) said to his father, Azar ...' (*al-An'am*: 74). In this aforementioned verse of *al-An'am*, Allah *the Exalted* refers to Azar as the father of Ibrahim (Abraham); yet, as we previously explained, had Azar been the man who sired Ibrahim (Abraham), Allah *the Almighty* would not have clearly mentioned his name. For example, someone may ask you, 'Where is your father?' this question clearly indicates that the questioner is asking about the father who sired you. However, in case someone asks, 'Is your father Muhammad here?', we understand that the questioner is asking not about the real father but the uncle. It is thus clear that the Saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'And when Ibrahim (Abraham) said to his father, Azar...' (*al-An'am*: 74) implies the fact that Azar was the uncle of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and not his biological forefather.

Back to the Saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Ibrahim (Abraham) asked forgiveness for his father because he had made a promise to him, but once he realised that his father was an enemy of Allah, he washed his hands of him. Ibrahim (Abraham) was tender-hearted and forbearing.' (*at-Tawba*: 114); the Arabic word 'forbearing' is a quality of patience, forgiveness and self-control shown in a difficult situation.

The Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were concerned about their fellow believers who died before the rulings of Islam had all been revealed, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* sent down the following verse, 'Allah would not condemn for going astray those He had already guided [to the faith] before making entirely clear to them what they should avoid. Allah has knowledge of everything.' (*at-Tawba*: 115)

We know for certain that the teachings of Islam have been revealed over twenty-three years, which is why we believe that Muslims were not obligated to obey all the rulings of Islam at the very onset of their faith. On the contrary, there are some people who embraced Islam by declaring the Testimony of Faith, which means that they did not do any of the teachings of Islam. The story of Mukhayriq is a case in point. It is narrated that this Jewish man had embraced Islam and died without even performing one unit of prayer, for the war broke out right after he embraced Islam. Having become a Muslim, he donated all his property to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In addition, he engaged in the Muslims' war against the disbelievers and was martyred. I stress this fact that he is a martyr, for he did not have enough time to practise the rest of the teachings of Islam before he died.

In the same respect, this ruling equally applies to those who died before the rules of Islam had all been revealed down, that is, they were true Muslims. For example, considering those who died before alcohol had been completely forbidden, it is not right to call them sinners or disbelievers, for they are actually true believers. The person who died before the direction of Muslims in prayers is changed into Mecca is a third case in point. Commenting on this point, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ قَوْمًا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَاهُمْ حَتَّى
يُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ مَا يَتَّقُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾

God would not condemn for going astray those He has already guided [to the faith] before making entirely clear to them what they should avoid. God has knowledge of everything [115]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 115)

This verse in question is in conformity with that particular human-made law, which states that '*Nullum crimen sine lege, nulla poena sine lege*'. This means that we, Muslims, only punish after first specifying which actions incur punishment, and after establishing or adopting a law which defines the crime and the punishment assigned for it.

It is thus clear that those who died before a particular law was laid down will never ever be blamed for it. This is based on the undeniable fact that

Divine Laws are not ‘retroactive’, a point which is perfectly clear in the saying of Allah in the chapter of *an-Nisa*, ‘...except what has already passed...’ (*an-Nisa*: 22). Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* tells believers not to grieve about their fellow believers who died before all the rulings of Islam had been revealed, conforming meanwhile that their Islam was judged according to how they followed the rulings which did reach them, along with stressing that if they followed them, i.e. these rules revealed to them before their death, they would be gifted with the same reward given to those who practised all the rulings and teachings of Islam after they had been sent down; this fact is yet proven by the saying of Allah in which He *the Almighty* says: ‘Allah would not condemn for going astray those He had already guided [to the faith] before making entirely clear to them what they should avoid. Allah has knowledge of everything.’ (*at-Tawba*: 115)

Furthermore, this verse under discussion sheds light on ‘the guidance of direction’, a point which is deduced from the saying of Allah, ‘...before making entirely clear to them what they should avoid ...’ That is to say that Allah *the Almighty* would not judge people astray until He made it entirely clear to them what they should avoid. As for the term *At-Taqwa* (piety), it means to adhere to the Commands of Allah and to refrain from His Prohibitions. Thus, in the case that people act accordingly, Allah *the Exalted* will help them through the Way of Guidance. Yet, in case they denied and rejected the divine Way of Guidance, they will be judged astray. Therefore, we stress that when the uncle of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) did not follow the Way of Guidance shown to him, he was judged as a misguided person.

In conclusion, we can clearly state that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* showed his uncle the Way of Guidance, but he refused to be guided, and therefore Allah *Glorified is He* commanded him *peace be upon him* not to pray that he be forgiven.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَمَا
 لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١١٦﴾

**control of the heavens and earth belongs to God; He
 alone gives life and death; you have no ally or helper
 other than Him[116] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 116)**

The Arabic words *Mulk* (dominion), *Malik* (owner), *Malik* (king), *Malak* (angel) and *Malakut* (kingdom) are all derived from the root *m-l-k*. The Arabic word *Milk* (property) means that which one owns. As for *Malik* (the King), it refers to the One Who owns everything in this life. Yet, if a person has control over others, meaning that he manages and rules over their affairs, he possesses *Mulk* (dominion). For example, the sheikh of a tribe has dominion; the mayor of a village has dominion; the ruler of a nation has dominion, and so on. Thus, we should take into account that people have dominion and control over the items of this worldly life, a point which highlights the difference between *Mulk* and *Malkut*, for the latter is used to the kingdom of the heavens and the earth including the universe's natural secrets and signs. In the Quran, Allah says: 'And thus did we show Ibrahim (Abraham) the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and that he might be of those who are sure.' (*al-An'am*: 75)

At this point, we should take into account that adding the letter *t* at the end of particular Arabic words like *Malkut* (kingdom) and *Rahabut* (severe dread) indicates intensification of the word. Therefore, it is as if Allah *the Exalted* is saying to believers, 'Do not think that when I forbid you from praying that your disbelieving forefathers to be forgiven that your obedience too will disturb your existence in life, for they as well as their allies are part of My Dominion.' That is to say that as long as Allah *the Almighty* has dominion over the heavens and the earth, then no one will cause you, O, believers, any harm, for He *Glorified is He* supports you all the time.

Concerning the undeniable fact that Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who possesses the dominion of the heavens and the earths, He says: 'Say: "O, Allah! Lord of all dominion! You grant dominion to whom You will, and take away dominion from whom You will. You exalt whom You will, and abase whom You will. In Your Hand is all good ...' (*Al-Imran*: 26).

As a matter of fact, this saying of Allah *the Most High* contains four contrasting things, as follows: first, the act of giving dominion to whomever Allah *Glorified is He* wants which is opposite to the act of taking it away from whomever He wants; second, the act of exalting whomever Allah *Glorified is He* wants which is the opposite of the act of abasing whomever He wants. So, we should take into account that the two acts of granting dominion and exalting whomever Allah wants are viewed by people as good things, while their opposite are viewed as bad. In the same respect, we notice that Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... in Your Hand is all good ...’ and not ‘... in His Hand is all good’. Why is this? This is due to all of the Decrees of Allah entailing good. For example, when He *the Almighty* grants dominion to a man, this is a good thing, and thus, this man in particular must take advantage of this good. In the same respect, when He *the Almighty* takes dominion away from someone, this is also viewed as good since this person might have misused this dominion, which is why Allah wanted not to make him more extravagant in this regard. The same applies to the other two acts mentioned in this verse of *Al-‘Imran*. It is thus clear that all the Divine Decrees entail good for man.

When you see a despotic king, do not think that he gained this dominion against the Will of Allah; no, it was Allah *the Almighty* Who gave it to him., We must stress that if the people were obedient to Allah *the Exalted* in all their affairs, He would soften the heart of their rulers towards them, a fact which is quite clear in the following Qudsi Hadith in which Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘I am Allah, the King of Kings, and the hearts of all kings are in My Hand. If my servants obey Me, I will change the hearts of their kings to treat them with kindness and mercy. And if My servants disobey Me, I will change the hearts of their kings to treat them with wrath and punishment, and they will mistreat them and inflict on them the worst punishment. Therefore, do not busy yourselves with invocations (or imprecations) against your kings, but busy yourselves with remembrance [of Allah] and devoted supplication, then I will suffice the whole affair of your kings [for you].’

At this point, we should be fully recognising the fact that all the events that take place in the universe around us are based on great wisdom. In this respect, we stress that when we see anyone attaining dominion whilst being

an evildoer; this means that Allah *the Almighty* has given it to him in order to admonish the evildoers whom he rules, for He *the Almighty* does not use good people to carry out that task, a fact which is proven by the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And in this manner do We cause evildoers to seduce one another...' (*al-An'am*: 129). That is to say the good people do not enter this battle, rather, they watch it from a distance. Therefore, we heavily stress that everything in the universe runs according to a due measure since Allah *the Almighty* has dominion over the heavens and the earth. In addition, He Alone is the One Who grants life and causes death. So, you, O believers, should not be awestruck by anyone but your Creator, no matter how great a created being's power and tyranny become, he can never protect himself from the punishment of Allah *the Almighty* which is why believers should take Allah as their Protector and Helper.

Having said that He *the Almighty* is the One Who had dominion over the heavens and the earths, He then reminds us of something in which His Omnipotent Power is clearly manifested, and which no one else shares with Him. Concerning this particular part of the verse in question, that is, the saying of Allah, '...He alone gives life and death ...', some scholars, due to the fact that they believe that life means to move, to speak, etc., are under the opinion that it means that Allah *the Almighty* grants life to inanimate things and deals death to living things. Yet, they forget that Allah has placed life into every atom in the universe and that it is by means of this life that everything in the universe performs its role by due measure. For example, the grains of sand have life, so do the mountains, and so on. This point is yet proven by the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in which He says: '...That he who would perish might perish in clear evidence of the truth and that he who would remain alive might live in clear evidence of the truth...' (*al-Anfal*: 42).

This aforementioned part of the verse of the chapter of *al-Anfal* clearly indicates that 'perishing' is the opposite of 'life'; yet He, in other places of the Quran, states that 'death' is the opposite of 'life'. Therefore, we reach the conclusion that 'perishing' is nothing but death. Thus, when Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Everything is bound to perish, save His [eternal] Self' (*al-Qasas*: 88), this means that all the creatures must be alive before being afflicted with

death. Therefore, we reach the conclusion that life does not only mean to move, to speak, etc., a point which is definitively proven by today's recent scientific discoveries. Thanks to microscopes, we have discovered some invisible, live creatures which we previously knew nothing about them. It is thus clear that man became fully aware of the fact that everything in this life has a due role to perform. If we take a piece of metal, for example, and leave it for some time, it oxidises, meaning that it reacts with other natural elements in the universe, which indicates that this material, i.e. metal, is alive.⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

لَقَدْ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ الَّذِينَ
اتَّبَعُوهُ فِي سَاعَةِ الْعُسْرَةِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا كَادَ يَزِيغُ قُلُوبُ فَرِيقٍ
مِّنْهُمْ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّهُ بِهِمْ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾

In His mercy God has turned to the Prophet, and the emigrants and helpers who followed him in the hour of adversity when some hearts almost wavered: He has turned to them; He is most kind and merciful to them [117]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 117)

We previously explained that the act of repentance has various stages. So, we stress that Allah *the Almighty* due to His Infinite Mercy, allows people to show repentance for their sins. As a matter of fact, had Allah *the Almighty* not allowed the sinful people to show repentance, they would have fallen prey to the frequent committing of sins, a matter which will cause the entire society to fall prey to doing evil. Therefore, it is clear that thanks to the Infinite Mercy of Allah, He allows the sinful to repent. In the same way, it is also a kind of mercy to those who are oppressed. Furthermore, Allah's acceptance to the repentance of His sinful servants is viewed as another kind of mercy to them. So, when Allah *the Almighty* says: '...He turned again to them in His Mercy, so that they might repent...' (*at-Tawba*: 118), this means that He has instructed the sinners to show repentance to Him so that He *the All Merciful* would accept it.

(1) When late Sheikh Sha'rawy *may Allah rest his soul* says that an inanimate object is alive, he means that this particular object has a due role to perform in life.

This raises a very important point, which is Allah *the Exalted* has included Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* under the category of those to whom He has given His Mercy, so what did he *peace and blessings be upon him* do to be gathered with them? We say that the answer to this question should be given in the light of His saying, ‘May Allah pardon you, [O, Prophet Muhammad]; why did you give them permission [to remain behind]?’ (*at-Tawba*: 43) We know that some of the hypocrites came and asked him for permission to stay at home instead of going to fight with Muslims, whereupon he gave them permission since Allah *the Almighty* had said about hypocrites: ‘Had these [hypocrites] set out with you, [O, believers,] they would have added nothing to you save the evil of corruption ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 47).

That is to say that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* out of his sound *Fitra*, had taken the right decision. Therefore, we strongly stress that Allah *the Almighty* did not want people to follow only their inner dispositions, which is why He sent down His Divine Way of Guidance to be followed.

In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* wanted to tell us that He had pardoned the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* for giving permission to the hypocrites who asked leave to stay behind instead of fighting with Muslims. Thus, we should know with certainty that Allah *the Almighty* sometimes corrects His servant for doing things which are against his own interest. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point. When you see your son spending twenty hours a day studying, you go into his room and take the book from him or turn off the light, telling him to go to sleep. In essence, you are only firm with him in this way because you love him, not because he has broken any rule; you do as such since he has gone too far and worked so hard that he might harm himself.⁽¹⁾ At this point, we should wonder, ‘When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* let some people stay behind, did he do this against the interest of the war, or for it? In fact, had the hypocrites taken part in the battle, they would

(1) *Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him narrated that Messenger Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him came into the mosque and noticed a rope stretched between two poles. He enquired, "What is this rope for?" He was told: "This is Zainab's rope. When during her voluntary prayer, she begins to feel tired, she grasps it for support". Prophet Muhammad then said, 'Untie it. You should perform prayers so long as you feel active. When you feel tired, you should go to sleep.'* [Narrated by Al-Bukhari]

have been well rewarded, even if they were only to guard the weapons of Muslims; what that means is that he *peace and blessings be upon him* by giving them the leave to stay behind, he had made things more difficult for himself, for by doing this, he has deprived himself from their support.

Thus, we strongly and heavily stress that whenever Allah *the Exalted* instructed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to do a particular act, He did so to achieve his own benefit. For example, Allah *the Almighty* says in chapter *at-Tahrim*, ‘O, Prophet, why do you prohibit [yourself from] what Allah has made lawful for you ...’ (*at-Tahrim*: 1). This verse clearly indicates that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not make lawful what Allah *the Most High* had forbidden, rather, he prohibited to himself what He had permitted for him which is against his own interest. It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* was asking him, ‘Why are you making matters hard for yourself?’ That is to say that He *the Almighty* instructed him *peace and blessings be upon him* to do what achieves his own interest (alongside the interest of believers). His story with the companion ‘Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum is another case in point. ‘Abdullah who was blind came to ask Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* something about one of the rulings of the Islamic faith, yet he *peace and blessings be upon him* did not pay attention to him since he was fully occupied with telling the chieftains of the Quraysh about Islam, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* revealed His saying, ‘He frowned and turned away because the blind man approached him.】’ (*Abasa*: 1-2)

As a matter of fact, Ibn Umm Maktum had come to ask the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* about a particular topic of faith which means that Ibn Umm Makhtum *Allah be pleased with him* was not there to argue with him *Peace and blessings be upon him* as did the chieftains of Quraysh; yet the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* chose the difficult matter which required exerting considerable effort, meaning telling the disbelievers of the Quraysh about Islam. It is thus clear that He *the Almighty* by revealing these aforementioned verses of the chapter of ‘*Abasa* instructed the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to do what is easy for him.

Concerning the main point in question, which is ‘Why did Allah include Prophet Muhammad within the emigrants and the helpers to whom He turned

His Mercy?' The reason for this is that He wanted none of the emigrants and helpers to feel worried that He would not show them mercy; that is to say His Infinite Mercy was extended to all of them including Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself.

Furthermore, there were sound justifications for all of these events, a fact which is proven by His saying, '...when some hearts almost wavered ...' As for the Arabic word *Yazigh* translated as 'waver' means, in this context, to incline to do something evil; in other words, some of the believers, due to the fact that the battle of *Tabuk* was very difficult, were about to leave the battlefield. We previously explained that the battle of *Tabuk* is known as the battle of distress, for the distance to the land of Byzantines was long. In addition, Muslims were supposed to face the forces of the Byzantines in extremely hot weather. Moreover, they did not have enough mounts; it is narrated that there was only one camel for every ten men, not to mention that the Muslim soldiers had nothing to eat but maggot-ridden dates.

Regarding the extreme hardship Muslims suffered during this battle, it is narrated that each of the Muslim fighters would lick a date for a moment and then pass it to his companion who would do the same, and they would pass it around until there is nothing remained from it but the pit. In the same respect, the barley was infested by worms and utterly ruined. The following is a testimony of one of the Muslim soldiers who attended this battle, and it may be quoted that he is narrated to have said, 'It (the barely) got to the point where if one of us took a handful of it to eat, he would hold his nose so he would not have to smell it.' Thus, all of these difficulties made some of the Companions desire to turn back and not to finish the journey to the battle.

It is thus clear that Allah *the Almighty* has shown the helpers and emigrants mercy out of the fact that some of their hearts had almost inclined to leaving the battlefield, which is a major sin. In the same respect, Allah *the Most High* took the severity of the conditions into account and alluded to the thoughts which had come to some of their minds. At this point, we should recognise that there were some of the companions who were about to decide not to set out towards the battle. The story of Abu Khaythama is a case in point. It is narrated that this aforementioned companion had remained ten days in

Medina after the army of believers had set out to the land of the Byzantines. Yet, when Abu Khaythama *Allah be pleased with him* entered his orchard, he found his two wives preparing food for him, each in her hut. When he saw these great blessings including the cool shade and hanging fruits, he came back to himself and said, ‘Prophet Muhammad is in the glare of the sun and blown on by hot winds while I am here in cool shade with food made ready for me, two fair women and softly-furnished huts! This is not fair!’ He *Allah be pleased with him* consequently rode his camel and headed towards the land of the battle. At this moment, his two wives begged him to stay, yet he paid no heed to either of them and continued his journey to catch up with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The companions then said to him *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘O, Prophet Muhammad, we see a man approaching from afar!’ Then, he *peace and blessings be upon him* looked and said, ‘By Abu Khaythama! And indeed it was.’⁽¹⁾ This is how we should understand the saying of Allah, ‘In His Mercy, Allah has turned to the Prophet, and the emigrants and helpers who followed him in the hour of adversity when some hearts almost wavered. He has turned to them; He is Most Kind and Merciful to them.’ (*at-Tawba*: 117)

In this regard, we should know that Allah *the Almighty* has also accepted the repentance of the companions who confessed their sins; this is proven by the saying of Allah, ‘And [there are] others – [people who] have become conscious of their sinning after having done righteous deeds side by side with evil ones; [and] it may well be that Allah will accept their repentance, for, verily, Allah is Much-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy.’ (*at-Tawba*: 102) In the same respect, He *the Most High* also shows that He deferred the cases of certain others about whom He said: ‘and [there are yet] others – [people whose cases are] deferred until Allah wills to judge them...’ (*at-Tawba*: 106).

As long as Allah *Glorified is He* said that their cases were deferred until He wills to judge them, this means that He had not yet pronounced His Judgment on them, which is why they had to wait until He judges them. At this point, the believers had to leave them alone until He judged them according to His

(1) [Narrated by Muslim]

Will. In the following verse, He *the Almighty* tells us also that He accepted the repentance of those three companions who had been left behind by saying:

وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خَلَفُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا
رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَن لَا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا
إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١١٨﴾

And to the three men who stayed behind: when the earth, for all its spaciousness, closed in around them, when their very souls closed in around them, when they realized that the only refuge from God was with Him, He turned to them in mercy in order for them to return [to Him]. God is the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful [118] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 118)

Someone might think that the saying of Allah ‘And to the three men who stayed behind ...’ means simply that they stayed behind because someone has ordered them not to set out to war with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which is not true. Rather, it means that the Will of the Lawgiver decreed to defer their case; this point is proven by His Saying: ‘and [there are yet] others – [people whose cases are] deferred until Allah wills to judge them...’ (*at-Tawba*: 106). That is to say that as long as their judgment had been postponed, it was necessary to wait.

We know fully well that when a person is concerned about something, he thinks about leaving the place where he is sitting and which is causing him discomfort, in the hope that the discomfort will be relived. However, these three men found discomfort wherever they went, to the extent that the earth, despite its vastness, became too narrow for them, and none of them found a place to go. This means that they were completely surrounded by woes.

Likewise, even if the earth becomes too narrow for a man, his soul might still accommodate him, a point which is totally different with those three companions under this case, for Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...when their very souls closed in around them ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 118). This means that the earth, despite all its vastness, became too narrow for them, and their souls also utterly constricted them. We should recognise the fact that these three men had stayed

behind and refrained from going to battle for no reason but laziness and sloth, which is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* commanded the believers to ostracise them. In this respect, it is narrated that Ka'b ibn Malik⁽¹⁾ *Allah be pleased with him* used to go out to the market, but no one would speak to him. In addition, he used to go to see his relatives, but yet none of them would speak to him to the extent that he would climb their walls in the hope that they would look at him, but they would not.

As a result, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* raised their suffering up a notch by censuring them, for he ordered their wives to leave. As such, it is clear that the act of ostracising became severe, for it had been conducted on three levels: first, the society; second, their relatives; and, third, their wives. At one point, the wife of Hilal ibn Umayya went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O, Messenger of Allah, Hilal ibn Umayya is a sick and weak man, and I ask your permission to help him what he needs to sustain him.' Then, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* answered her, 'No blame, but he must not go near you.' She said, 'By Allah, O, Prophet Muhammad, he never even moves, and by Allah, he has been weeping ever since all this began.' As a result, some Muslims went to Ka'b ibn Malik to tell him that Messenger Muhammad had permitted Hilal's wife to serve him, and they tried to talk him in to go to him *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask permission for his own wife to serve him, too.

Yet, Ka'b said, 'Hilal is an old man, so what will I say to Prophet Muhammad when I am a young man? By Allah, I shall never go to him (for that).'

The three men remained in this social and personal boycott for fifty days until Allah *the Exalted* declared that He had relented towards them. In truth, this was a trial and a test for them. Ka'b ibn Malik, for example, spoke later about his condition before the battle by saying, 'Never did I possess means enough and (my circumstances) more favourable than at the occasion of this expedition. Also, by Allah, I had never before this expedition simultaneously

(1) The other two men, Marara ibn Ar-Rabi' and Hilal ibn Umayya, kept to their houses, and only Ka'b went out during this time.

in my possession two rides.' This means that he had no excuse whatsoever for not going. Having experienced this great affliction, the glad tidings came that Allah, out of His Infinite Mercy, had relented to him. It is narrated that someone came from Mount Sal' and said, 'Be of good cheer, Ka'b, for this is best day of your life! Allah has revealed verses of the Quran concerning you and has turned to you in mercy.' Ka'b later said, 'I had no gift to give him for bringing me this glad tidings but my own two robes, so I took them off and gave them to him, and then borrowed two others to wear and set off for Prophet Muhammad's Mosque.' When he got there, he said, 'O, Messenger of Allah. Am I allowed to give in charity my wealth for Allah's sake and for the sake of His Messenger?'⁽¹⁾

So, the reason why the verdict on these three companions was delayed was to test them and to make others take admonition of their case, for when they saw how the earth, despite all its vastness, had become too narrow for them, and their own souls had constricted them, 'they came to know with certainty that there is no refuge from Allah other than [a return] to Him' (*at-Tawba*: 118). What this means is that no one could protect us but Allah Who is also sought to protect us from Himself. How can we understand this point? When no one can protect you except for the one who is pursuing you, then you know that no one has any real power over you but the One Who created you. Therefore, we say that you do not seek refuge in Allah from His creatures, rather you seek refuge in Him to protect you from Himself, for He *Glorified is He* has both the Attributes of Majesty and Beauty; His attributes of Majesty are manifested in the undeniable fact that He is All-Dominant, All-Compelling, Lord of Retribution, Severe in Vengeance, and so on. As for the His Attributes of Beauty, they include being Much-Forgiving, the Dispenser of Mercy, and so on. Thus, when a man sins, he becomes liable to be punished by the Attributes of Majesty, Therefore, we stress that nothing can protect the servant from the Attributes of Majesty except those of Beauty.

(1) *Messenger Muhammad Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him then replied to him: 'Keep some of your wealth, for this would be better for you.' Ka'b then said: 'I shall keep with me that part (of my property) which fell to my lot (on the occasion of the expedition of) Khaybar.' [Narrated by Al-Bukhari]*

Furthermore, we can quote the following supplication of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in support of this point; he is narrated to have said, 'I seek refuge in You from You.'⁽¹⁾

This means that he *peace and blessings be upon him* seeks refuge in Allah's Attributes of Beauty from His Attributes of Majesty, for nothing can protect him from Allah's Attributes of Majesty but His Attributes of Beauty.

Therefore, when speaking about the last night of the month of Ramadan, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'And when the last night of Ramadan falls, the All-Compelling manifests Himself in forgiveness.' Some people think that this does not make sense, for how could the All-Compeller manifest Himself in forgiveness?! Would it not make more sense to say, 'The All-Forgiving shows Himself in Forgiveness'? To those people, we say the answer is 'No', since forgiveness implies the existence of sin, which falls under the category of the Attribute of All-Compulsion, and therefore, the Attribute of Mercy supplants that of All-Compulsion. It is as though we say, 'O All-Compeller, You Alone are the True Lord, but we seek the intercession of Your Attributes of Beauty with Your attributes of Majesty.' This is the true meaning of this Prophetic Hadith mentioned earlier.

In the same respect, when Abu Sa'id Al-Asma'i, a great Arabic grammarian, heard someone supplicating to Allah *the Almighty* at the doors of the *Ka'ba*, saying, 'O Lord, I am ashamed to ask You for forgiveness because I have disobeyed You, but I searched, and found no other god but You.' He said to him, 'I believe that Allah *the Almighty* will forgive you, for you have made your request so well!' Allah *the Exalted* then says: '... He turned to them in mercy in order for them to return to [Him].' (*at-Tawba*: 118) We notice that verb 'to show mercy' has been mentioned two times in this verse being discussed, yet there is a difference as to the signification of each of them, which proceeds as follows: the first of them refers mainly to the act of legislating repentance itself, whilst the second refers to the fact that when people sincerely show repentance to Allah *Glorified is He*, He will certainly accept it. Therefore, the saying of Allah, '...in order for them to return to Him' indicates that the three Companions had returned to their former state of keeping away from sins.

(1) [*Narrated by Muslim*]

He *the Most High* then concludes the verse with His Saying: 'Allah is the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful.' (*at-Tawba*: 118) That is to say that He *the Almighty* Alone is the One Who is able to accept repentance from His sinful salves. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Whose Mercy encompasses everything in the universe. Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

You who believe, be mindful of God: stand with those who are true [119] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 119)

In this verse, we should note the point that when Allah *the Exalted* calls His believing servants, He does so either to give them an instruction pertaining to their faith or otherwise to ask them to have (true) faith; the second point is yet quite clear in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* 'O you who believe, Hold fast to your belief in Allah and His Messenger ...' (*an-Nisa*': 136). In this verse of *an-Nisa*', Allah *the Almighty* tells believers that their faith in Him may be negatively affected for one reason or another, which is why He *the Most High* asks them to be steadfast in their faith. On the other hand, in case He asks believers to do something other than attaining faith in Him, this means that He directs them to carry out certain instructions and orders; this is a fact which is perfectly clear in the verse being discussed, for Allah *the Almighty* says: '... be mindful of Allah ...' (*at-Tawba*: 119).

Therefore, the Arabic phrase *Ittaqu* (be mindful of Allah) means to 'place a protective barrier between oneself and Allah *the Almighty*'. Therefore, someone might ask, 'Why would anyone ask a believing man to place a barrier between him and his Lord, especially if we take into account that he greatly desires to be in His Presence?' This is another case where it is vital to understand the concept of the Divine Attributes of Majesty and Beauty. When Allah *the Almighty* says: '... be mindful of Allah ...', this implies an order for believers to place a barrier between themselves and Allah's Attributes of Majesty, just like when He *the Almighty* says: '...be conscious of the fire...' (*al-Baqara*: 24). Due to the fact that Hellfire falls under the category of the Attributes of Majesty, we must place a barrier between ourselves and Allah's Attributes of Majesty. Allah *the Almighty* says: '...be mindful of Allah: stand with those who are true.' (*at-Tawba*: 119)

Some scholars yet explain this particular part of the verse under discussion to mean ‘be amongst those who are true to their word’. In other words, they have the opinion that the particle *Ma*‘ (with) in this context gives the meaning of the preposition ‘amongst’, meaning that the believers are, in general, supposed to be amongst those who are true to their word. However, I stress that there is a difference between these two sentences, namely ‘...stand with those who are true...’ and ‘stand among those who are true’. For example, the Saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...stand with those who are true...’ implies an order to believers to join with those who are truthful so that they will be in their company.

At this point, we need to call to mind what we said before about ‘the spoken aspect’ and ‘the mental aspect’. When a thought comes into one’s mind before he interprets it, this is viewed as the mental aspect. For example, when one says, ‘Mohammad visited me’, this means that there is an idea that came to his mind before he interpreted it. In this case, we should realise that the listener knew nothing about ‘the mental concept’ that came into the mind of the speaker until the latter spoke it.

Upon carefully reflection concerning this particular sentence, the listener, who firmly believes that the speaker is always truthful, fully realises that there is actually a person named Mohammad and who came to visit him. Thus, we reach the conclusion that ‘truthfulness’ means that the spoken aspect exactly corresponds to reality. However, in case someone says, ‘Mohammad had travelled to America’ when he actually did not, this means that the spoken aspect does not correspond to the factual aspect and therefore is judged as telling a lie. It is thus clear that we have three different aspects in this respect which are the mental, the spoken and the factual; in case the spoken aspect exactly corresponds to the factual one, this brings forth truthfulness; otherwise it is viewed as an act of telling lies.

In the same respect, we should take into account that man’s speech is judged true or otherwise based on reality which means that whether or not it corresponds to reality. At this point, I Would like to draw your attention to another aspect which is that of making a request. For example, when someone orders you, ‘Pay a visit to so and so’, this has nothing at all to do with truthfulness or lie since the action will be done later.

Back to the verse under discussion, Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘...be mindful of Allah. Stand with those who are true.’ (*at-Tawba*: 119) In this verse, we

should know that 'truthfulness' is a trait which gathers together all the aspects faith. Let us offer a striking example to illustrate this point; it is narrated that a Bedouin once came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I possess three weaknesses of which I will never be able to rid myself: the first is (having strong desire for) women, the second is (drinking) wine and the third is (telling) lying, and I have come to you, O, Prophet Muhammad, to ask you to choose one of these three traits and give me strength to resist it, confirming that I shall make a covenant with our Lord *the Almighty* concerning whichever one you will choose.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then said to him, 'O, Bedouin, be truthful and you shall be blameless.' This means that he *peace and blessings be upon him* chose for him to give up telling lies. So, when the man wanted to drink wine, he wondered, 'what would I tell Prophet Muhammad if he asks me about whether or not I still drink wine?!' Therefore, he gave up drinking wine so as not to lie to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. In the same respect, when the Bedouin was about to steal a glance at a woman, he said to himself, 'What will I tell Prophet Muhammad if he asks me about this? And how can I degrade myself with doing such an act which behoves no Muslim?!' Thus, he gave up looking at women. In this way, truthfulness overcame all of man's weaknesses and thus refined his conduct entirely. In this respect, we can also quote the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in which he was asked, 'Can a believer be a coward?' He said, 'Yes.' He was then asked, 'Can a believer be a miser?' He said, 'Yes.' He was further asked, 'Can a believer be a liar?' He said, 'No.'⁽¹⁾ This is due to the way of attaining faith is firmly based on accepting the truth of the firm matters of doctrine, which is why 'truthfulness' is viewed by scholars as the most important trait ever. It is thus clear that the Saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...be mindful of Allah. Stand with those who are true.' (*at-Tawba*: 119) implies an order to believers not to say anything which does not accurately reflect reality and likewise not to say things which contradict one's own deeds, for Allah *the Almighty* has warned those who do so. In the chapter of *as-Saff*, He *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who believe, Why do you say one thing and do another? Most loathsome is it in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do!' (*as-Saff*: 2-3)

(1) [Narrated by Malik]

In the same respect, Allah *the Exalted* says in the chapter of *al-Baqara*: ‘True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west – but truly pious is he who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, the angels, revelation and the Prophets, and one spends his substance – however much he himself may cherish it – upon his near of kin, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, the beggars and for the freeing of human beings from bondage; he is constant in prayer and renders the purifying dues ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 177).

This raises a very important point that we should carefully reflect upon, which is why does Allah *the Almighty* mention the act of giving the recommended charity, although He already mentioned that of giving the prescribed alms later in the same verse of *al-Baqara*? The answer is perfectly clear in the fact that Allah *the Almighty* does so to tell that there is a difference between these two acts, for the former is recommended and supererogatory while the latter, namely *Zakat*, is obligatory. Allah *Glorified is He* then concludes the verse of *al-Baqara* with His saying, ‘... And [truly pious are] they who keep their promises whenever they promise and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril, It is they that have proven themselves true, and it is they who are conscious of Allah.’ (*al-Baqara*: 177)

According to this aforementioned verse of *al-Baqara*, these are the attributes of those who are true to their word. As for the verse under discussion of the chapter of *at-Tawba*, they are described as being mindful of Allah and truthful. Thus, we should take into account that Allah *Glorified is He* has mentioned the attribute of truthfulness here in particular since the context of these verses tells about those who declined to go out to the battle of *Tabuk* and lied about the excuses they proffered for this, and therefore, Allah *the Almighty* instructs them to be truthful.⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently, says:

(1) ‘Ab dullah ibn Mas‘ud Allah be pleased with him narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: ‘You must be truthful. Truthfulness leads to dutifulness and dutifulness leads to the Garden. A man continues to tell the truth until he is written as a trustworthy with Allah. Beware of lying. Lying leads to deviance and deviance leads to the fire. A man continues to lie until he is written as a liar with Allah.’ [Narrated by *Al-Bukhari*]

مَا كَانَ لِأَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ أَنْ يَتَخَلَّفُوا عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَلَا
 يَرْغَبُوا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ لَا يُصِيبُهُمْ ظَمَأٌ وَلَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا
 مَخْمَصَةٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَطْغُونَ مَوْطِئًا يَغِيظُ الْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُونَ مِنْ
 عَدُوِّ نِيْلًا إِلَّا كُنِبَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

The people of Medina and their neighbouring desert Arabs should not have held back from following God's Messenger, nor should they have cared about themselves more than him: if ever they suffer any thirst, weariness, or hunger in God's cause, take any step that angers the disbelievers, or cause any harm to an enemy, a good deed is recorded in their favour on account of it – God never wastes the reward of those who do good [120] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 120)

This verse under discussion yet sheds light on those who stayed behind during the battle of *Tabuk*. We have previously explained that there is a difference between the following two styles, namely *ma kan laka* (it is not for you) and *ma yanbaghi* (it is not of right/one should not), as follows: when one says to another, 'It is not for you to do such and such act', this means that this person does not have the ability to do that particular act; yet in case it is, one says, 'You should not do such and such act,' this means that even though one has the ability to do the act, he is not allowed to do it. As for the verse under discussion, it tells that even though Allah *Glorified is He* tells that the people of Medina and their neighbouring desert Arabs should not have held back from following Allah's Messenger, some of them had already stayed behind and did not set out to the battle with him *peace and blessings be upon him*:

As for the saying of Allah, '...nor should they have cared about themselves more than him ...' (*at-Tawba*: 120), it refers to two kinds of selves, namely the selves of those who stayed behind during this battle and the self of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Concerning the Arabic verb *Raghiba* (care), it means that the heart inclines towards something; yet if the verb under discussion is followed with the preposition *fi* (in), it means that the heart strongly desires to perform the action in question, whilst if it is followed by the proposition '*an* (from), it means that the heart desires to keep well away from the action in question. Thus, the preposition is what determines the nature of the heart's inclination.

The saying of Allah *the Exalted*, ‘...nor should they have cared about themselves more than him...’ (*at-Tawba*: 120), thus indicates clearly that those who stayed behind were averse to obeying the command issued by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which means that they preferred their own commands to that of the Messenger, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* tells them that they should not do that, for they by virtue of their belief were supposed to love him *peace and blessings be upon him* more than their own selves.⁽¹⁾

This is why when ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* heard Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘None of you is a (true) believer till I am dearer to him than his own self’⁽²⁾, ‘Umar said to him, ‘O, Prophet Muhammad, I indeed love you more than my family and my wealth, but not more than my own self’, which is why he *peace and blessings be upon him* repeated the saying, ‘None of you is a (true) believer till I am dearer to him than his own self’. At this point, ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* fully realised that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* strongly and heavily affirms one of the unshakeable principles of faith. In addition, ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* became fully aware of the fact that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was referring exclusively about the act of rational love and not the emotional one. Therefore, we should take into account that there is a difference between these two acts of love, for the former has to do with legal obligation while the latter not.

For example, one loves his son emotionally, even if the boy is not clever; however, one might love the son of his enemy rationally if he is clever, honest and successful. In this respect, we previously gave the following example to illustrate this point; man might love a bitter medicine because it cures him; that is to say that he does not love this medicine emotionally and thus does not feel any pleasure when he drinks it. However, he loves it rationally since it might be the means by which his health is restored, to the extent that if he

(1) *Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him is narrated to have said: ‘There are three qualities whoever has them, will taste the sweetness of belief: To love Allah and His Messenger peace and blessings be upon him more than anyone else; to love a slave (of Allah) only for (the sake of) Allah; and to abhor returning to disbelief after Allah has saved him from it as he would abhor to be thrown into the fire (of Hell).’ {Narrated by Al-Bukhari}*

(2) *[narrated by Al-Bukhari]*

does not find it in the pharmacies, he becomes angry and complains, yet he is delighted when someone brings it for him from abroad.

It is thus clear that those who stayed behind during the battle of *Tabuk* from amongst the people of Medina and the neighbouring desert Arabs had sinned by their action since this action was in contradiction with their faith, which obligates them to love Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* more than their own selves. In addition, these people were supposed to care about him more than themselves, and not vice versa because the reason for this is that obeying the orders of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will bring them none but goodness.

However, if they show love for themselves more than Prophet Muhammad, this will for sure bring them nothing but evil, and even if it brought them goodness, it would be temporary and contingent on their own possibilities. It is thus clear that their love for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would undoubtedly bring them perpetual goodness commensurate to the Omnipotent Power of Allah *the Almighty*.

The Arabic pronoun *Dhalik* (for) in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...for if ever they suffer any thirst...’ refers to the reasons why they will be provided with this great reward. The reasons for this are as follows: Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘...if ever they suffer any thirst...’, and we know for certain that thirst assailed the believers in this battle, to the extent that a warrior would slaughter his camel and extract the water from its stomach to wet his mouth and the mouths of his companions.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘if ever they suffer any) weariness’, the Arabic word *Nasab* (weariness) means exhaustion, for the battle, as we know, took place in extremely hot weather.

As for Arabic term *Makhmasa* (hunger) in the Saying of Allah *the Most High* in the aforementioned verse, it refers to starvation. We know quite well that believers during this battle ate the worm-ridden dates and maggot-infested barley. Yet, Allah *the Almighty* will certainly reward them with the best for all the hardships they experienced in His cause.

As for the explanation of the saying of Allah *the Exalted* ‘if ever they take any step that angers the disbelievers...’, it means that when the believers

attack the army of the disbelievers in such a way that makes the latter move backwards, to the extent that the believers occupy their valleys and orchards, this matter will for sure enrage the people of disbelief.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘(if ever they) cause any harm to an enemy...’ it means that the believers gain the upper hand over the enemy, in which they defeat the enemy so that they retreat and feel loss. Having enumerated all of these reasons, Allah *Glorified is He* then tells that He will reward the believers for each of these deed; a point which is proved by the Saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...a good deed is recorded in their favour on account of it...’ (*at-Tawba*: 120).

It is thus clear that those who preferred themselves to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and thus refrained from going out to battle lost much, for they indeed lost the great reward provided by Allah *the Almighty* for each of the hardships experienced by the believers in this battle.

Allah *the Most High* then concludes the verse with His saying, ‘...Allah never wastes the reward of those who do good.’ (*at-Tawba*: 120) What this means is that Allah *Glorified is He* will certainly not waste the reward of those who do the good.

He then moves to count the good deeds that may are done by the believers who set out to the war with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying:

وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً وَلَا يَقْطَعُونَ وَادِيًا
إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾

If they spend a little or a lot for God’s cause, if they traverse a mountain pass, all this is recorded to their credit so that God can reward them in accordance with the best of their deeds [121] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 121)

This verse clearly indicates that all of man’s actions are recorded which means that Allah *the Almighty* knows fully well those who spend in His cause and those who travelled the long road and crossed valleys to join Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in his battles confirming meanwhile that He will certainly reward them the best for their actions. Having set out

with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the battle to the extent that Medina was about to not have a single Muslim residing in it Allah *Glorified is He* instructs them how to act in such a situation, by saying:

وَمَا كَانَتِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

Yet it is not right for all the believers to go out [to battle] together: out of each community, a group should go out to gain understanding of the religion, so that they can teach their people when they return and so that they can guard themselves against evil [122] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 122)

Having revealed these verses concerning the condition of those who stayed behind during the battle of *Tabuk* and having counted the advantages of the believers and the great reward they would be provided with by Allah *Glorified is He* for their good deeds, He *the Almighty* sent down this aforementioned verse. That is to say that Allah *the Most High* in these two previous verses, counts the reasons why people should join striving in His cause. As a matter of fact, these two verses have encouraged the believers to do so in such a way that makes them leave behind their lands, properties and families, taking only into consideration the great reward they would obtain from Allah *the Exalted*.

Upon careful examination of these two verses, scholars have the opinion that they were revealed to perfect the topic of *Jihad*, confirming meanwhile that companions of Prophet Muhammad, upon hearing these two verses, swore to participate in all the battles and expeditions to the extent that they sometimes left him *peace and blessings be upon him* with a small number of the companions since most of them had already set out to take part in war.

We know for certain that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the one appointed by Allah to receive the Divine Message and to deliver it to people. Yet, when all of the people showed a strong desire to take part in jihad, Allah *the Almighty* instructed them how to deal with this topic in the best way; He made it clear that Islam was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that he could convey it to the people. Thus, we

should acknowledge the fact that the religion of Islam is mainly based on two requirements, which are as follows: someone to convey it to people and something to prove to them that he is truthful. Likewise, when people see someone sacrifice himself only for the sake of Allah while another spending his wealth for the same reason, they will undoubtedly realise that these people do apply their steadfast and firm belief.

The act of jihad is certainly a good deed, yet there is a very important point which we must take into account which is that in case all the people set out to take part in wars, then who would remain to learn Islam from Prophet Muhammad and to convey it to people? That is to say that those who shouldered the responsibility of learning Islam and conveying it to others would have a great reward, like those who sacrifice themselves and wealth for the sake of Allah.

It is thus clear that the Divine Way of Guidance was sent down upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to convey it to people who, in turn, were obligated to deliver it all over the corners of the world. This means that those who received the knowledge of Islam were supposed to spread and disseminate it to all mankind, which is why the residence of some of the companions with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in Medina was of cardinal importance since they were to get this knowledge from him; otherwise, they would have nothing to tell people about.

Therefore, we reach the conclusion that Muslims had to take care of two things: the reception of the Message from Heaven through Prophet Muhammad and the deliverance of this Message throughout the land. Thus, if you, O, believers, all go out to struggle in the Cause of Allah, you thus achieve one of these two goals, but not the other one which is that you should remain with Prophet Muhammad to hear the Divine Message from him. It is as if Allah *the Exalted* wants to tell the believers that those who shall remain with Prophet Muhammad to learn the Message are already striving in the cause of Allah exactly like those who set out to participate in battles and expeditions; this point is proven by His saying: ‘Yet it is not right for all the believers to go out [to battle] together ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 122).

Thus, we should realise that the Arabic style *Ma Kan* (It is not right) indicates the denial of a particular topic. Therefore, this particular part of the

aforementioned verse means that it is not right for all believers to set out for war together which means without any of them staying behind.

As for the Arabic word *Kaaffah* (all... together), it is derived from the verb *kaff* which means 'to halt'. For example, when a tailor wants to put a hem on a garment to stop it from unravelling, the same word is used to give this meaning. It is thus clear that the word *Kaaffah* is used in this context to give the meaning of 'all'.

This raises a good question: 'why should not all the Muslims go out to fight and struggle in the cause of Allah, especially if we take into consideration that jihad is a means to spread the Divine Message among people?'

We say that it is undoubtedly a good way of disseminating and spreading the Divine Way of Guidance throughout earth, but the one who travels to fulfil this task must have something to proclaim and tell people about; this is a matter which was not to be fulfilled during that particular period of time except through learning from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Therefore, we can summarise the entire topic as follows: people had to learn and receive the teachings and instructions of Islam from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and then spread them throughout the land. Had all the believers gone out to join jihad in the cause of Allah, then the Message of Islam would not have been conveyed to people, which is why Allah instructed them how to deal with this matter by saying, 'Yet it is not right for all the believers to go out [to battle] together ...' (*at-Tawba*: 122). What this means is that even though all believers might have the ability to set out for battles and expeditions, they were not allowed, under this verse, to do so.

In this respect, we know for certain that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was brought up amongst people who were masters of eloquence and speech. It is historically recorded that many Arabs during that particular period of time were known for their extraordinary talent of making speech and composing poetry, yet Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not known for that, to the extent that some of his tribe tried to disparage his eloquence by saying, 'His eloquence is less than that of the orators, speakers and poets', which is why Allah *Glorified is He* refutes their allegation in the

Quran by saying, ‘And [thus it is:] We have not imparted to this [Prophet the gift of] poetry, nor would [poetry] have suited this [Message]...’ (*Ya Sin*: 69).

What this means is that had Allah *the Almighty* so willed, He would have made the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* excel everyone in this regard, yet He *the Almighty* did not teach him poetry since it did not befit him. However, why did He not?! Since Arabs knew fully well that the best poetry is that which is most untrue and since this was the case, Allah *Glorified is He* did not want people to think that the Quran was from the own composition of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who, let us assume, would have been highly skilled in composing poetry and making eloquent speech. That is to say that if this were truly the case (i.e. Prophet Muhammad was highly skilled in these arts of Arabic language), people would not deny that the Quran was from his composition. Therefore, we should stress that he *peace and blessings be upon him* lived amongst them for a long time, yet they never heard him recite poetry; in other words, all what he delivered to them was revealed upon his heart from Allah *the Almighty*.

Therefore, it is clear that the saying of Allah in the chapter of *Ya sin*, ‘...nor would [poetry] have suited this [Message] ...’ (*Ya Sin*: 69) means that even though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was highly qualified by Allah to master poetry, it was not right from him to do so. In other words, had Allah *the Almighty* willed to make him master the art of composing poetry, He would have made so, which is why He, refuting the allegation of those who claimed that the Quran was the production of him *peace and blessings be upon him* says: ‘...Indeed, a whole lifetime have I dwelt among you before this [revelation came to me]. Will you not, then, use your reason?’ (*Yunus*: 16) As a matter of fact, Prophet Muhammad lived amongst them for forty years without ever reciting a verse of poem or even making a speech. Thus, we shall wonder, ‘Who is that person who can delay his genius until the age of forty?’ We know for certain that genius shows itself obviously before the age of twenty, or during the second decade of life, and no one ever delays showing his genius.

So, when Allah *the Most High* encouraged believers to strive in His cause by revealing down these verses of *jihad*, Medina was almost emptied of Muslims which is why Allah *Glorified is He* sent down the following verse to tell them how to deal in such a situation: ‘Yet, it is not right for all believers to go out

[to battle] together: out of each community, a group should go out to gain understanding of the religion, so that they can teach their people when they return and so that they can guard themselves against evil.' (*at-Tawba*: 122) Once again, this verse in question sheds light on two very important points, which are the reception of the Divine Message and its propagation. What this means is that *jihad* is of different kinds including those who sacrifice themselves in the Cause of Allah and those who receive knowledge of Islam and disseminate it to others. Thus, we should take into account that had all the believers set out to perform *jihad* in the battlefield, leaving Prophet Muhammad behind, how could the believers then know about the instructions and teachings of Islam? In the same respect, had they all remained in Medina, how could this Message then reach people throughout the land? At this point, we should know that these two aforementioned cases are totally different from that one in which the believers remained with him *peace and blessings be upon him* during times of no wars or peace. As a matter of fact, the believers, according to the last case, were only in a state of receiving knowledge.

Likewise, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself went out to fight, all the believers who were able to fight had to join him, so that they would be able to learn about the Message from him. It is thus clear that the problem concerning this matter only exists when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not go out with those who went to strive in the cause of Allah, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* instructed them, under this case, to divide themselves into two groups: one who remains with him *peace and blessings be upon him* to learn the teachings and instructions of Islam from him, and the other who sets out to strive in the cause of Allah.

At this point, we should mention that the war in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* took part is called *Ghazwa* (battle), as for a war in which he did not take part, it is called *As-Sariyya* (an Expedition).⁽¹⁾

(1) *It is narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him had already set out to twenty-seven battles and fought personally in nine of them: Badr, Uhud, Al-Murisi', Al-Khandaq, Banu Qurazha, Khaybar, the Opening of Mecca, Hunayn and At-Ta'if. Scholars yet differed concerning the number of the expeditions he sent; some of them say it was forty-seven while others opine that they were around sixty.*

There is only one exception to this aforementioned rule which is the expedition of Mu'ta; it is called *Ghazwa* even though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not set out for it himself. The reason for this naming was that this expedition witnessed the occurrence of a number of violent incidents exactly like those that took place in battles. For example, a number of the Companions including the three leaders Zayd ibn Haritha, Ja'far ibn Abi Taleb and 'Abdullah ibn Rawaha were martyred during it. That is to say that it was a fierce and decisive battle, which is why we cannot call it expedition.

Therefore, there is a very important point that we should take into account about the battle of Mu'ta which is that even though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not set out for the battle with the believers, he arranged all the affairs of the army of Islam before it even set out for fighting to the extent that he appointed the leaders of the army by saying, 'If so-and-so is killed, let so-and-so take his place, and so on.' This means that he *peace and blessings be upon him* had arranged the events of the battle even before its start.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, we should note the fact that this battle of Mu'ta is considered the only one in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave such instructions for the army of believers. What this means is that Allah *Glorified is He* has informed him of what would happen in the battlefield, an undeniable fact which is proven by that when the army of Islam reached the land of Mu'ta, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while in Medina, started telling the companions about the events of the battle by saying: 'Zayd took over the flag and was martyred. Then it was taken by Ja'far who was martyred as well. Then 'Abdullah ibn Rawaha took the flag, but he too was martyred. After Allah's Messenger *peace be upon him* mentioned this, his eyes were full of tears. Then, Khalid ibn Al-Walid took

(1) 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar is narrated to have said: 'Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* appointed Zaid bin Haritha as the commander of the army during the battle of Mu'ta and said, "If Zaid is martyred, Ja'far should take over his position, and if Ja'far is martyred, 'Abdullah bin Rawaha should take over his position.' "'Abdullah ibn 'Umar further said, "I was present amongst them in that battle and we searched for Ja'far ibn Abi Taleb and found his body amongst the bodies of the martyred ones, and found over ninety wounds over his body, caused by stabs or shots (of arrows).' [Narrated by Al-Bukhari] .

the flag without being nominated as a chief (beforehand) and was blessed with victory.⁽¹⁾

When the warriors of the army of Islam came back home, the companions learned from them that events of the battle had taken place in the same way narrated to them by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This means that there was no difference whatsoever between his narration and reality, which is why the companions firmly believed that he *peace and blessings be upon him* had already witnessed the battle. Based on this, scholars have the opinion that this battle of Mu'ta is to be called *Ghazwa*.

Back to the verse being discussed, Allah *the Almighty* says: '... out of each community, a group should go out to gain understanding of the religion ...' (*at-Tawba*: 122). At this point, we should understand that there are some Arabic particles which give the same meaning, such as *Law la*, *law*, *Law ma* and *Halla*, all of which are used to indicate exhortation. As for *law* (if only), it indicates the negation of two acts: one because of the other. For example, if you say, 'If only Zayd were with you, I would visit you', this means that you are not coming because Zayd is not there. So, the word *law* is a particle which implies that one thing is negated because another is. In the same respect, if you say, 'If only you had come to my house, I would have welcomed you', this means that I did not welcome you because you did not come.

As for *law la*, it is used, if followed by noun, to indicate that a particular act will not take place because of another act, which has already taken place. For example, if you say, 'If only Zayd were not with you, I would come to you', this means, 'I am not coming to you because Zayd is there.' However, if this particle in question is followed by a verb, it indicates exhortation; this meaning is quite clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Why do the believing men and women, whenever such [a rumour] is heard, not think the best of one another...?' (*an-Nur*: 12) Another example for this meaning is the Saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Why do they not [demand of the accusers that they] produce four witnesses to prove their allegation ...?' (*an-Nur*: 13) Thus, we should know that the particle *Law ma* is also used to give the same

(1) Narrated [Reported by Al-Bukhari]

meaning; this point is perfectly clear in the Saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Why do you not bring to us the angels if you are of the truthful ones?’ (*al-Hijr*: 7).

In the same respect, the particle *Halla* is used to give the meaning of exhortation: for example, when one says, ‘Have you revised your lessons?’ Furthermore, this particle in question is made up of a question word, which is *hal*, as well as a long vowel indicating exhortation. When one says, ‘Have you not honoured so-and-so,’ this actually encourages one to be generous to so-and-so.

As for the verse under discussion, Allah *the Exalted* tells believers that they all are not allowed to set out to war together, and thus He *Glorified is He* stresses to them to divide themselves into two groups: one of them should set out to perform jihad, while the other should remain with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to learn the teachings and instructions of Islam. Concerning the saying of Allah *the Most High* ‘...out of each community, a group should go out to gain understanding of the religion...’ (*at-Tawba*: 122), the Arabic verb *Nafara* (go out to) is used to give the meaning of ‘repulsion’, yet it is used in this context to give the meaning of ‘going out to war’; this meaning is deduced from the Saying of Allah *Glorified is He* ‘...What is amiss with you that, when you are called upon, “Go forth) to war in Allah’s Cause,” you cling heavily to the earth? Would you content yourselves with [the comforts of] this worldly life in preference to [the good of] the life to come?! But, the enjoyment of life in this world is but a paltry thing when compared with the life to come! If you do not go forth to war ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 38-39).

This raises a very good question, which is ‘Why does Allah *the Almighty* use the verb *I’nfiru* (go forth to) in the context of war?’ The answer is quite clear in the fact that one is prevented from going out to strive in the Cause of Allah due to the joy he feels from relaxation and happiness which he experiences while with his family and properties. This point is made in the Saying of Allah *Glorified is He* ‘Fighting is ordained for you, even though it be hateful to you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 216). It is taken for granted that this aforementioned verse of *al-Baqara* has actually told the absolute truth, for even though man dislikes the act of fighting, Allah *Glorified is He* has ordained it upon them. As a matter of fact, due to the fact that believers know with certainty the great reward prepared by Allah *the Almighty* for those who strive

in jihad for His cause, they disdain all what they leave behind, for it is in no way comparable to Bounty of Allah. That is to say that the true believer leaves behind all what he owns to be eligible to receive the Reward of Allah *the Exalted*. This is actually why *jihad* in the cause of Allah is called *Nafra*. Truthfully speaking, when a believer compares the value of what he can gain from jihad in the light of the value of what holds him back from it, he will ask, 'What would make me hold onto what is lesser, as long as there is something more valuable in store?'

Thus, when the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... out of each community, a group should go out to...' (*at-Tawba*: 122) was revealed, the companions understood that this verse clarified the topic of jihad by instructing them to divide themselves into two groups: one of them to remain with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to learn the Divine Message from him, while the other to set out to perform jihad in the battlefield. Therefore, someone, upon reading this verse under discussion, may ask, 'How could it be for those who remain in Medina to acquire a deeper knowledge of religion than those who set out to perform jihad in the battlefield?!' The answer to this question is yet evident in the fact that Allah *the Almighty* mentions the word *Firqa* (community) which is divided into several groups which is exactly as it is the case with today's armies; we find today's armies divided into several battalions which are, in turn, divided into squadrons according to their different duties. In the same respect, the word *Ta'ifa* gives the meaning of 'many'.

Therefore, the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* '...out of each community, a group should go out to ...' (*at-Tawba*: 122) means that He *the Almighty* has divided the community of believers into two factions: one of them is supposed to go out to fight in the cause of Allah, while the other is supposed to stay with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to learn the teachings of Islam from him. This means that each of the two factions has a due role to perform.

Once again, the community of believers, according to this verse in question, is divided into two groups: one of them had to shoulder the military responsibility, while the other had to play the role of propagating the Message, as clearly mentioned in the Saying of Allah, '...to gain understanding of the

religion...’ (*at-Tawba*: 122). That is to say that those who stayed with him *peace and blessings be upon him* in Medina to gain the understanding of religion would perform the role of disseminating the Message to those who were not present with him *peace and blessings be upon him* during that time. Then, those who came back from war were to remain in Medina with him *peace and blessings be upon him* to learn from him, while the other group was to set out to fight, and so on.

There is yet another group of scholars who have a different opinion believing that both of the two parties referred to in this verse under discussion are viewed as performing jihad. They say that those who remained with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* underwent another kind of struggle since they gained new knowledge from him and exchanged it with the warriors when they returned from the battlefield. What this means is that while the warriors returned from the battlefield with victory, this plainly indicates how Allah *the Almighty* aided the small party over the numerous host; how He supported the believers with the angels; and how He destroyed the enemy. Also, it indicates that those who stayed with him *peace and blessings be upon him* in Medina would convey them the knowledge they got from him during the formers’ absence. Therefore, it is clear that they both perform jihad in the Cause of Allah as if they were a firm and compact wall.

Thus, we reach the conclusion that the explanation we gave to this verse being discussed should be considered as viewing or as shedding light on the concept of jihad; yet how could we explain this verse in case it is meant to cast light on a topic other than *jihad*? The answer to this question is quite clear in the fact that the act of *jihad* entails the propagation of the Divine Way of Guidance throughout the land, a matter that requires being well versed in knowledge which tells us about the destiny of those who strived in the cause of Allah and those who stayed behind.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...out of each community, a group should go out...’ (*at-Tawba*: 122) thus means some Muslims shall go to the lands around Medina to convey the teachings of Islam to the people therein. It may also be explained to mean that people from around Medina shall come to learn about the religion of Islam so that they could be able to teach their relatives.

Once again, this particular part of the aforementioned verse which is the Saying of Allah, ‘...out of each community, a group should go out ...’ may be explained to refer to those who come from places far from Medina to sit with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to acquire a deeper knowledge of religion so that they can then return to their communities and tell them about the teachings and instructions of Islam.

Therefore, we can hold the position that this verse in question either sheds light on the topic of jihad or on those who came from areas surrounding Medina to gain the understanding of religion from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that they would be able to teach their people about the instructions of Islam; this is a point which has nothing at all to do with jihad. Thus, to go out (*nafara*) to acquire a deeper knowledge of the Faith can impart the two meanings; this means that there is no difference between those who stay behind to acquire knowledge, which they then teach to those who go out to fight in the battlefield, and those who go out to fight and thereby acquire knowledge by means of the miracles or events which occur during war and which they then teach to those who do not go out to fight.

Once again, this verse may also be explained in the held opinion that it sheds light on a topic other than that of *jihad*, and thus, it means that groups of people from around the Medina came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to gather understating of religion. Therefore, we stress that Allah *the Most High* has called it *Nafra* since it entails exerting great efforts to attain the knowledge of religion, which truly requires the exertion of one’s utmost efforts; furthermore, going out to strive in battle requires that one should well understand the reasons why this Divinely-revealed Way of Guidance must be defended.

Thus, we know that the word *Firqa* (community) in the saying of Allah under discussion gives the meaning of a ‘group’, which, in turn, is divided into individuals or factions. In this respect, we should take into account that a ‘group’ is composed of at least three people. As for the legitimacy of accepting the deliverance of knowledge from one person, scholars differed concerning this point, as follows: some of them hold the position that the report of one person should be accepted, while others reject this, stressing that there must be at

least two persons. Yet, if we review this opinion in the light of the verse under discussion, we know that *Firqa* is composed of at least three persons, while *At-Ta'ifa* is composed of either two or one, which is why it is believed that it is allowed for one person to report and convey knowledge to his people.

Yet, some scholars do not accept this opinion, saying that the verse does not mean that only one person is he who went out to learn from Prophet Muhammad, rather, it is a faction of the community which is composed of more than one person.

As for the main reason for *An-Nafra* (the act of going out), it is quite evident in the Saying of Allah, 'to gain understanding of the religion' (*at-Tawba*: 122). That is to say that acquiring deeper knowledge of Islam is the main reason behind going out, exactly as is the case when a delegation of students is sent to a developed country to learn modern sciences; yet, if any of the members of this delegation abandons its purpose by playing and fooling around, he is thus judged as not fulfilling his mission. Therefore, each one of the members of this delegation must always remember that he has come in order to acquire a deeper knowledge in a particular field of science.

As for the Arabic term *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), it linguistically means 'understanding', which is why Arabs used to say about any topic they understood as '*Faqihthu Al-A'mra*', which means that he really understood it. As a matter of fact, this applies to the understanding of any topic, whether it relates to geometry, biology, etc. Yet, we should take into account the fact that this word in question is used today to refer to the topics of religion more than anything else. The reason for this is that religion is the most important thing in life. Furthermore, the *Faqih* (the person who has a deep understanding of religion) is the one who tells people how to adhere to the Divine Way of Guidance in the light of the two orders: 'Do' and 'Do not do'.

Thus, generally speaking, (*fiqh*) linguistically means 'understanding', but it, due to the fact that it is meant with showing people what is right and what is wrong, has come to be a technical term meaning 'the understanding of the Shari'a (Islamic Law) of Allah'. At this point, we should differentiate between the following two verbs, namely *faqiha* and *faquha*; this confirms that no one is called a jurist unless he has successfully gained the knowledge of the

religion of Islam in such a way that enables him to answer any question offered to him in this regard quite easily, or in other words, the matter becomes natural to him, for he has practised it so many times. As for the *faqih*, it means that he understood (something). This is actually the difference between these two verbs.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...to gain understanding of the religion...’ (*at-Tawba*: 122) thus means that that they shall learn the rulings and teachings of Islam in such a way that makes this knowledge second nature to them.

However, what if a man comes forth for a reason other than understanding the matters of religion, will he be rewarded for this? Let us offer an example to illustrate this point. If a Bedouin, upon seeing his people going out, asks them where they are going to, and, in turn, they tell him that they are going to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to learn the knowledge of religion from him, so he decides to go with them. However, he does not listen him *peace and blessings be upon him*; rather, he goes here and there to the extent that he does not make any effort to acquire deeper knowledge. Will this person be rewarded for this act, especially if we take into account the fact that the reason behind his going out to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was to learn from him?! At this point, we heavily stress that jurists do not seek fame, power or employment, rather they show people how to correctly act in accordance with the sound teachings of religion; this is a point which is quite evident in the saying of Allah *the Exalted* ‘...so that they can guard themselves against evil.’ (*at-Tawba*: 122)

As a matter of fact, when we examine this matter of going out closely, we fully realise that it is done according to several stages. The first stage is quite clear in the Saying of Allah, ‘...out of each community, a group should go out ...’, while the second stage is manifested in the saying of Allah, ‘...to gain understanding of the religion ...’. As for the third stage, it becomes evident in the saying of Allah, ‘...so that they can teach their people when they return and so that they can guard themselves against evil’.

As for those who acquire knowledge for nothing but to draw people’s attention, they fall under the category of those about whom Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Say: “Shall we tell you who are the greatest losers 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 works." (*al-Kahf*: 103-104)

Thus, knowledge should be acquired for the purpose of giving tidings and warnings, so that people can guard themselves against evil.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ
وَلْيَجِدُوا فِيكُمْ غِلْظَةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

You who believe, fight the disbelievers near you and let them find you standing firm: be aware that God is with those who are mindful of Him [123] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 123)

By this verse, Allah *the Exalted* sheds light once again on the topic of *jihad*. As a result, we might wonder, 'Why did Allah separate the verse talking about *jihad* by the topic of going out to learn the knowledge of religion from Prophet Muhammad?' The answer is quite apparent in the fact that a person is not eligible to perform *jihad* unless he is fully aware of his reasons; this is a matter that will not be fulfilled except through acquiring deeper knowledge of religion.

Concerning these verses shedding light on the topic of *jihad*, Allah *the Most High* divided people into two groups: those who go out to fight and those who remain with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Yet, in case there is no *jihad*, they should be divided into two groups: one of them should struggle, while the other should learn the rulings of religion. Yet, these two groups shall exchange their spiritual and military knowledge in such a way that makes all of their attitudes complementary, not opposed. As a matter of fact, if this is fully achieved, believers will be then able to fight against disbelievers. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'You who believe fight the disbelievers near you ...' (*at-Tawba*: 123), it means that there were people near the believers, and they were still disbelievers. Meanwhile, there were others who were far from them. Likewise, if we discuss this verse in question in the light of the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... And fight against those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah, all together – just as they fight against you, [O, believers,] all together...' (*at-Tawba*: 36), we will reach the conclusion that there are priorities that must be taken into consideration in wars.

Furthermore, fighting disbelievers who are near is a means of attaining security for the forces of faith. For this reason, the commandment is given here to fight those who are near since this fighting does not require mounts or provisions necessary for long travel. In addition, you know about the condition of your nearby enemies better than the distant ones; this means that you know fully their points of strengths and weaknesses and thus how they could be defeated. Furthermore, you cannot fight against a distant enemy unless you do so first against a near one; otherwise, they both will gather their forces to make a 'pincer movement' to trap you, which is why it is a must to first protect our back from the near enemy. It is thus clear that there is no contradiction whatsoever between fighting a distant enemy and fighting a near enemy.

In the same respect, there is no contradiction between the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'You who believe, fight the disbelievers near you...' (*at-Tawba*: 123) and His saying, 'And fight against those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah, all together' since the words 'all together' mean 'all of them'. However, there are priorities in this; so fight, O, believers, those nearest to you first so that you own their land and thus become stronger. Let us offer this example to clarify this point. If your enemy has a sword and you have another, but yet you take his sword; this means that you now have two swords, while he does not have any.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* makes it clear to disbelievers and instructs them to take admonition of the fact that the area of their lands, by the passage of time, decreases from beneath their feet to increase the area of the land of Islam.⁽¹⁾ Thus, there is a very important point which is that as long as Allah *Glorified is He* uses the word 'fight' which entails that the act of *jihad* requires resolve, boldness and endless patience; for you might find yourself facing someone who is stronger or braver than you. Yet, we stress that if this enemy realises that you are braver and have more patience than them, they will have no hope at all to defeat you; this point is yet proven by the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... and

(1) Commenting on the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *ar-Ra'd*, 'Have, then, they [who deny the truth] never yet seen how We visit the earth [with Our punishment], gradually depriving it of all that is best thereon?...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 41), Ibn 'Abbas Allah *be pleased with them explained this to mean*: 'Have they not seen how We conquer land after land for Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him' [Narrated by Ibn Kathir].

let them find you standing firm ...' (*at-Tawba*: 123) which means that you, O, believers, must be firm in your fighting with them, or in other words, you should firmly and strongly strike your enemy from disbelievers.

In the same respect, when your enemy tries to strike you, you should receive his blow with great endurance. Thus, you find that 'the act of being firm' is required in two different situations: when the blow goes from you to disbelievers and when it comes from them to you. What this means is that it is not enough that you strike your enemy a powerful blow, yet when your enemy returns it, you capitulate and cower. In this regard, it is stressed that Allah *the Almighty* wants you, O, believers, to be adamant when striking your opponent and adamant when receiving his blow.

This point is yet clear in the saying of Allah in the chapter of *Al-Imran* in which Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Be patient in adversity...' (*Al-Imran*: 200). Yet, if we suppose that the enemy, in turn, shall show patience, then you, O, believers, are supposed to try to be more patient than them; this is a fact which is proven by the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... and vie in patience with one another ...' (*Al-Imran*: 200). In the same respect, He *the Most High* warns you not to cast aside your weapons once the battle is over since the enemy might try to attack you while you are not paying attention; He *the Almighty* says: '...and be ever ready ...' (*Al-Imran*: 200).

What this means is to be stable on earth, O, believers, so that the enemy knows that you are waiting for him if he ever tries to attack you again or even thinks about fighting you again. Thus, to be adamant and firm, you are obligated to attack, to bear hardships and to show patience and courage. Yet, if your enemy too has patience and courage, you must vie in patience with him, or in other words, you must have more patience than they. As for the Arabic word *Sabara* (to vie in patience) means to compete with one another. The word *Munafasa*, in turn, is derived from the word *Nafs*, which means 'soul'. Allah *the Most High* says: '...To that, then, let all such aspire as [are willing to] aspire to things of high account.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 26) This means aspire, O people, and compete with one another for what is good. In this respect, we know that a human body might require something once or twice a day; yet, it might require another thing five or six times a day, whilst it might

require a third constantly. For example, one eats three meals a day and might need to drink two or four litres of water, or more. As for breathing (*tanaffus*), he cannot do without it even for a moment, which is why it is viewed as the most crucial of all human needs.

We said before that Allah *the Almighty* due to His Infinite Mercy, has allowed some people to own the food of others. Therefore, we should take into account that man might go without food for weeks, but he cannot go without water for more than three to ten days depending on how much water he has stored in his body, and therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* has not allowed anyone to own water in the same way He has allowed them to own food. Yet, as for air, He *the Almighty* due to the fact that one cannot go without it for more than a few seconds, has never allowed anyone to own it. It is as though Allah *the Most High* knew that His servants could not be trusted to look after the affairs of one another. For this reason, the Arabic word for 'breathing' is *tanaffus*. At this point, we should fully acknowledge that the process of breathing (inhaling and exhaling) is the main reason for the existence of the soul (*nafs*, which is the meeting of spirit and body).

Truthfully speaking, when you compete with the enemy, you seek to get something precious, which is to make the Word of Allah superior. In the same respect, when you vie in patience with the people of falsehood, one of them might have patience obstinately for a little while, but he will then give up since it is the nature of falsehood to pass away and vanish. This is why Allah *the Almighty* orders us to be firm when attacking the enemy along with enduring his attack when it happens.

This raises a good question: 'Why does Allah *the Almighty* ask us to be adamant with disbelievers, when He said to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* before: '...for if you had been harsh and hard of heart, they would indeed have broken away from you...' (*Al-Imran*: 159)?' I say that we should differentiate between two points, which are being adamant as to having a strong argument and being hard in times of warfare. As for the affairs of ordinary life and company, one should be soft and relenting. Thus, the saying of Allah, '...and let them find you standing firm...' (*at-Tawba*: 123) indicates that being adamant is not meant to be a constant attribute, rather, it

must be produced when it is needed. Therefore, we previously said that Allah *the Exalted* does not want the nature of a believer to be always adamant, to be always harsh or to be always proud, rather, He *the Most High* wants them to be as those whom He describes in His saying ‘... Firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the truth, [yet] full of mercy towards one another ...’ (*al-Fath*: 29) and His saying ‘... Humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth ...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 54).

Allah *the Exalted* then concludes the verse with His saying: ‘...be aware that Allah is with those who are mindful of Him.’ (*at-Tawba*: 123) Do not, O, believers, imagine that you face your disbelieving enemies with your own forces and preparations, for these forces and preparations are only means which are required for you to enter the battle with a feeling of assurance. It is like when a person travels through barren desert and wilderness, or follows a dangerous path where he might encounter highwaymen; we find him, under any of these cases, carrying a weapon with him, so that he could have a feeling of reassurance. Furthermore, amassing forces and preparations for war looks like this

As for victory, it comes from the divine aid sent by Allah *the Almighty*. Truthfully speaking, as long as Allah *Glorified is He* is with those who are conscious of Him and is on their side, He will surely provide them with His Aid; this is a point which is proven by the saying of Allah, ‘...Allah is with those who are mindful of Him.’ (*at-Tawba*: 123) This means to take into account that the righteous in this regard are those who are adamant against the enemy. Thus, we should know that someone might be adamant for the sake of battle-spoils, so he fights the disbeliever fiercely, and the heart of this disbeliever might be ready to accept faith, to the extent that he might say, ‘I submit myself to Allah. I surrender!’ Yet, the one who fights this disbeliever might take a fancy to his mount and consider it as battle-spoil for himself.

Therefore, he should take admonition from Allah's Words: ‘... Allah is with those who are mindful of Him.’ (*at-Tawba*: 123), for if someone surrenders to him, he must take the person captive, and he must not harm him or seize his belongings as battle-spoils; the truth is that he did not go out to fight simply in order to gain spoils or to have the high status of a warrior in his

community. Rather, one must fight when fighting is required, and he must do so with the proper spiritual conduct of those who are conscious of Allah *Glorified is He* and one must fight to make the Word of Allah the uppermost⁽¹⁾. It is at this point that Allah *the Almighty* will be with you, for: '... Allah is with those who are mindful of Him.' (*at-Tawba*: 123) Thus, one's being harsh does not mean that harshness became his natural way of being, rather one's enemy should find him harsh when harshness is required. However, if harshness is not required, then his nature should be lenient and gentle.

Therefore, they say, 'The real man is the one who shows bravery in war and mildness in peacetime, and the best of you is the one who is valiant in battle and childlike at home.' So his harshness with the enemy does not continue when he goes home to his wife and children, since this entails directing his energy the wrong way.

This is how we understand the Allah's saying: 'You who believe fight the disbelievers near you and let them find you standing firm. Be aware that Allah is with those who are mindful of Him.' (*at-Tawba*: 123) What this means is that you should be harsh in times of war when this is needed because war requires hardness and harshness, but you should beware of using this to your own advantage, rather, you should use it for Allah's Cause instead, so that He will be with you.⁽²⁾

Afterward, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

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- (1) *Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari narrated that a Bedouin came and said, 'O Prophet of Allah, one man fights for the spoils of war; another fights that he may be remembered, and another fights that he may see his (high) position (achieved as a result of his valour in fighting). Which of these is fighting in the cause of Allah?' The Prophet Muhammad said: 'Who fights so that the Word of Allah is exalted is fighting in the way of Allah.' [Narrated by Bukhari (123) and Muslim (1904)].*
- (2) *Mu'az Ibn Jabal narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: 'Campaigns are of two types. As for the one who seek the Face of Allah, obeys the imam, spends what is precious to him, is easy-going with his Companion and avoids mischief, when he is asleep and when he is awake, it will all bring reward. But as for the one who fights to show off, and he disobeys the imam and does mischief in the land, he will not come back the same as when he left' [Narrated by Ahmed (5/234), Abu Dawud (2512) and An-Nasa'i (6/49)]*

وَإِذَا مَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَقُولُ أَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هَذِهِ إِيمَانًا
فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

When a sura 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 [124] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 124)

He says: ‘When a chapter of the Quran is revealed.’ (*at-Tawba*: 124) Now we know there are the Arabic words *nazala* (to come down), *anzala* (to send down) and *nazzala* (to send down gradually); also, *anzala* is a transitive verb. The Quran came down from the Preserved Tablet to the lower heaven all at once, and then Allah *the Most High* and sent it down gradually⁽¹⁾. Therefore, the verb *Nazzal* describes how all the parts of the Quran were successively sent down; the entire Quran was sent down all at once to the Preserved Tablet, and then Allah *the Almighty* sent it down gradually when Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* delivered it to Prophet Muhammad *peace an blessings be upon him*.

There is a verse which mentions both how Allah *the Exalted* sent down the Quran to the lower heaven and how Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* then brought it down to Prophet Muhammad *peace an blessings be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘We sent down the Quran (*Anzala*) with the truth, and with the truth it has come down (*Nazal*).’ (*al-Isra*’: 105) In another verse, He says: ‘The Trustworthy Spirit brought it down.’ (*ash-Shu’ara*’: 193)

In the verse being discussed, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘When a chapter of the Quran is revealed.’ (*at-Tawba*: 124); the Arabic word *sura* (a chapter) means a section of Quran which is bounded in a certain way. A chapter begins with ‘In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy’, and then continues until another chapter begins after it with ‘In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, and the Giver of Mercy’. The word is derived from the Arabic word *sura* which means ‘a wall’, i.e. something which marks the boundary of a place.⁽²⁾

(1) According to the incidents

(2) Terminologically, *As-Sura* (the chapter) includes some verses of the Quran with a beginning and an end. The least chapter consists of three verses and every *Sura* (chapter) is a miracle and a sign of Allah. There are long and short chapters, but a short chapter like *Al-Kawthar* which consists of three verses, shares the same miraculous nature with *al-Baqara*. You can find the details in *Al-Burhan fi 'Ulum Al-Quran* for Az-Zarkashi (1/263-265).

Does Allah *the Exalted* mean the revelation of an entire chapter of the Quran or just the revelation of any particular part of it? What is meant is the revelation of any particular part of the Quran.

The verse continues: '... Some [hypocrites] say, "Have any of you been strengthened in faith by it?"' (*at-Tawba*: 124) This verse refers to the hypocrites who apostatised from the religion of Islam. We, the believers, know that the Quran is true that it is from Allah *Glorified is He* and that it has a captivating impact, effectively illuminating and purifying the soul. Even disbelievers testified to this when they heard the Quran.⁽¹⁾ When believers heard it, they were utterly captivated by it because they were prepared to receive it, as all actions are not completely dependent on the doer, but also on the recipient of the action. For example – and Allah *Glorified is He* is beyond compare – if you take a hammer, and hammer down a piece of iron, it becomes thinner and its surface area increases. However, if you use the hammer on a hard piece of steel which is stronger than the hammer itself, it will not affect it.

Therefore, the act of hammering is one thing, and the reception of this hammering is another; in this way, the doer of the action must have a responsive receiver, and this receiver should receive the thing without any feeling of animosity towards it in his heart. If someone wants to hear the Quran, he must first remove from his heart any animosity against it. Then, he should place both his feelings for the Quran in his heart and anything against it outside his heart, but he should listen to both of them equally, and whatever seems best to his heart after this, he should accept it.

However, if he receives the Quran with hatred he already has for it in his heart, it will not have any effect on him; this is similar to the position of the hypocrites who heard the Quran and said, 'It did not affect us.'

The reason for this is that the heart has a limited capacity, and it cannot contain both a thing and its opposite. So, do not fill your heart with hatred for

(1) *Among them was Al-Walid Ibnul-Mugheera whom the disbelievers tried to persuade to describe the Quran as soothsaying, the words of a mad person, poetry or the talk of a sorcerer. But he said, 'By Allah it overflows with sweet clarity; it is fruitful at its lowest and prodigious at its highest. And if you tried to say something like this, it would be proven false' [Sirat An-Nabi for Ibn Hisham (1/270)].*

the religion of Islam and then say, 'I heard the Quran, but it did not affect me.' In such a situation, we say to you, 'Remove all what is against the Quran from your heart and also place the Quran outside your heart, and then look at both stances. Then, see which one of them is most pleasing to your heart.' However, if you are already full of feelings against the Quran and then you say, 'The Quran does not affect me', this means that you have not paid attention to the difference between the doer of an action and its recipient, nor to the fact that your heart has a limited capacity and a limited ability to take things in.

A thin-necked bottle will not take the water in if you dip the bottle into it since the thin neck does not allow the air inside to escape, nor does it help the water to enter, as the water cannot enter until the air escapes. Therefore, the neck of the bottle must be wide enough to allow the air to escape and the water to enter, and then you will see bubbles of air rise to the top of the neck. Furthermore, if this is the case with material matters, then it will be the same with spiritual matters which resemble material ones.

So, take all what contradicts the truth from your heart and place both the truth and falsehood outside it, and then consider them both. When you do this, you will have no option but to accept the truth.⁽¹⁾ Allah *the Exalted* describes those who persist with their disbelief by saying: '... Allah has sealed their hearts so they do not understand.' (*at-Tawba*: 93)

In other words, what is outside these hearts cannot get inside them and what is inside these hearts cannot get outside them. Therefore, as long as Allah *Glorified is He* has sealed their hearts, these hearts will not open up to faith and will continue to harbour disbelief. Thus, if any of these disbelievers or hypocrites listens to the Quran and is not captivated by its eloquence, this is due to his inability to behold the meanings and values therein.⁽²⁾ When a

(1) This is in conformity with Allah's Words: 'Will they not contemplate the Quran? Do they have locks on their hearts?' (*Muhammad*: 24) So their hearts have been locked whilst containing other than Allah *Glorified is He* and other than His Word, and therefore they do not contemplate the Quran

(2) *Ibn Ishaq relates in his (Sira) that some of the Qurayshi disbelievers went by night to listen secretly to Prophet Muhammad's recitation of the Quran while he was praying in his house, and each of them stayed there to listen to him without knowing that the others were there. When dawn broke, they left and encountered one another in the*

person listens to the Quran with a pure soul that does not contain anything to disturb the attraction and rhetorical force of the Quran, it captivates him, and his soul finds peace in it.

This is how 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* first read the Quran. He was a dead set against Islam and went to his sister to check if she had really embraced the religion of Islam. When he discovered her conversion to it, he struck her and made blood flow from her, which made his feelings towards her soften. Then, he read the Quran and it settled in his heart.⁽¹⁾ Thus, to receive the Quran, you must first remove what is in your mind.

When a new chapter was sent down from above, a believer accepted it with a pure heart⁽²⁾; as for disbelievers and hypocrites, some of them said, 'Have any of you been strengthened in faith by it?' (*at-Tawba*: 124) This verse tells us that we have two different groups: one that reads, and the other that listens. Also, we can understand from the context of the verse that those who asked this question posed it to two groups: those who had weak faith or had newly converted to Islam and those who were hypocrites. These two groups had not yet removed their disbelief, or some of it, from their hearts, and their receptivity towards faith was not yet confirmed. Allah *Glorified is He* says about some of them: 'Some of these people listen to you [Prophet], but, once

= road, and censured one another and pledged never to do that again – but they each returned to listen to the Quran several further times. One of them, namely Al-Akhnas ibn Shariq, said to Abu Sufyan, 'O Abu Hanzalah, what is your opinion about what you had heard from Muhammad?' He replied: 'O Abu Tha'laba, by Allah, I heard some things I know and whose meaning is clear to me, and I heard other things which I do not understand.' And Al-Akhnas asked Abu Jahl the same question, and he replied, 'What did I hear? We competed with the tribe of Babu Abd Manaf for honour: they fed food, and we fed food; they bore the burdens of others, and we bore them; they gave, and we gave, until when we were running equal, knee to knee, like two mares in a race, they said, 'One of our men is a prophet; revelations come to him from Heaven!' And when shall we ever attain to the like of this? By Allah, we shall never believe in him.' (*Sira ibn Hisham*, 1/315-316).

- (1) Ibn Hisham mentioned the story of 'Umar's conversion to Islam in his *Sira* (1/343, 346).
- (2) Allah *Glorified is He* says in this regard: 'Allah has sent down the most beautiful of all teachings: a Scripture that is consistent and draws comparisons; that causes the skins of those in awe of their Lord to shiver. Then their skins and their hearts soften at the mention of Allah: such is Allah's guidance. He guides with it whoever He will.' (*az-Zumar*: 23)

they leave your presence, they sneer at those who have been given knowledge, saying, "What was that he just said?"...' (*Muhammad*: 16). He also says: '... But the ears of the disbelievers are heavy; they are blind to it...' (*Fussilat*: 44).

Therefore, the doer of an action is one thing, and the recipient of it is another. They heard the Quran which is implied by Allah's Words: 'When a chapter of the Quran is revealed...' (*at-Tawba*: 124) and the context of the verse indicates to us that a whisper was heard from some of them: '...Have any of you been strengthened in faith by it?...' (*at-Tawba*: 124). This whisper was said in a sarcastic tone, and the one who said it meant to imply that hearing the Quran had not strengthened him in any way, nor had it weakened him. So, he whispered to his fellow hypocrite, or to those whose faith was weak, saying, '... Have any of you been strengthened in faith by it?...' (*at-Tawba*: 124). Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* replies to this psychological matter and teaches us that He has divided the people into two groups: those who are hypocrites or disbelievers whose disbelief increases when they hear the Quran,⁽¹⁾ and the second group are believers whose belief increases when they hear the Quran.⁽²⁾ So the doer is one thing, and the recipient is something else.

The scholars have differed about this verse and held different stances regarding Allah's Words: 'When a chapter is revealed, some [hypocrites] say, "Have any of you been strengthened in faith by it?"...' (*at-Tawba*: 124), for some of them say that faith decreases and increases, whilst others say that it does not. The scholars of theology battled over this point. The intelligent people do not come into conflict over something unless they each understand it from a different point of view, some of them seeing it in one way, and some in another.⁽³⁾

(1) As Allah *Glorified is He* says in the next verse: 'but, as for the perverse at heart, each new chapter adds further to their perversity. They die disbelieving.' (*at-Tawba*: 125)

(2) As Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'true believers are those whose hearts tremble with awe when Allah is mentioned, whose faith increases when His revelations are recited to them, who put their trust in their Lord.' (*al-Anfal*: 3)

(3) Those who maintained that faith does not increase or decrease looked at the linguistic meaning of faith that is to accept and belief in something, which cannot decrease. As for those who held that faith increases and decreases, they looked at it as the belief of the heart, the saying of the tongue and the acts of the limbs. The righteous acts of the limbs increase the meaning of faith in the heart of the servant, but the misdeeds decrease his faith, that is, they badly affect its firmness in the heart. Look for the books of theology for more details.

What those who say that faith does not increase or decrease mean by 'faith' is that faith which settles in the heart, namely faith in Allah besides whom there is no deity, and faith in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as His Messenger, cannot increase or decrease. For example, 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Even were the veil to be removed from my sight, my certitude could not increase.'

As for the scholars who say that faith can increase or decrease, what they mean by 'faith' is the practical application of the requirements of faith as each verse requires that those who believe in it should, firstly, have faith in Allah *Glorified is He* and then act in accordance with what the verse demands of them.

All of the Muslims believe in Allah *the Almighty*, but when it comes to the individual details of practice, we find that there are some who observe twenty of them, whilst others observe thirty. However, as for the basis of faith, namely faith in the Oneness of Allah that only after which can a man receive his religious responsibilities, it does not increase or decrease.

When these hypocrites said, 'Have any of you been strengthened in faith by it?' (*at-Tawba*: 124), did they say this secretly or openly? They must have said it secretly, but then Allah *Glorified is He* has exposed them. Also, it could have been enough for them to know that Allah *the Exalted* informed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of all that they concealed, but they were skilled in obstinate debate. Therefore, when they said, 'Have any of you been strengthened in faith by it' (*at-Tawba*: 124), Allah *Glorified is He* responded: 'It certainly does strengthen the faith of those who believe and they rejoice.' (*at-Tawba*: 124) When a person 'rejoices' (*istabshara*), this means that his joy lights up his skin (*bashara*) so that it gleams with happiness and glee; all of these are signs of rejoicing. The person who rejoices in a verse revealed by Allah *Glorified is He* is the one who understands something new from this verse which brings happiness to his soul; therefore, he is content to see new religious assignments being revealed because they will increase the reward he receives. Likewise, he is completely different to the one who hates to see a new ruling come down from Allah *the Most High*. This is the meaning of their rejoicing.

As for the others, Allah *Glorified is He* says about them:

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا إِلَى رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

**But, as for the perverse at heart, each new sura adds further to their perversity. They die disbelieving [125]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 125)**

Literally, the Arabic word *Rijs*⁽¹⁾ means ‘filth’ or something disgusting, and filth can be both physical and spiritual. The disgusting nature of carrion, for example, is physical because its blood remains in it after it dies, and as we know, there are two different stages to the flow of blood: one before it is purified and one after it is purified. Before the purification of the blood, it flows to the lungs and kidneys, which cleanse it of the harmful things that enter it as a result of the various reactions of the body parts. Once it is purified by the lungs and kidneys, it becomes clean.

Thus, when an animal dies, both its clean and unclean blood remain within it, which is why we slaughter the animal before we eat it, and we let out its clean blood along with the unclean so that the unclean blood does not inflict us with diseases. Therefore, carrion is considered to be filthy (*rijs*), and intoxicants are also physically impure and filthy. There is also spiritual filth, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘You who believe, intoxicants and gambling, idolatrous practices, and [divining with] arrows are (*rijs*) repugnant acts –Satan’s doing’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 90).

Thus, there are physical filth and spiritual filth, and the word (*rijs*) also means ‘disbelief’, and it can also mean the whispering and insinuations of Satan. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Remember when He gave you sleep as a reassurance from Him and sent down water from the sky to cleanse you, to remove Satan’s pollution (*Rijs*) from you, to make your hearts strong and your feet firm.’ (*al-Anfal*: 11)

(1) *Ar-Rijs* is what is physically and spiritually disgusting and filthy, and what is legally abhorred is also called *Rijs* and it is synonymous with the word *Rijz* and both of them are used to refer to the punishment Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘You are already set to receive your Lord’s loathing (*Rijs*) and anger.’ (*al-A’raf*: 71) He also says: ‘But, as for the perverse at heart, each new chapter adds further to their perversity (*Rijs*)...’ (*at-Tawba*: 125). And He says: ‘They would say, whenever a plague (*Rijs*) struck them...’ (*al-A’raf*: 134).

Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But, as for the perverse at heart, each new chapter adds further to their perversity (*Rijs*)...' (*at-Tawba*: 125).

Their disbelief in Allah and His verses adds further to their perversity so that their disbelief becomes compounded. Thus, we find that glad tidings are given to believers, and a warning is given to disbelievers because their disbelief increases and they end up dying whilst still adhering to it.

Afterward, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَوَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُمْ يُفْتَنُونَ فِي كُلِّ عَامٍ مَّرَّةً أَوْ
مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتُوبُونَ وَلَا هُمْ يَذْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾

**Can they not see that they are afflicted once or
twice a year? Yet they neither repent nor take
heed [126] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 126)**

Allah's saying 'Can they not see...' (*at-Tawba*: 126) means: do the hypocrites not notice their history with Islam and how they are tested once a year with calamities and once with exposure? We find that when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw them, he would expel some of them from the rows of the prayer by saying: 'Be gone, so-and-so, for you are a hypocrite!'⁽¹⁾, and then after a few months this situation would be repeated. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* reminds them that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* exposes them every year once or twice.

The basic meaning of (*fitna*) is 'trial' or 'test' which in itself is not a bad thing, but it can be bad depending on the result which comes from it. No test is ever bad in itself, but what is bad for a man is to fail the test. Thus, a trial or a test is not bad in itself, but what is bad is that the result of the test is not as you would like. The hypocrites were tested when they saw the Muslims gain victories despite their hypocrisy and the plans they made against the Muslims. They should have realised that they could not impede the progress of Islam since it is supported by Allah *the Exalted*. They should have also reflected and repented in order to attain to the goodness of Islam, for its goodness would

(1) Narrated by Ahmad (5/273) and Al-Bayhaqi (6/286)

continue in spite of them, and the loss would not be for Islam, but for those who disbelieved in it.

Also, we know that the first people to embrace Islam were the weak, and later the powerful people began to embrace it; this is the Way of Allah *Glorified is He* in the universe. Indeed, we find in the beginning of the Message that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself was required to believe that he was a messenger; and just as you say, 'I testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah', Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also had to say, 'I testify that here is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' Even the Generous Creator *the Almighty* has declared His belief in His Own Self first of all, as He says: 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and those who have knowledge.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 18) Thus, the first one to testify to the true Divinity was Allah Himself, and He testified to His Own Self. He mentions this to us so that we believe that He continues to manifest His Self-sustenance and Omnipotence by the Word 'Be!' knowing that His creation will inevitably respond. It was necessary for Him to tell us that He is the first to believe that He is the First and that He is the True God so that if He issues a Commandment of compulsion to any being, His Command will inevitably come to fruition. He has no fear of commanding anything, and therefore He says: 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 18); this is a testimony of the Self for the Self; and then the angels testified according to what they witnessed first-hand, along with those endowed with knowledge testified according to what they perceived by means of evidence. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* testified that he was the Messenger of Allah, he believed that he was a messenger. Had he not believed in his own Message, he would have been afraid to convey it to us. Also, once he believed that he truly was the Messenger of Allah, he was commanded by Allah *Glorified is He* 'to warn his nearest kinsfolk.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 214)

Afterward, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* continued to call to Islam and convey the signs and verses of Allah *Glorified is He* until the verses instructing him to defend the religion were revealed, and then Allah *the Most High* said: 'You who believe fight the disbelievers near you...' (*at-Tawba*: 123).

Therefore, in the beginning, it was necessary for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to believe that he truly was a Messenger and to deliver the Call of Islam to the Quraysh and the rest of Arabia. Afterward, his call reached as far as the Levant by way of reports rather than actual preachers; then his companions took the Call of Islam to all the corners of the earth. Also, letters which were sent to various leaders⁽¹⁾ had a symbolic significance and showed to the world that the Prophet Muhammad's Call to Islam is a universal call unlike those of the Messengers *peace be upon them* who came before him, for each one of them knew that his call was limited to his own community.⁽²⁾

As for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, his Message has various stages: first of all, he believed in himself, then he called his near kin, then all of the Quraysh, then all of Arabia, then the Levant and then his Message was sent by letter to all the monarchs of the world. Finally, his *Ummah* (followers of Islam) were then charged with the task of bearing the Message and spreading it everywhere, along with its proof, the Quran.

Then, Allah *the Exalted* willed that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* finalise His Messages, and He sent him with Islam which overcame whole civilisations, even though he came from an unlettered community who knew nothing so that no one would say that Islam is only a 'civilizational movement'. Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to the people with a way of guidance that overcame the great civilisations which existed at the time, the Persians and the Byzantines, both at the same time.

(1) *Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him sent letters to the monarchs around Arabia like Caesar of Byzantin, Khosrau of Persia and Muqawqis of Egypt to called them to Islam. He sent the letters with some of his Companions and said to them: ' Allah has sent me as a mercy for all people so convey the Message on my behalf may Allah have Mercy on you.'* [Sira Ibn Hisham (4/607)]

(2) *This is something specially given to Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him as Jabir Ibn Abdullah Al-Ansari narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: ' I have been conferred upon five (things) which were not granted to anyone before me (and these are): Every apostle was sent particularly to his own people, whereas I have been sent to all the red and the black the spoils of war have been made lawful for me, and these were never made lawful to anyone before me, and the earth has been made sacred and pure and mosque for me, so whenever the time of prayer comes for any one of you he should pray wherever he is, and I have been supported by awe (by which the enemy is overwhelmed) from the distance (which one takes) one month to cover and I have been granted intercession.'* [Narrated by Bukhari (335) and Muslim (521)]

Thus, the Arabs before Islam lived in a tribal society in which the chief of the tribe governed randomly without any social system, and they knew nothing of anything. They were a nomadic people who had no kind of political or economic system; the home of every one of them was found with his camels, his tent and a few simple tools to make his life easier. Each group would settle in a place where there was grass and water, and once the sheep and cattle had eaten all the grass they would move on to another place, after looking at the sky to see where the clouds were headed and where the rain would fall. Later, these very people went out into the world to convey the Message of Islam, and had they been attached to a home, a house or a specific place, it would have been hard for them to leave, but they were accustomed to travelling around.

The verse which we are currently examining exposes the weak faith of some and the hypocrisy of others, for Allah says: ‘Can they not see that they are afflicted once or twice a year? Yet they neither repent nor take heed.’ (*at-Tawba*: 126). What this means is that they should have repented or taken heed, along with realising that their standing against Islam had never, and would never, impede it, and that they would lose out and be defeated – so it would have been better for each one of them to reflect to himself and see that it was in his own interest to embrace faith.

Afterward, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذَا مَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ نَّظَرَ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ هَلْ يَرَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفُوا صَرَفَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

Whenever a sura is revealed, they look at each other and say, ‘Is anyone watching you?’ and then they turn away – God has turned their hearts away because they are people who do not use their reason [127] (The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 127)

Allah *the Almighty* says in a previous verse: ‘When a chapter of the Quran is revealed, some [hypocrites] say, “Have any of you been strengthened in faith by it?” ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 124). This means that these hypocrites felt constrained and surrounded, along with being afraid to speak since they lived amongst the Muslims; however, they were not entirely bereft of ways of expressing their

disbelief. One of them would roll his eyes, and another would gesture with his hand. When they asked before, 'Have any of you been strengthened in faith by it' (*at-Tawba*: 124), this question was related to religious assignments; as for the verse which we are currently examining, it does not refer to new assignments.

They wanted to say something, but they could not say it in words, so they said it with their eyes and their glances, and though their looks implied the words: 'Is anyone watching you?' (*at-Tawba*: 127). You might have seen someone do this as he listened to someone give a sermon which contained things he did not like; the reaction on his face would convey his displeasure. Therefore, there were looks, and there was speech. Also, they wondered, 'Is anyone watching you?' which is like a person saying, 'Do I have any money at all?' which implies that he does not have what can be called money. These words are more explicit than simply saying, 'Can anyone see you?'

Allah's Words, 'Is anyone watching you?' (*at-Tawba*: 127) show that they were afraid that someone would identify them, and after this, one finds that they attempt to sneak away to avoid listening to the Quran or Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since they cannot bear to keep on listening as the logic of truth silences falsehood. Since each of them is unable to believe in the truth or to declare his disbelief, they simply withdraw and leave. Therefore, we find that some of them said before: '...The disbelievers say, "Do not listen to this Quran. Drown it in frivolous talk. You may gain the upper hand!"' (*Fussilat*: 26) They said this because a disbeliever or a hypocrite might temporarily be distracted from his falsehood, and faith might creep into his heart, just as a believer might be temporarily distracted from the truth, but then he seeks Allah's Forgiveness for it.

If a disbeliever or a hypocrite momentarily becomes heedless of his disbelief or hypocrisy and faith begins to come to him, he becomes afraid and says to those who are like him, 'We should tell those who are with us not to listen to the Quran.' Why is this so? This is so due to they not being momentarily distracted from their hypocrisy, for if that were to happen, faith might enter their hearts. Therefore, they said, 'Do not listen to this Quran' (*Fussilat*: 26), and they did not stop there, for they actually told their followers to talk frivolously about it, i.e. to speak over it: '... Drown it in frivolous talk. You may gain the upper

hand!' (*Fussilat*: 26) Therefore, they could only gain the upper hand by refraining from listening to the Quran or by making noise when they heard the Quran so that it would not penetrate their hearts.⁽¹⁾

In this verse, Allah *the Most High* says about these hypocrites: 'Whenever a chapter of the Quran is revealed, they look at each other and say, "Is anyone watching you?"...' (*at-Tawba*: 127).

They would say this because, as hypocrites, they had previously claimed to be Muslims, and they claimed that they practised the rulings of Islam better than everyone else. They would also insist on standing in the front row at the communal prayer in order to absolve themselves of any suspicion of hypocrisy. A proverb says: 'The dubious man almost seems to cry out, "Take me!"' Also, they would look at one another and ask, "Is anyone watching you?" and then they turn away...' (*at-Tawba*: 127) because they could not bear to sit with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or the believers.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* ends the verse by saying: 'Allah has turned their hearts away because they are people who do not use their reason.' (*at-Tawba*: 127) This was a result of how they turned away psychologically by adopting hypocrisy, so He has aided them in this, for as long as they did not know the value of faith, they stayed away of it. Allah *the Exalted* only turned their hearts away since they chose this so that no one would say, 'Allah is the One Who has turned their hearts away. So, what did they do wrong?' No, they turned away themselves by means of the free will which Allah *Glorified is He* created in them, so He has turned their hearts away. Why is this? The reason is that they are people who do not use their reason, or in other words, they do not understand.⁽²⁾

Understanding is the first stage of a human being, and there is a difference between understanding and knowledge. Understanding means that one possesses the ability to comprehend the nature of things by means of an aptitude he

(1) This was the customs of the polytheists and the disbelievers with every revelation coming from the heaven. The people of Nuh (Noah), for example, about whom he said, 'Every time I call them, so that You may forgive them, they thrust their fingers into their ears, cover their heads with their garments, persist in their rejection, and grow more insolent and arrogant.' (*Nuh*: 7)

(2) As in Allah's Words: 'When they went astray, Allah left their hearts to stray: Allah does not guide rebellious people.' (*as-Saff*: 5)

possesses; knowledge, on the other hand, means that one might not understand something himself, but someone else understands and teaches him. He might know a detail not by himself, rather, his teacher tells him of it. However, someone might say, 'If someone cannot grasp the truth, then what is his sin?' We say that the one who does not understand must accept to be taught, but those like this neither understood nor sought to be taught, and they persistently refused to accept any knowledge.

After this comes the conclusion of the chapter of *at-Tawba* which began with a declaration of disavowal: 'A release by Allah and His Messenger from the treaty you [believers] made with the idolaters [is announced].' (*at-Tawba*: 1) Furthermore, this chapter told us about different situations pertaining to disbelievers and hypocrites, and the difficult responsibilities of struggle in Allah's Cause. Allah *the Exalted* has wanted to end the chapter with a justification of all these aforementioned hardships, so He has made it clear to us: Beware of abandoning Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or making him angry; for if he conveys unto you things which are difficult, you must take these difficult things as coming from someone who is beloved to you, not from someone who is an enemy to you.

For example, if you see your enemy strike your son and wound him, this will be most grievous to you because he is your enemy. However, if you take your son to the doctor and the doctor decides to operate on the child, you accept this in order to save your child from danger. Therefore, there is a difference between the wound your enemy inflicts upon your son and that inflicted by the doctor even though the pain he feels is the same. Also, do not refuse things which are difficult for you simply because they are difficult, rather, first of all, you must know the identity of the one who burdens you with this difficulty; thus, if it is your Lord, then your Lord is Merciful towards you, and if it is Prophet Muhammad, then accept his commandments and obey them because they come from someone who loves you and wants the best for you.

Allah Glorified is He says:

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ
حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُم بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾

**A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering distresses him: he is deeply concerned for you and full of kindness and mercy towards the believers [128]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 128)**

We can observe here that Allah *the Most High* ascribes the act of coming to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and does not say, 'I have sent you a Messenger.' We all know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not come of his own accord, and he never claimed that this momentous matter was of his own devising. Rather, he was created with all the spiritual virtues which made him worthy of receiving the Message. As soon as the Revelation came down to him, he possessed the intrinsic motivation to convey it, and he did not need anyone to motivate him to do so. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* wanted to affirm that indeed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did come forth on his own, for this coming forth was not instigated by him in the first place, rather, he was a Messenger sent forth by Allah *Glorified is He*. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* uses the word 'has come' in this verse.

Thus, the word 'a Messenger' indicates that he did not send himself forth, whilst the words 'has come' indicate that his spiritual preparation made him actively involved. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* yearned to struggle in the cause of the Message and to strive in order to fulfil it.

Thus, you should not view the things he has brought to you as though they are difficulties which wear you out, rather look at from whom they have come. If they are from the Originator Who sent all the Messengers, then the Lord is Merciful, and He has created you out of nothing and sustained you when you had nothing. Likewise, He bestows His Blessings to you even when you disobey Him, and when you disobey Him, He loves those who conceal your sin⁽¹⁾ so that you are neither the subject nor the object of suspicion. Yet,

(1) This is one of the rights of the Muslim on his Muslim brother and Allah *Glorified is He* is pleased with this act. 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with them* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'A Muslim is a brother of=

you must accept your assignments as they have come from one who is beloved to you, so you should not say that they are difficulties. For example – and Allah *Glorified is He* is beyond compare – you tell your son to revise his lessons, and sometimes you make him review them against his will. Furthermore, you might take hold of your son's arm so that the doctor can inject him with the medicine, which Allah *Glorified is He* made a means for his cure. Therefore, do not judge things by what they bring you, rather judge them by the One Who decreed them for you, in other word, Allah *Glorified is He*.

In this verse, Allah *the Exalted* says: 'A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves...' (*at-Tawba*: 128). This means that Allah *the Almighty* has not sent you a man who was a stranger to you, rather, he sent you one of your own with whom you could communicate. Allah's saying 'from among yourselves' has many meanings. It could mean 'from your species', such as when Allah *Glorified is He* says about *Hawwa'* (Eve): 'People, be mindful of your Lord, who has created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate...' (*an-Nisa'*: 1).

What this means is that He has created *Hawwa'* (Eve) from the same human race as Adam *peace be upon him*. Thus, no one should say, 'Why has not Allah sent a human being to be His Messenger', for Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen a human beings to be His Messengers due to His mercy for mankind. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* emphasised his own humanity more than once, and on many occasions.⁽¹⁾ The Quran also

= another Muslim. So he should not oppress him nor should he hand him over to (his Satan or to his self which is inclined to evil). Whoever fulfils the needs of his brother, Allah will fulfil his needs; whoever removes the troubles of his brother, Allah will remove one of his troubles on the Day of Resurrection; and whoever covers up the fault of a Muslim, Allah will cover up his fault on the Day of Resurrection.' [*Narrated by Al-Bukhari (2442) and Muslim (2580)*] We must understand that covering up the fault does not mean to keep silent about the transgression of someone who habitually sins rather, it is to cover up the sin of someone that happened and ended.

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says: "Say [Prophet], 'I am only a mortal like you, [but] it has been revealed to me that your God is One....'" (*Fussilat*: 6). And Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* alluded to this many times, such as his saying which Umm Salam Allah be pleased with her related: "Prophet Muhammad heard some people quarrelling at the door of his dwelling, so he went out to them and said, 'I am only a human being, and litigants with cases of dispute come to me, and someone of you may =

says: 'The only thing that kept these people from believing, when guidance came to them, was that they said, "How could Allah have sent a human being as a messenger?"' (*al-Isra'*: 94).

So, Allah *the Most High* cannot be criticised for choosing a human being, Muhammad, to be His Messenger, rather, He should be thanked for it since He has sent someone who was part of the human race so that he would be able to communicate with mankind, and it would be easy for them to follow his example. Therefore, He says: 'Say, "If there were angels walking about on earth, feeling at home, We would have sent them an angel from Heaven as a messenger."' (*al-Isra'*: 95). In addition, His Words 'from among yourselves' (*at-Tawba*: 128) also mean 'from Arabs', for He has not chosen him from the Persians or the Byzantines, rather, He has chosen for you someone who knew your natures best. 'from among yourselves' (*at-Tawba*: 128) could also mean from the same tribe to which the members of the Quraysh belong. Furthermore, 'from among yourselves' (*at-Tawba*: 128) could mean one whose past is known to you, and you know him to be worthy of bearing the trusts of Heaven to earth, just as he bore all your worldly trusts on earth. Since this is his character, he is well able to convey the trust of Heaven to earth, and you yourselves named him 'The Truthful, Trustworthy One', and 'The Honest One'. All of these precursors indicated how essential it was to believe in him as a Messenger from Allah *Glorified is He*. Likewise, if the way he had always behaved with you made you feel proud, then his coming as Messenger should only increase your own esteem and raise your own status. You are the people of the Quraysh and of Mecca, and you have authority over the Sacred House, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to increase the area you authority over, for if you were the masters of the Sacred House before he was sent as a Prophet, you would become the masters of the whole world after the beginning of his Mission.

= *happen to be more eloquent (in presenting his case) than the other, whereby I may consider that he is truthful and pass a judgment in his favour. If ever I pass a judgment in favour of somebody whereby he takes a Muslim's right unjustly, then whatever he takes is nothing but a piece of Fire, and it is up to him to take or leave. "' [Narrated by Al-Bukhari (2458) and Muslim (1713)] He also said: 'I am a human being and I have made this term with my Lord, the Exalted and Glorious: For any servant amongst Muslims whom I curse or scold, make that a source of purity and reward. '[Narrated by Muslim (2602)]*

Allah *the Exalted* also says: 'for it is a reminder for you and your people: you will all be questioned.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 44) Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a Prophet for the whole world and a member of the Arabs and of the Quraysh, and therefore, they should have rejoiced in his Message and aided it. However, Allah *Glorified is He* has not willed this to be the case because the Quraysh had grown accustomed to having mastery over the Arabs, and this had made the Arabs wary of the Quraysh, and all the tribes of Arabia feared them and held them in awe and dreaded them. All the Arabs needed to make the pilgrimage to the *Ka'ba*, and during the pilgrimage, all the tribes were present on Qurayshi land; thus, all the Arabs protected the caravans of the Quraysh, and no tribe would ever attack them. So, their caravans would come and go in peace to the north and the south, and no tribe would ever stand in their way nor threaten them.

Furthermore, the Quraysh derived all this prestige and awe from their service to Allah's Sacred House. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* willed to prevent Abraha from destroying the House so that the power of the Quraysh would be preserved. Had the Sacred House been destroyed, and the site of the pilgrimage relocated to Yemen, as Abraha intended, then from whence would the Quraysh have derived their power thereafter? Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says about Abraha and his people: 'He made them [like] cropped stubble.' (*al-Fil*: 5) Furthermore, He follows this by saying: '[He did this] to make the Quraysh feel secure, secure in their winter and summer journeys.' (*Quraysh*: 1, 2) As long as Allah *Glorified is He* has willed this, then He has commanded in the next verse: 'So let them worship the Lord of this House Who provides them with food to ward off hunger, safety to ward off fear.' (*Quraysh*: 3, 4)

Allah *the Almighty* has willed to send Muhammad as His Messenger to call first of all upon the leaders of the Quraysh and the tribe which possessed prestige and inspired dread. He has willed that the call of faith be proclaimed to the ears of those who ruled Arabia and were feared by all the tribes therein, lest it would be said, 'Muhammad has sought out a weak minority of people and proclaimed his call to them.' No, rather, his call was directed at the chieftains, the leaders and the foolish people of the Quraysh; thus, when they rejected his call, he emigrated and was then given permission to fight them. Islam was not given victory by means of these leaders, rather, the weak were

the first to believe in Islam. Then, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* migrated to Medina and victory came from there.

Had victory come by means of the leaders, people would have said, 'Islam has prevailed by a people who are accustomed to leadership, and when one of them came forth and claimed to be a Messenger, they wanted to use him to gain more power, not only over Arabia but also over the whole world. So, it was partisan loyalty to Muhammad which created faith in him.' However, Allah *Glorified is He* has wanted the victory to come from the weak so that everyone would understand that it was faith in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which engendered loyalty to him.

Thus, we understand the meaning of 'A Messenger has come to you...' (*at-Tawba*: 128) to be that he was sent by Allah *Glorified is He* 'from among yourselves' (*at-Tawba*: 128) with all the different meanings that this implies. Furthermore, he came to convey Allah's Message and did not invent anything of his own accord, rather, everything which he conveyed came from his Lord, and by your own admission, the Lord is the One Who has created for you everything from which you benefit in the heavens and the earth, as He says: 'If you [Prophet] ask them who created them they are sure to say, "Allah," ...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87). He also says: 'If you ask them who created the heavens and earth, they are sure to say, "God." ...' (*Luqman*: 25).

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* has created man to be His vicegerent and all that He has created in the universe is meant to serve you all, and you yourselves admit this. If the Lord has also previously given you all these blessings, and then sent you His Messenger with guidance to bring you felicity, along with you having received His Goodness before He has given you assignments and having received His Blessings before asking Him, then when He has sent you His Messenger to give you assignments and His Way of Guidance, He must have chosen for this role someone whom you trusted. Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not an angel, rather, he was a man just like you; so if he says to you, 'Do this, and I am your role model in doing it', then do not find this surprising. However, the foolishness of those who disbelieved in Allah *the Exalted* made them desire that the Messenger be an angel, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The only thing that kept these people from believing, when guidance came to them, was that they said, "How could Allah

have sent a human being as a messenger?" Say, "If there were angels walking about on earth, feeling at home, We would have sent them an angel from Heaven as a messenger." (*al-Isra'*: 94). What this means is 'If you want an angel, then the angel's form is invisible to you, and therefore We would have to put this angel in a human form in order for him to speak to you.' So is it merely a problem of form and shape? Moreover, the nature of the angels by creation is that they 'Never disobey Allah's Commands to them, but do as they are ordered.' (*at-Tahrim*: 6) Therefore, if this angel sent to you were to say to you, 'I am your role model for righteous conduct', would this be a real role model? Of course some of us would say, 'No, it would not be a good role model because, as an angel, you are naturally righteous, and you have no appetite or lust. So we cannot take you as a role model.'

Due to His Mercy with you, Allah has given you a Messenger from your own selves, tribe and Arab race, not from the Persians or Byzantines, and he speaks to you in your own language; for you are the first people to hear the Message, so the Messenger must speak your own language. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also came with friendliness and cordiality for the Quraysh had bonds and ties with tribes all over Arabia. They had friendly relationships with all the Arabs. There was also the friendliness that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had with all humanity in that he was one of them. Furthermore, Allah *the Exalted* chose him as an individual who was known for his honesty and trustworthiness before he began to convey Allah's Message unto you.

Therefore, if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brings you an assignment which is hard for you, then think of all these things and remind yourselves that he is a man, not an angel; he is an Arab, not a foreigner; he is from your tribe and was raised amongst you, and you knew his conduct well before he began to convey Allah's Message unto you – and if he never lied to any man about any man, would he lie to men about Allah?

The Arabic for 'from among yourselves' (*at-Tawba*: 128) is *min anfasikum*, and 'Abdullah ibn Qusait Al-Makki recited it as *min anfasikum* which means 'from your very finest.'⁽¹⁾ This means that he is from the best and most esteemed

(1) So Allah *Glorified is He* exclusively granted him physical and spiritual attributes that makes him the best of Allah's creatures. Allah *Glorified is He* says: Prophet, We have=

of you according to human standards. Therefore, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* first received the Message from Allah *Glorified is He* did our lady Khadeeja *Allah be pleased with her* wait for him to show her a miracle? Also, did our master Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* wait for him to be shown a miracle? No, they did not wait because they both saw the miracle in Prophet Muhammad's previous conduct.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told Lady Khadeeja *Allah be pleased with her* of the things which came to him, her thought and logic was truly mature, and what she said to him tells us why Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen her to be the wife of His Messenger when he was twenty-five years old and she was forty, although usually a man likes to marry someone younger than him.

However, this was not an ordinary marriage, rather, it was intended for a higher purpose than that, for during this marriage, the transition period from ordinary humanity to that which receives the revelation would take place, and this required a mother's heart and care to embrace and raise him up. Had she been a young woman, and he had told her what he told Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* she would have doubted his sanity. Due to her intelligence, Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* considered the matter from a purely logical standpoint. When he said to her, 'I fear that these visions are being sent to me by a jinn', she said to him, 'You join ties of relationship, help the destitute, and you help against the vicissitudes which affect people. It cannot be. I swear by Allah that He shall never humiliate you.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, she looked at how Prophet Muhammad's life had been before he was sent and saw in it proof that he was truthful after he was sent.

= sent you as a witness, as a bearer of good news and warning, as one who calls people to Allah by His leave, as a light-giving lamp.' (*al-Ahzab*: 45, 46).

(1) *When Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him returned from the cave of Hira', his heart was trembling, and he went to Khadija and said: Wrap me up, wrap me up! So they wrapped him till the fear had left him. He then said to Khadija: O Khadija! What has happened to me? and he informed her of the happening, saying: I fear for myself. She replied: It cannot be. Be happy. I swear by Allah that He shall never humiliate you. By Allah, you join ties of relationship, you speak the truth, you bear people's burden, you help the destitute, you entertain guests, and you help against the vicissitudes which affect people.' [Narrated by Bukhari (3) and Muslim (160)]*

Likewise, when they said to Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* 'Your friend claims that he is a Messenger,' he said, 'Did he really say it?' They answered in the affirmative, so he said, 'Then he is a Messenger from Allah, for he has never told a lie in his whole life.'⁽¹⁾

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Your suffering distresses ('Aziz) him...' (*at-Tawba*: 128). The word ('Aziz) means something which cannot be attained and which no one can bear, and every rare object is called ('Aziz). Also, if you say to someone, 'You might be a minister someday', he might be silent in hope that this will be the case. However, if you say to him, 'You might be a prime minister one day', he might say, 'that's a little far-fetched and a difficult matter for me.'

Therefore, if something is ('aziz), this means that it is unattainable, rare or impossible; it is something which people dearly wish to do, but which is very hard for them to do, such as climbing to the top of a mountain. So, 'Your suffering distresses ('Aziz) him...' (*at-Tawba*: 128) means that he finds it very difficult for him to assign you with something which might cause you to suffer, for his heart is full of mercy for you. He does not bring you rulings in order to make things difficult for you, rather, these rulings are sent down by Allah *the Most High* for your own good. Furthermore, it weighs heavily on him that you might find them difficult.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The similitude of mine and that of my *Ummah* (followers of Islam) is that of a person who lit fire and when the atmosphere was aglow, moths and insects began to fall into the fire, but I am there to hold them back. However, they are plunging into it despite my efforts.' He further added, 'This is your example and mine. I am there to hold you back from fire and to save you from it, but you are plunging into it despite my efforts.'⁽²⁾ If Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is from your own selves and from the best of you, and

(1) *Abu Ad-Darda'* relates that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about Abu Bakr: "Are you (people) leaving for me my companion? (Abu Bakr), Are you (people) leaving for me my Companion? When I said, 'O people I am sent to you all as the Messenger of Allah,' you said, 'You tell a lie.' while Abu Bakr said, 'You have spoken the truth.'" [Narrated by Bukhari]

(2) [Narrated by Al-Bukhari]

he loves you so much that it weighs heavily upon him that you suffer difficulties. Then, accept his instructions with good thoughts and think the best of them and this is the educational standard which should prevail over the whole world.

A father might give his son hard orders and prohibitions, 'Do this, and don't do that, don't go there, don't sit with so-and-so, do not stay out at night after such-and-such time'; these orders might seem harsh to the son, but we say to the son, 'From where do these difficult orders come? They are from your father who loves you as you know and who sacrifices and toils much to give you a good and comfortable future and strive to make you feel comfortable. So, how can you allow yourself to befriend wretched people who prevent you from obeying your father and drag you into distraction and evil? Look at how your father is bearing such hardships so that you do not have to bear them, and it is hard to him to see you suffering. He is the one whom you should obey.'

Your difficulties weigh heavily upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and there are different kinds of difficulties. Some of the difficulties of this worldly life are found in the assignments which your faith demands of you, but they save you from eternal hardship in the Hereafter. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* grieves that you might encounter any hardship in the Hereafter; for the hardship of this worldly life is temporary and will come to an end, but the hardship of the Hereafter, on the other hand, is what is truly exhausting and tiring.

For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* depicts this when He says: 'But [Prophet] Are you going to worry yourself to death over them if they do not believe in this Message?' (*al-Kahf*: 6) Why is this so? The reason is that you know, O, Muhammad, that if they do not stop, they will endure all manners of suffering in the Hereafter, or this means that the hardships of the Hereafter are the ones which we have to avoid, and we must endure these temporary hardships which will bear fruit in the future.

We might find a man saying to his son, for example, 'Go out to the field and load the manure onto the donkey, and then plough and water the land.' The joy of all these hardships will be experienced on reaping day, when the land gives Allah's Bounty to you in abundance. However, if the father were to leave his son idle, this would be the gravest mistake. Therefore, when he encourages his son to work, he avoids the consequences of loss.

A father might take his son to the doctor and find him busy, thus pleading with the doctor to give his son surgery to save him from danger, even though the father knows that the doctor will use surgical tools on his son like a scalpel and so on.

However, the son should know that this scalpel will touch his father before it touches him. So if you are ever commanded to do something difficult, first ask yourself, 'Who commands you? Is it someone dear to you and beloved to you and someone who wants the best for you?' If it is so, then you must accept it and avoid thinking badly of it, and you must not cause the one who loves you to suffer.

Also, know that when your father turns you away from bad friends, for example, he is keeping you safe from the evil ways. Likewise, if you work hard, you will reap a good return,; on the other hand, if you follow the ways of evil, you will end up destitute and hungry, and then you will knock on your father's door and hear the wise common proverb: 'The one who eats at my table will do as I say.'

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'A Messenger has come to you from amongst yourselves. Your suffering distresses him: he is deeply concerned for you...' (*at-Tawba*: 128). This means that he is eager to take care of you so that you do not fall into the greatest of all hardship. Therefore, we said that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* depicted this for us when he said, 'My example and your example is that of a person who lit the fire and insects and moths began to fall in it, and he would be making efforts to take them out. I am going to hold you back from fire, but you are slipping from my hand.'⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* also consoles him by saying: 'But [Prophet] are you going to worry yourself to death over them if they do not believe in this message?' (*al-Kahf*: 6) Allah *the Most High* also says to him: '[Prophet], are you going to worry yourself to death because they will not believe?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called people to do the best they can in this worldly life so that they attain paradise in the Hereafter, for every believer was dear to him, and he feared that even a

(1) [Narrated by Muslim]

single person would suffer in the Hereafter. Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* says to him: '[Prophet], are you going to worry yourself to death because they will not believe? If We had wished, We could have sent them down a sign from heaven, at which their necks would stay bowed in utter humility.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3-4) In other words, it is like Allah is saying, 'Do not grieve because of your concern that they believe, for Allah *Glorified is He* could send them a sign which would cause them to bow down and yield to it, but the Lord does not want bowed-down necks, He wants reverent hearts.

'Your suffering distresses him. He is deeply concerned for you and full of kindness and mercy towards the believers.' (*at-Tawba*: 128) Kindness and mercy might be alike in a general sense, but there are things which ward off harms, and others which bring benefits; the warding-off of harm always takes precedence over the attraction of benefit. When we are faced with one action which harms and another which benefits, we always give precedence to the action that prevents harm, and only then do we engage in the beneficial action.

Furthermore, when you encounter one harmful thing and one beneficial thing, and you are equally able to deal with either of them, you must first protect yourself from the harmful thing which would upset your equilibrium, and only then you go after the thing which will make your situation better.

To make this easier to understand, I will illustrate it with a tangible example. Suppose that one person wants to throw a stone at you, and another person wants to throw an apple to you. Will you worry about catching the apple or fending off the stone? You will protect yourself from the harm before you go after the benefit.

Another example is to suppose you see someone drowning in the sea before you. Will you rebuke him for going into the sea without knowing how to swim? Or will you first rescue him and protect him from harm, and only afterwards will you rebuke and punish him for what he has done? You rescue him first, and thereby you do what is best by preventing harm first, and when you rebuke and punish him, he will accept that from you, as your action saved him from death.

Allah *Glorified is He* further says: 'Whoever is kept away from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have triumphed.' (*Al-Imran*: 185) So, the stages of this triumph are that one is first kept away from Fire, and this in itself is a

prevention of harm and an attainment of benefit, and if he remained in his place, neither in the Fire nor Paradise, this would be easy enough. Furthermore, if he is then brought into paradise, this is the whole of goodness.

If some of the attributes of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are that he is 'A messenger from among yourselves. Your suffering distresses him. He is deeply concerned for you and full of kindness and mercy towards the believers.' (*at-Tawba*: 128), and a person were to think deeply on these attributes, he will be attracted to following him.

Also, in Allah's Words '...full of kindness and mercy towards the believers' (*at-Tawba*: 128), we observe the attributes 'full of kindness', which means to prevent the harms of trial and hardship, and 'full of mercy' which means to bring the benefits of bliss and advancement. Therefore, it is enough to behold the greatness of these two attributes, '... full of kindness and mercy', to know that Allah *Glorified is He* describes Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with them and He also describes Himself with them when He says: '...Truly, your Lord is Kind and Merciful.' (*an-Nahl*: 7)

Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does not act on his own powers alone, rather, he draws his kindness from the Kindness of *the Most High* and draws his mercy from the Mercy of *the Most High*. It is as though Allah *the Exalted* is telling us that He has given Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* some of the Attributes which He possesses, and just as he conveys difficulties to you in the form of religious responsibilities, he also conveys relief from these difficulties unto you by virtue of his kindness and increases the blessings by virtue of his mercy. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We send down the Quran as healing and mercy to those who believe; as for those who disbelieve' (*al-Isra'*: 82). We know that healing only comes after sickness; this means that the Quran removes the harm first, and then brings about benefit: mercy.

Allah's saying, 'A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering distresses him. He is deeply concerned for you and full of kindness and mercy towards the believers.' (*at-Tawba*: 128) means that if the believers find hardships in the religious obligations which Prophet Muhammad conveyed to them, they should put into consideration the source of these hardships

and remember that he was sent with these obligations in order to save them from other more terrible hardships. The hardships of religious obligations end when this worldly life ends, then the believer will be admitted to Paradise to live without any obligations, and he will find at once anything that crosses his mind, such as food, drink and all the other bounties which Allah has created for the dwellers of Paradise.⁽¹⁾

If we consider the enjoyments of this worldly life, we find that those who work hard eventually hire people to do the things they used to do for themselves: the rich man who used to cook for himself hires a chef to cook his food after becoming rich. In addition, the farmer who used to build his own house by himself hires someone to build a house for him after Allah has granted him affluent sustenance. Accordingly, how will the Hereafter be, wherein a believer will be surrounded by Allah's Pleasure and so will the secrets of "'Be," and it is' will be embodied before him?

In this chapter, Allah has mentioned the hardships of religious obligations and their reward. Then He reassured believers that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is characterised by all the attributes He revealed: he is a human being, he feels concern for them, he conveys to them religious obligations which involve hardships which will save them from eternal hardships in the Hereafter and he is kind and merciful to them.

Allah *the Exalted* tells Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that if people pay heed to all these matters, they will be welcomed into the folds of the faith; if they turn away and their hearts are not touched by the Quran, they should not think that they support him, as Allah is the One Who supports him. Allah tells His Messenger Muhammad that if people turn away⁽²⁾ from him

(1) 'Abullah ibn Mas'ud related that Prophet Muhammad said: 'If a bird in Paradise appeals to you, it will fall into your hands, roasted.' [Related by Al-Bazzar (3532 – *Kashf Al-Astar*) The line of transmission includes Humayd ibn 'Ata' Al-A'raj, and Haythami mentioned it in *Al-Mujamma'* (10, 414).

(2) The word '*tawallaw*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means 'turn away'. The word '*tawalli*' is one of the words that has two opposite meanings. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...And if you turn away, He will replace you with another people...' (*Muhammad*: 38) The word '*tawallaw*' here means 'turn away from Islam'. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...anyone who takes them as an ally becomes one of them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 51). The '*tawallaw*' here means 'takes them as ally'.

and reject faith in Allah and refuse to listen to him, then he should resort to Allah Who is his strong support.⁽¹⁾ Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* ends the chapter by saying:

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ
تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ

**If they turn away, [Prophet], say ,‘God is enough
for me: there is no god but Him; I put my trust in
Him; He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne’[129]
(The Quran, *at-Tawba*: 129)**

Allah *the Almighty* did not say to His Messenger that if they turn away, he should bear in mind that Allah is enough for him. Rather, He told him to say this frankly to all of the people so that they could hear since announcing this saying might alert them to the truth, as he says this out of strong faith. If any of them harmed him, Allah *the Almighty* would punish him.

Also, when the Prophet announced: ‘...Allah is enough for me...’ (*at-Tawba*: 129) after disbelievers belied him; the events which took place afterwards affirmed that He is enough for him. For example—and to Allah belong the utmost example of perfection—sometimes you say, ‘So-and-so’s help is enough for me’ because you are sure that this person is capable of helping you. However, power in the worldly life is subject to changes, but as for the saying, ‘Allah is enough for me’ (*at-Tawba*: 129), there is no god besides Allah *Glorified is He* who might oppose Him in this or in anything else. Therefore, Allah’s saying, ‘... say, “Allah is enough for me...”’ (*at-Tawba*: 129) is based on the fact that ‘There is no god but Him’ (*at-Tawba*: 129). ‘There is no god...’ (*at-Tawba*: 129) is a negation, whilst ‘but Him’ is an affirmation, so

(1) The Arabic words ‘*al-rukn as-shadid*’ which are mentioned in the Arabic text of the following verse mean ‘the strong support who supports any person who resorts to him’. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says about Lut peace be upon him: ‘...If only I had against you some power or could take refuge in a strong support. (Hud: 80) Prophet Muhammad said, ‘May Allah have mercy upon Lut, certainly he used to lean toward powerful support. So Allah did not send a Prophet after him except among a high ranking family among his people.’ Related by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (2, 3323), and *At-Tirmidhi* in his *Sunnan* from the Hadith narrated by Abu Hurayra’

these words ‘There is no god but Him’ (*at-Tawba*: 129) containing a logical negation and a logical positive affirmation. They negate the existence of any god other than Allah *the Exalted*. May Allah be merciful to Sheikh ‘Abd Ar-Rahman ‘Azzam who translated a line of poetry by the great Pakistani poet Muhammad Iqbal,⁽¹⁾ who said:

Monotheism testimony includes affirmation and negation,
Giving the soul resolution and power

The affirmation is in ‘but Him’, and the negation is ‘There is no god’ (*at-Tawba*: 129) and both of the two parts give the soul resolution and power. They are like electrical poles for the soul. This testimony of faith negates the existence of any other deity except Allah *the Most High*.

As we know, people are of three kinds: the atheists who deny the existence of Allah completely, the pagans who believe in the existence of Allah Whom the Muslims believe as the only Deity, but they ascribe partners to Him, as they believe that those partners will benefit them and believers who believe that Allah is One.

When we say ‘*la ilah illah huwa*’, this means that we affirm Allah is the only God Who has no partners. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘If they turn away, [Prophet], say, "Allah is enough for me. There is no god but Him. I put my trust in Him ..."' (*at-Tawba*: 129). This conclusion can be reached by reason. The Arabic word ‘*hasbi*’ literally refers to judging. If you judge a matter, you will indeed find that you need nothing but Allah. As long as Allah, Who is the only God, is enough for you, He will protect and support you. Therefore, it is reasonable to obey your Prophet, who has delivered Allah’s Message to completely and to place your trust in Allah *the Most High*.

As long as Allah *Glorified is He* is enough for you and there is no deity except Him, you should remain in His company which involves two stages: the first is to make use of the means which He extends to His creation, and the

(1) Muhammad Iqbal is an Islamic poet and thinker who strived with his own self and pen in the cause of Allah and for the sake of liberating his country. He had literary and poetic works which had religious trend and are taught in the academic establishments. He had a Pakistani origin, Islamic homeland, and an international thought. In Egypt, Dr. ‘Abd Ar-Rahman ‘Azzam and Al-Sawy Sha’lan translated some of his works.

second represents sincere faith in which you believe that if you lack the means, you seek refuge in the Creator of all means, the Lord of all existence.

For example, people need water because it is essential for life, and some people may go to the well but find no water since the water that used to come from the earth core no longer flows to it. This is due to the rainwater which used to flow down from the mountaintops and infiltrate into the earth, having completely run out. Therefore, we are in need of rain in order for it to infiltrate into the earth and for water to return to wells.

If all the wells in our vicinity dry, will we despair? No, we will not since our Lord instructs us to raise our hands in supplication.⁽¹⁾ If we use up all the means, we must turn to the Creator of all means, and I am sure that if anyone uses up all the means Allah *the Almighty* extends to him then seeks refuge in Him, He will never turn him down.

Allah's Hand is outstretched to us, offering us material means, and no one should ever neglect to utilise these means claiming that he puts his trust in Allah in this way. Rather, a person must first utilise all the available means until they are all used up, then he should resort to Allah *the Most High* to help him. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Is He [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him ...' (*an-Naml*: 62).

'The desperate' is the one who has used up all the available means and has nothing to do except to resort to Allah. However, if a person says that he supplicates to Allah frequently, glorifies Him and recites the chapter of *Ya Sin* - for example - but He does not answer his supplications,⁽²⁾ he may not be

(1) If you raise your hands when offering supplication and beseech Allah while having sincere faith, your supplication will be more likely to be answered.

(2) *Among the etiquette of supplicating to Allah is that the person who supplicates should not consider the answer delayed, so he may despair and stop supplicating. He should realize that Allah wants for His slave what benefits him most; a person may ask Allah for something which he considers good for him, but Allah, the Knower of the Unseen, knows that it is evil for him. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said: 'The supplication of the servant is granted in case he does not supplicate for sin or for severing the ties of blood, or he does not become impatient. It was said: "Allah's Messenger, what does: 'If he does not grow impatient' imply? He said: "That he should say like this: 'I supplicated and I supplicated, but I did not find it being responded, then he becomes frustrated and abandons supplication.'"* [Related by Muslim in his Sahih (2735), the third narration of the Hadith]

supplicating to Allah *the Exalted* in the manner that a desperate person does; he may not make use of all the available means. A person should utilise all the possible means first, and then supplicate and resort to Allah *the Exalted*. Accordingly, he will not be tempted by the means; when the means run out, he should resort to Allah. If Allah *the Most High* makes all means available to man, he will be tempted by them. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘No! [But] indeed, man transgresses because he sees himself self-sufficient.’ (*al-‘Alaq*: 6-7)

Allah *Glorified is He* always clarifies that all the means are under His control. A farmer may plough the land, sow seeds and irrigate and cultivate plants, then as the crops are nearly ready for harvest, a heat wave may kill his plants or a heavy rainstorm may destroy them. Therefore, a person should utilise all the possible means while keeping the Creator of all means in mind, and he should place his trust in Allah *the Almighty*.

Many people misunderstand the word *tawakkul* (placing one’s trust in Allah); it means that one should make use of the means which Allah provides him, and if doing so does not bring about any good outcomes, he should resort to Allah, Who says: ‘Is He [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him ...’ (*an-Naml*: 62).

We sometimes supplicate to Allah not in the manner of the distressed and neglect the use of the means. There is a clear example concerning this from our daily life: when a boy asks his mother to supplicate to Allah for him to succeed, and his illiterate mother tells him to study first in order for her supplication to be answered. Accordingly, she shows her son the importance of utilising the means. If one uses up all the available means, he should not despair, and he should resort to Allah *the All-Powerful*.

Another example follows: If you are walking in the road and you have only one pound, then you lose it or it is stolen, and you do not have a single penny at home or in the bank, so you may become angry or sad. However, if you have ten pounds in the house, then your anger and sadness will only be slight; likewise, if you have ten pounds in the house and one hundred pounds in the bank, then you will not become angry or sad at all for losing a single pound. In this way, you are confident because you possess many items instead of what you have lost. Therefore, you should put your trust in the One Who gave you things as a substitute for what you have lost.

Therefore, *tawakkul* involves that a person works and utilises all the available means, and his heart trusts Allah *the Almighty*.⁽¹⁾ Only lazy people wish to stop working and put their trust in Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* does not say in this verse, '*tawakkaltu 'alayh*' (I have put my trust in Him) instead of '*'alayh tawakkalt*' (in Him I have put my trust). If you are blessed with a good understanding of Allah's saying, you will find that if a man says, 'I rely on you', you may add to this sentence 'and on so-and-so and so-and-so.' However, if you say 'On you I rely', you cannot add any person else to the end of the sentence. The use of this style indicates that nothing is like Allah and the people should place their trust only in Him. This style is like the style used in the chapter of *al-Fatiha* in the following verse: 'It is You we worship...' (*al-Fatiha*: 5). Therefore, worship is restricted to Allah Alone.

Allah *the Almighty* should be trusted since He is the Lord of the universe which has received you, and your powers do not match His Power. You plough the earth, plant seeds and water them, and then you receive Allah's bounties, which He bestows on you. This universe is subdued to your will, and you could never have subdued it by your own power. Actually, you can subdue, tie or mount a riding animal, and you can also load its back with fertilisers out of Allah's grace for you. Allah's bounties include the subjection of different beings for you, such as the sun which rises every day, bringing light and warmth, and the same is true of the moon and the clouds. None of these beings is under your power or control, but Allah *the Almighty* has subdued them to serve you.

He manages everything without you seeing this. Therefore, you should look beyond the apparent means which Allah *the Almighty* gives you, as you should consider the numerous causes behind the apparent bestowal of bounties.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne.' (*at-Tawba*: 129) Allah is the Lord of the universe, and He has subdued to you that which you see and that which you do not see. He manages everything

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent..' (*at-Talaq*: 3).

with His absolute power, and Allah *the Exalted* has dominion over everything in the universe.

Allah has a Mighty Throne, so what is meaning of the word ‘*’arsh*’? On first consideration of the word ‘*’arsh*’ is ‘ceiling’;⁽¹⁾ when you build a floor in a building, you cover it with a ceiling to protect you from the sun and the rain. If the land is soft, the building sinks in it, so we build ceilings to protect the walls from the weathering agents.

Allah’s saying: ‘the Mighty Throne’ (*at-Tawba*: 129) means that He arranges things in a balanced manner. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* expresses the idea of dominion in the case of the Queen of Sheba, for example, when the hoopoe said, ‘Indeed, I found [there] a woman ruling them, and she has been given of all things, and she has a mighty throne.’ (*an-Naml*: 23)

The throne is a symbol of power. In our daily life—and to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection—we find that when someone seizes dominion from the one who ruled before him, he gets rid of those who surrounded the previous ruler first and then searches for advocates, so that he can rearrange the dominion in the manner that suits him. Accordingly, everything can be settled, then he can ascend the throne.

Allah’s sitting on the throne means that all things have been settled and put in order by the Supreme Sovereign. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘those [angels] who carry the Throne and those around it exalt [Allah] with praise of their Lord...’ (*Ghafir*: 7).

The word ‘*’arsh*’ (throne) indicates the fact that Allah, the All-Powerful, has settled and ordered everything in the universe and that everything is under His control. A ruler does not sit on a throne unless things become settled and stable, so what do we think about how the entire universe has been settled under Allah’s control even before time began?

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘It is He Who created the heavens and earth in six days and then established Himself above the Throne ...’ (*al-A’raf*: 54).

(1) The word ‘*al-’arsh*’ means throne. For example, the king assumes the throne. It has also the meaning mentioned in Allah’s saying, ‘...she has a great throne.’ (*an-Naml*: 23) One of its meanings is ‘ceiling of a house’ or the house itself. All these meanings imply stability. See the meaning of the word ‘*’arsh*’ in ‘*Al-Lisan Lexicon*’.

This means that everything is settled under His control. Therefore, the word '*arsh* (throne) can refer to Allah's Throne and can also be used in a worldly sense.⁽¹⁾ Allah's Throne indicates that the entire universe is settled under Allah's dominion, so that nothing happens against His Will and nothing escapes His Dominion. Everything in the universe is subject to Allah's control and authority.

Allah says: '...He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne.' (*at-Tawba*: 129) When a throne is described as being mighty, the minds of people turn to the thrones of kings which we see in our lives, such as how the hoopoe described the throne of the Queen of Sheba: '...and she has a mighty throne.'⁽²⁾ (*an-Naml*: 23)

This is according to human standards. Allah's saying, 'He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne' (*at-Tawba*: 129) refers to the mightiness of the Throne according to the standards of the Lord of mankind. The Throne of the Almighty Creator is beyond all human imagination. Therefore, we should understand this in the light of '...there is nothing like Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11).

(1) The worldly thrones indicate the settlement of matters for a certain king, while Allah's Throne indicates that the whole universe is settled for Allah *Glorified is He*.

(2) The thrones of kings are limited in place and time, while Allah's Throne has not limits, as He is the Owner of Sovereignty.

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