

A
COLLECTION
OF
ISLAMIC WRITINGS

BY

MUHAMMAD AMIN A. SAMAD

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Publisher

In memory of
my beloved parents
H. Abdul-Samad & Besse Chichu'.
May Allah bless them all, and may
their souls rest in peace,
amin!

CONSUL GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

FOREWORD

By M. Wahid Supriyadi
Consul General, Republic of Indonesia
Melbourne

Islam is often viewed negatively, and particularly since the WTC attack of 11 September 2001 it has been regarded by many as a violent religion which produces extremists and terrorists. Indonesia, as the home of the world's largest Muslim population, is thus often considered to be a safe heaven for terrorists.

The truth is that Indonesia has been deeply scarred by the terrorist acts committed on its soil, and that the majority of those killed in these attacks have been Muslims. Furthermore, Indonesia is one of the very few countries in the world to have successfully arrested the perpetrators of terrorist acts and jailed some 300 terrorists through open and transparent legal processes.

This booklet by Dr. Muhammad Amin Samad, an Indonesian specialist in the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* residing in Australia, is good reading for those who want to learn about Islam, particularly for those from non-Muslim backgrounds. Contrary to what many people think, Islam is a religion of peace which preaches tolerance, not only towards one's fellow believers but also towards followers of different religions. A great many Qur'anic verses and *Ḥadīths* (accounts of the Prophet's deeds) address how to maintain good neighbourhood relations, even if our neighbours are non-Muslims. It is true that a small, misguided

minority may read some verses of the Holy Book out of context, and become narrow-minded and extreme in their stands on Islam. But extremists emerge in all religions and societies and should not overshadow the majority. Dr. Samad skilfully uses easily-understood language to explain the highly poetic Qur'ānic verses which many may find difficult to comprehend.

After reading this booklet, I heartily recommend it to those who really want to understand what Islam is. Dr. Samad is a well- respected Islamic scholar among Indonesians in Australia, particularly in Melbourne, and is truly adept at bridging the misunderstandings which sometimes occur between our two communities.

May Allah give him strength for all his efforts.

Melbourne, January 2006

Foreword

Richard Rohr at the beginning of his book *Contemplative Prayer* has a quote from Shams-ud-din Mohammed Hafiz:

Pulling out the chair
Beneath your mind
And watching you fall upon God –
There is nothing else for Hafiz to do
That is any fun in this world!

Hafiz reminds me of the scene in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, where Aslan romps with the girls. He captures the exhilaration and the vulnerability, for should Aslan fail, or break faith, the girls would be grievously injured or destroyed.

There is this danger when Muslims and Christians speak to each other as believers, for we are in the hands of God over whom we have no right of control or influence. Our only safety is in God and God is not tame, nor to be tamed. God loves us with a fierce love and only the foolish feel no fear.

I am deeply privileged to be asked to contribute a foreword. I value Anton's friendship and I honour the courage inherent in this endeavour. There is a sad history of violence and culpable misunderstanding between Muslims and Christians, still if we are not to be the victims of history we must learn to speak to each other in truth and with love. Else how can we stand before God at the last day.

Reverend Keith Lanyon

Publisher's Note

This book contains a collection of religious discussions written as articles over a period of time during the author's stay in Melbourne. We all know that the only way to conduct a proper discussion on religions is with an open mind and tolerance. Islam, as mentioned by the well-known American author James Michener, is the most misunderstood religion in Europe and America. The event of September 11th, 2001 has become a turning point in the West where people are starting to study Islam to find out what Islam really is about. As a matter of fact, Islam in many ways is very close to Judaism and Christianity and considers them as also revealed religions.

The main objective of this book is to present Islam in an objective possible way and to give further understanding of it to Muslims as well as non-Muslims. Islam is a new and fast growing world religion embraced by about one-fifth of the world's population. Therefore, there is no intention to publish this book as a means of religious propagation.

Hopefully, this book will bring better understanding of Islam to the readers.

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Transliteration System

The English transliteration for Arabic names and terms followed in this booklet is as follows:

a. Consonants:

ا = a or '	ب = b	ت = t	ث = th	ج = j	ح = ḥ
خ = kh	د = d	ذ = dh	ر = r	ز = z	س = s
ش = sh	ص = s	ض = ḍ	ط = ṭ	ظ = ṣ	ع = '
غ = gh	ف = f	ق = q	ك = k	ل = l	م = m
ن = n	ه = h	و = w	ي = y	ء = ' (like alif)	

b. Vowels:

	Short:		long:
<i>Fathah</i>	-----	: = a	ا = ā
<i>Kasrah</i>	-----	: = i	ي = ī
<i>Dammah</i>	-----	: = u	و = ū

c. *Tā' marbūṭah*: *ah*, e.g., *sūrah* (سُورَة)

Tā' marbūṭah in *iḍāfah*: *at*, e.g., *sūrat al-Baqarah* (سُورَة الْبَقَرَة)

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1

***Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (The Causes of Revelation)**

Asbāb al-Nuzūl (“the causes of revelation”), means the occasions that led to the revelation of a particular verse. Al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392) who mentioned forty-seven sciences of the Qur’ān in his *Burhān* put *asbāb al-nuzūl* in the first place. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 991/1505) who mentioned eighty sciences put it in the ninth place in his *Itqān*. Many ‘*ulamā*’ (Muslim scholars) in the past wrote on *asbāb al-nuzūl*, such as ‘Alī al-Madīnī (Imām Bukhārī’s teacher), al-Wāḥidī, Ibn Ḥajar and al-Suyūṭī in their books.

A verse can become clearer by knowing its *asbāb al-nuzūl*. For example, Allah says in the Qur’ān:

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا أَتَوْا وَيُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يُحْمَدُوا بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلُوا
 فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّهُمْ بِمَقَارَةِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ
 (آل عمران ٣: ١٨٨)

"Do not think that those who rejoice in what they have done and wish to be praised for what they have not done – do not think they will escape from torture. A woeful punishment awaits them."
 (Qur’ān 3: 188).

When Marwān ibn Ḥakam read this verse he sent his servant Rāfi’ to ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās (*r.a.*) to ask him its meaning, and said that if it was as he understood it, then nobody would escape punishment. Ibn ‘Abbās explained that the verse was addressed to the people of the Book, in this case, the Jews of Madinah. Then Ibn ‘Abbās read the preceding verse:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ فَنَبَذُوهُ
وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَاشْتَرَوْا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَبُيِّنَ مَا يَشْتَرُونَ
(آل عمران ٣ : ١٨٧)

"When Allah made a covenant with those to whom the Book was given, He said: 'Proclaim these to mankind and do not suppress them.' But they cast the Scriptures behind their backs and sold them for a paltry price. Evil was their bargain."
(Qur'an 3: 187).

Ibn 'Abbās said further that the Prophet asked the Jews of Madinah a question, but they gave him the wrong answer, and they were happy for not giving him the right one¹.

This is one occasion involving the revelation of the above verse. Another occasion was reported by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī that a group of the hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*) in the time of the Prophet were absent when he went out for his campaign, and were happy for not participating in the battle. When the Prophet returned they made excuses to him and swore, and liked to be praised for what they had not done. Then it was revealed: *"Do not think that those who rejoice in what they have done ..."* (Q: 3: 188) above.² Here we notice that, like hitting two birds with a single stone, the verse answers two circumstances.

When the above verse was revealed a companion of the Prophet called Thābit ibn Qays al-Anṣārī came to him, saying:

"O Messenger of Allah, by Allah I am afraid that I might perish."

"Why?," asked the Prophet. He said:

"Allah prohibits us from loving to be praised for what we have not done, and I love praise; Allah prohibits us from

showing off, and I love beauty; and Allah prohibits us from raising our voice above yours, and I am a person with loud voice." The Prophet told him:

"Won't you like to live praiseworthy, die as a martyr, and enter Heaven?"

"Yes, I do, O Messenger of Allah," said Thābit. So, he lived praise-worthy, and was martyred in the battle against Musaylimah al-Kadhdhāb (the liar), who claimed to be a prophet³.

Another example is the following Qur'ānic verse:

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ
حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا
(البقرة ٢ : ١٥٨)

"Ṣafā and Marwah are beacons of Allah. It shall be no offence for the pilgrim or the visitor to the Sacred House to walk around them..."
(Qur'ān 2: 158).

This verse was not clear to 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, as it seemed to him to indicate that performing *sa'ī* is not obligatory in the *ḥajj*. Therefore, he went to his aunt 'Ā'ishah (*r.a.*) and asked her the meaning of the verse. She told him that the Prophet and the Muslims did perform the *sa'ī*, whereas the idolaters who gave offerings to the idol Manāt at al-Mushallal did not perform it. Then Allah revealed the above verse. Had the verse meant what he had understood it, it would have said:

فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ لَا يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا

*"it shall be of no offence ... for **not** walking around them."*

As reported by al-Sha'bī, that in the time of *Jāhiliyyah* (pre-Islamic era) people performed the *sa'ī* between Safā and Marwah with the intention to make a pilgrimage to the two idols which they touched on the two hills, 'Isāf on Safā and Nā'ilah on Marwah. Some of the *sahābah* (companions of the Prophet) hesitated to perform their *sa'ī* because of the two idols, thinking that *sa'ī* was not part of the *hajj*, but of the idolaters' practice. Others among the *ansār* thought that they were enjoined to walk around the Ka'bah only, and not between Safā and Marwah. There were also among them those who hesitated to perform the *sa'ī*, as their *sa'ī* looked like that of the idolaters. Then the above verse was revealed to inform them that the *sa'ī* was enjoined on them, and that despite the presence of these idols, it was all right to perform it and they should not hesitate to do it⁴. Again, here, we notice that many circumstances were involved with the above verse.

After the prohibition of alcoholic beverage with the revelation of the verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ
رَجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ
(المائدة ٥ : ٩٠)

*"Believers, wine and games of chance, idols and
divining arrows are abominations devised by the devil
Avoid them, so that you may prosper."
(Qur'ān 5: 90),*

the *ṣahābah* asked the Prophet about the Muslims who had passed away before the above verse was revealed. They died in the path of Allah, but they drank wine, since it was not prohibited yet. To answer this question Allah revealed:

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ
فِيمَا طَعَمُوا إِذَا مَا اتَّقَوْا وَآمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا
وَآمَنُوا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَأَحْسَنُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ
(المائدة ٥ : ٩٣)

*"No blame shall be attached
to those that have embraced the faith and
done good works in regard to any food they may
have eaten, so long as they fear Allah and believe in
Him and do good works; so long as they fear Allah
and believe in Him; and again so long as they
fear Allah and do good works.
Allah loves the charitable."
(Qur'ān 5: 93).*

This verse means that there is no blame to those who had done something before it became prohibited, in this case, drinking wine. It does not mean, as some people understood later, that it is all right to drink wine as long as one fears Allah, believes in Him and does good deeds. Here, we see that the verse was revealed to answer the question of the *ṣaḥābah* concerning those who had drunk alcohol and died before it was prohibited.

After knowing the occasions that led to the revelation of a Qur'ānic verse, the ruling contained in it is not limited to the persons involved and the particular circumstance, unless there is an indication for being so. For example, the verse concerning the *kalālah* (a deceased person who has neither parents nor children to give his inheritance to), namely Qur'ān 4: 176, was revealed in the case of Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh, but the ruling of this verse is applicable to any person who is in a similar condition to that of Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh.

Asbāb al-nuzūl is an important Qurʾānic science. It gives us information which gives us further understanding of the verses of the Qurʾān. However, this Qurʾānic science should not be considered a science which gives us exclusive information of historical events involving the verses of the Qurʾān without having anything to do with the present. On the contrary, these historical events could repeat themselves in different forms, and the Qurʾān with its moral and legal codes would give us the true guidance accordingly as it did in the past.

Endnotes:

1. See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1967), vol. 4, p. 306 and M.A. al-Ṣābūnī (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Qurʾān al-Karīm, 1402/1981), vol. 1, p. 345. This occasion was reported by Aḥmad, Bukhārī, Muslim, and al-Tirmidhī in their collection of *ḥadīths*.
2. *Ibid.* This occasion was reported by Bukhārī and Muslim.
3. Al-Ṣābūnī (ed.) *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, p. 345.
4. Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, vol. 2, pp. 178-179; al-Ṣābūnī (ed.), *Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, p. 145.
5. There is no repetition of meaning in this verse, although the term "fear [Allah]" (*ittaḳaw*) is repeated three times and "believe [in Him]" (*āmanū*) twice. Al-Qurṭubī gives us four meanings of the repeated terms as follows: (1) they feared Allah for drinking wine, and believed in its prohibition; then they continued their fear and belief; then they did good deeds for fear of Allah; (2) they had feared Allah from committing prohibited things before the prohibition of wine; then they feared for drinking wine after its prohibition; then they feared Allah in the rest of their deeds, and did good deeds; (3) they feared for committing polytheism, and believed in Allah and His messenger; then they feared for committing major sins, and increased their faith; then they feared from committing minor sins, and did recommended things; (4) they feared Allah by obeying His command, believing and by doing; then they feared by affirming their faith; then they feared by doing good deeds and making themselves near to Him by performing recommended deeds; this is the view of al-Ṭabarī. See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*, vol. 6, p. 29.

2

Wujūh* and *Nazā'ir **(Homonyms and Synonyms) in the Qur'ān**

This subject is usually treated as one of the branches of the science of *Tafsīr* (commentary of the Qur'ān) called *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazā'ir fī al-Qur'ān*, usually translated, although not very accurately, as “homonyms and synonyms in the Qur'ān”. *Wujūh* (sing: *wajh*, face, meaning, aspect) are words which agree in wording but different in meaning. For example, the term *ṣalāh* which we shall treat later, basically means *du'ā'* (supplication, prayer). But it also means “the prescribed prayer”, “blessing”, as well as “the place of worship.”

Nazā'ir (sing: *nazīr*, similar, equivalent, matching) are *al-alfāz al-mushtarikah*, namely, words which indicate many different things equally, such as the word *'ayn* which equally means “eye”, “spring” (the place where water comes out from the ground), “ready money” (cash as the opposite of credit), and the letter ع. *Nazā'ir* also include *al-alfāz al-mutawāṭi'ah* (Latin: *denoteta*; sing. *denotatum*), namely, words which indicate many different things with one shared meaning, such as the word *insān* (man) which is applied to Zayd, 'Umar, and any other person, and *ḥayawān* (animal) which is applied to the cat, the horse, the bear and any other animal. Synonymous words are also included in the *nazā'ir*, such as the word *khamr*, *rāḥ*, and *'aqqār*, all mean one thing, the intoxicant made from raisins.

This branch of science is very important in studying the Qurʾān. Abū al-Dardāʾ among the *ṣahābah* (companions of the Prophet) and Muqātil ibn Sulaymān among the *tābiʿīn* (people succeeding the generation of the *ṣahābah*) were reported to have said that a man would not become a true *faqīh* (an expert in Islamic law) until he knew the *wujūh* in the Qurʾān. Al-Zarkashī put it in number four of the 47 branches of the Qurʾānic science in his work *al-Burhān*, whereas al-Suyūṭī put it in number 39 of the 80 branches in his work *al-Itqān*.

There were many writers of this branch of science in the past, among whom were: Al-Kalbī (d.146/763), Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d.150/767) as mentioned earlier, al-Mubarrad (d.285/898), al-Naqqāsh (d.351/962), Abū al-Faḍl al-Bukhārī (d.514/1120-1), Ibn Fāris (d.395/1005), al-Dāmaghānī (d. 478/1085-6), al-Zaghwānī (d.527/1133), Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), and al-Tiflisī (the native of Tiflis or Tbilisī, the capital of the present Republic of Georgia; died in 600/1204 or 629/1232).

I shall give some examples from the Qurʾān to show the significance of this branch of Qurʾānic science, as follows:

I. *Ṣalāh* (الصَّلَاةُ, supplication, prayer)

Ṣalāh has many *wujūh* (meanings), among which are as follows:

a. *Duʿāʾ* (الدُّعَاءُ, supplication, prayer), as in the verse:

وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ (التَّوْبَةُ ٩ : ١٠٣)

“.. and pray for them. Lo! thy prayer (*inna salātaka*)
is an assuagement for them...”

(Qurʾān 9: 103)

(The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān

by M. Pickthall - the translation of the remaining verses will be also his, unless stated otherwise).

b. *Al-Raḥmah wa al-Maghfirah* (الرَّحْمَةُ وَالْمَغْفِرَةُ), blessing and forgiveness), as in the verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا
(الْأَحْزَابُ ٣٣: ٥٦)

“Lo! Allah and His angels shower blessings (*yus.allūna*) on the Prophet. O ye who believe! Ask blessings (*s.allū*) on him and salute him with a worthy salutation.”

(Qur'ān 33: 56).

It means Allah gives blessings to the Prophet, and the angels pray and ask His forgiveness for him.¹

c. *Al-Ṣalawāt al-Khams* (الصَّلَوَاتُ الْخَمْسُ), the five daily prayers), as in the verse:

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ (الْبَقَرَةُ ٢: ٣)
“Who believe in the unseen and establish
worship (*wa yuqīmūna al-salāh*) ...”

(Qur'ān 2: 3),

namely, the five-daily prescribed prayers.

d. *Mawḍi' al-Ṣalāh* (مَوْضِعُ الصَّلَاةِ), the place of worship), as in the verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرُبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَى حَتَّى تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ
(النِّسَاءُ ٤: ٤٣)

“O ye who believe! Draw not near unto prayer (*al-salāh*, namely, place of worship) when ye are drunken, till ye know that which ye utter...”

(Qur'ān 4: 43).

This verse was revealed when the prohibition of alcohol was not yet stated explicitly, when a person prayed and recited in his prayer:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ أَعْبُدُوا مَا تَعْبُدُونَ

"Say O disbelievers. I worship what you worship"

instead of

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ (الْكَافِرُونَ ١٠٩ : ١-٢)

*"Say O disbelievers. I do **not** worship what you worship"*

(Qur'ān 109: 1-2)

Here the verse states the prohibition of approaching the mosque while one is drunk, let alone performing the prayer. This verse also indicates the prohibition of performing prayer by Muslims who are not fully conscious after taking medicine.

2. *Al-Ummah* (الْأُمَّة), nation, people, community, species; religion; a period of time)

Among the meanings of *ummah* in the Qur'ān are as follows:

a. *Jamā'ah min al-nās* (جَمَاعَةٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ), a group of people, a nation), which is the basic meaning of the term *ummah*, as in the verse:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ (الْبَقَرَةَ ٢ : ٢١٣)

"Mankind were one community (ummah wāḥidah), and Allah sent (unto them) Prophets..."

(Qur'ān 2: 213).

It means that mankind belonged to one community with one religion, the true religion of Islam; but when they disagreed and went astray, Allah sent prophets to them.

b. *Al-Hīn* (أَلْحِينِ , a period of time), as in the verse:

وَأَدَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ (يُوسُفُ ١٢ : ٤٥)

“... and (now) at length (he) remembered,...”

(Qur’ān 12: 45)

namely, he remembered after a long period of time. This period of time can mean “years”, as in the verse:

وَلَيْنَ أَخْرَجْنَا عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابَ إِلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ مَّعْدُودَةٍ (هُودُ ١١ : ٨)

“And if We delay for them the doom until a reckoned time ...”

(Qur’ān 11: 8)

It means, reckoned years². Ibn al-Jawzī, however, says that the word *ummah* in the above verses means "a period of time" which is contrary to the view of al-Dāmaghānī who says that it means in both verses “years”.³

c. *Al-Imām* (الإمام , leader and commander), as in the verse:

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ (الأنحل ١٦ : ١٢٠)

“Lo! Abraham was a nation (*ummah*, namely, a leader) obedient to Allah,..”

(Qur’ān 16: 120).

It means people followed his examples. Some commentators say that Prophet Abraham was called “a nation” because he and people who followed him constituted a nation; others said that it was because he possessed the good quality of a nation. He represented a nation when he was the only believer while other people disbelieved.

d. *Jamā‘ah min al-‘ulamā’* (جَمَاعَةٌ مِنَ الْعُلَمَاءِ , a group of Muslim scholars), as in the verse:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
(آلِ عِمْرَانَ ٣ : ١٠٤)

“And let be from you a nation (*ummah*,
namely, a group of ‘*ulamā*’) who
invite to (teach) goodness...”
(Qur’ān 3: 104).

The particle *min* (“from”) in this verse can be partition *min* which means “some”, so that the verse means that some among the Muslims should constitute a nation consisting of ‘*ulamā*’ to call people to virtuous deed, as this duty is *fard kifāyah*, a duty which should be carried out by a group of Muslims only, in this case, the ‘*ulamā*’⁴. It is also possible that it is explanatory *min*, so that the verse means “Let a nation calling to virtue be you”⁵. In other words, “you should be an *ummah* that calls to virtue.”

e. *Al-Dīn* or *al-Millah* (الْمِلَّةُ أَوْ الدِّينُ , the religion), as in the verse:

بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّهُتَدُونَ
(الزُّحُرْفُ ٤٣ : ٢٢)

“Nay! They say: ‘ We found our fathers
following one religion (‘*alā ummah*) and we
are guided by their footprints’.”
(Qur’ān 43: 22).

As a *shāhid* (a quotation serving as textual evidence) from poetry is the poem of the pre-Islamic poet al-Nābighah in which *ummah* means religion, as follows:

حَلَفْتُ فَلَمْ أَتْرُكْ لِنَفْسِكَ رَيْبَةً - وَهَلْ يَأْتَمَنُ ذُو أُمَّةٍ وَهُوَ طَائِعٌ؟

*"I have sworn so that I would not leave any doubt in your mind; will the person who has a religion (dhū ummah) verily commits in while he (at the same time) is obeying (his religion)?"*⁶

Originally, *ummah* was said to be of a group of people belonging to one religion, then later on was meant the religion itself as we have seen from the examples above.

Reference:

1. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-Arab*, vol. 14, p. 465.
2. Ibn Qutaybah, *Ta'wīl*, p. 445; al-Tiflisī, *Wujūh*, p. 29.
3. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Wujūh*, p. 56 and al-Dāmaghānī, *Qāmūs*, p. 43.
4. Ibn Qutaybah, *Ta'wīl*, p. 446; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, vol. 4, p. 167.
5. Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, vol.1, p. 224; al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-Bayān*, vol. 1, p. 483.
6. Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, vol. 12, p. 129.

3

Wujūh and Nazā'ir in the Qur'ān (cont.)

In the previous issue, the significance of the *wujūh* (homonyms) and the *nazā'ir* (synonyms) in studying the Qur'ān has been mentioned. In this issue we shall treat the *wujūh* or simply the meanings of the term *ḍalāl* (which basically means "straying") according to the understandings of scholars.

The term *ḍalāl* and its derivatives are mentioned 191 times in the Qur'ān according to Muhammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī in his Qur'ānic concordance, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li-Alfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. The homonyms or meanings of this term are as follows:

Al-Ḍalāl (الصَّلَال, straying)

Among the meanings of *ḍalāl* in the Qur'ān are as follows:

a. *Al-Istizlāl fi al-Hukm* (الإِسْتِزْلَالُ فِي الْحُكْمِ), giving a wrong judgement), as in the verse:

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَهَمَّتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ
أَنْ يُضِلُّوكَ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ
(النِّسَاءَ ٤ : ١١٣)

"... But for the grace of Allah upon thee (Muhammad), and His mercy, a party of them had resolved to mislead thee [أَنْ يُضِلُّوكَ, namely, to lead you making a wrong judgement], but they will mislead only themselves."
(Qur'ān 4: 113).

The verses 105 and 113 and probably also 111 and 112 were revealed in the case of Ṭu‘mah ibn Ubayriq among the *anṣār* who stole a coat-of-arms from his neighbour called Qatādah ibn al-Nu‘mān, and hid it with a Jew called Zayd ibn al-Samīn. The coat-of-arms was in a bag containing flour which dropped on the way when the coat-of-arms was stolen. Its owner traced the flour which led him to Ṭu‘mah's house. Since Ṭu‘mah denied his stealing of it, its owner kept tracing the flour until it led him to the house of the Jew. The Jew, supported by some of his Jewish colleagues, told him that it was given to him by Ṭu‘mah. Some people among Ṭu‘mah's clan came to the Prophet to save him and unjustly threw the blame on the Jew, so that the Prophet would give a judgement which would not only be wrong but also disgraceful. By the grace of Allah this did not happen, as Allah revealed their scheme to the Prophet¹.

b. *Al-Nisyān* (النسيان, forgetfulness), as in the verse:

فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّن تَرْضَوْنَ
مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ أَنْ تَضِلَّ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَى
(البقرة ٢: ٢٨٢)

"And if two men be not (at hand) then a man and two women, of such as ye approve as witnesses, so that if the one erreth (an taḍilla iḥḍāhumā) (through forgetfulness) the other will remember."
(Qur'ān 2: 282).

In other words, the verse means that if one of the two women forgets, the other will remind her. This is not a humiliation to women; on the contrary, it is a relief and protection for them. Women, as mothers, are so highly esteemed that the Prophet said: "Heaven lies under the feet of

mothers.” They do not have to become witnesses if they are alone, unless supported by another woman. There is harassment in going back and forth to court, risk and even a danger in being a witness, especially where crimes are involved. Even a man sometimes refuse to be a witness in this kind of situation and pretends not to have seen or heard what has happened. It is, then, for the protection of women, according to Islamic law, a woman can be a witness only if at least another woman is available to be a witness, so that they can support and remind each other. Women in general are not interested and too sensitive witnessing to horrible incidents, cruel behaviours or brutality, and it is easy for them to forget something they are sensitive about and not interested in, let alone the details of it.

c. *Al-Halakah* (الهِلَاكَةُ, annihilation), as in the expression *يَصِلُ الْمَاءُ فِي اللَّبَنِ* (*yadillu al-mā'u fī 'l-laban*), meaning, "the water perishes (namely, permeates) in the milk." It reminds us of the practice of cheating in the past where milk was mixed with water to increase its quantity. This example does not say that milk permeates in water. However, when we drink tea with milk, it is the milk which we pour into the tea that permeates. The example in the Qur'ān is as follows:

وَقَالُوا أَنَدَا صَلَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَنِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ
(السَّجْدَةُ ٣٢ : ١٠)

*"And they say: when we are lost (a'idhā ḍalalnā)
in the earth, how can we then be re-created?"*
(Qur'ān 32: 10).

Instead of "when we are lost in the earth" as translated by Pickthall, the verse means, "when we became annihilated and became united with the earth".

d. *Al-Khaṭa'* (الْخَطَأُ, error), as in the verse:

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَالُوا إِنَّا لَضَالُّونَ (الْقَلَمُ ٦٨ : ٢٦)

"But when they saw it, they said: Lo! we are in error ."

(Qur'ān 68: 26).

This verse says about people who did not want to give charity to the poor. They wanted to harvest their crops early in the morning and return home before the poor came for charity. They were wrong in their intention, and Allah wanted to teach them a lesson. When they came to their fields, their crops had been destroyed. They regretted their bad intention.

e. *Al-Jahl* (الْجَهْلُ, ignorance), as in the following statement of Prophet Moses (*a.s.*) to the Pharaoh:

قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَا إِذَا وَأَنَا مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ (الشُّعْرَاءُ ٢٦ : ٢٠)

"I committed it while I was still ignorant"

(Qur'ān 26: 20).

This is the interpretation of Mujāhid, one of the great commentators among the *tābi'in*. Here Prophet Moses (*a.s.*) was referring to what he had committed before he became a prophet, such as the killing of the Egyptian.

f. *Al-Khusrān* (الْخُسْرَانُ, loss), as in

إِنِّي إِذَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (يس ٣٦ : ٢٤)

"And so, behold, I would have indeed,
most obviously, been a loser!"

(Qur'ān 36: 24).

This verse is referring to a former idol worshipper who said that if he were still to worship idols which would not be able to help or save him from any disaster, he would certainly become a loser. Some commentators (Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid and Muqātil) said that this person was a carpenter, and his name was Ḥabīb bin Israel. He was killed by his people for believing in messengers sent by Allah. The names of these messengers were unknown.

g. *Al-Buṭlān* (البطْلان, non-fruitfulness), as in

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا . الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعِيَّهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا
(الْكَهْفُ ١٨ : ١٠٣-١٠٤)

"Say: Shall We inform you who will be the greatest losers by their works? Those whose effort goeth astray (namely, void) in the life of the world, and yet they reckon that they do good work."
(Qur'ān 18: 103-104).

The verse is referring to disbelievers among the Meccans who made a jest of Allah's revelations and messengers. However, those who commit similar mistakes would fall into the same category of people with the same consequence: the greatest fruitlessness and voiding of their good works from merit.

We have seen here some examples of the various meanings of *ḍalāl* in the Qur'ān. However, the examples of the basic meaning of *ḍalāl* which is the opposite of *hudan* (guidance) in the Qur'ān are not given here as they are easily recognised.

Reference:

Al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, n d., p. 103.

4

Commentary of the Qur'ān

Allah says in the Qur'ān,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ
مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ
وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ
(البقرة ٢: ٦٢)

“Verily, those who have attained to faith (in this divine writ) as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians, and the Sabians - all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds – shall have their reward with their Sustainer; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.”
(Qur'ān 2: 62, Muhammad Asad's translation).

In this verse Allah states that people who believe in Him and the Last Day and obey Prophet Muhammad (*s.a.w.*) and do righteous deeds will be rewarded by Him. They shall have neither fear nor grief. Fear of what and grief of what? Fear of the future and grief of the past, fear of what could happen to them, and grief for the bad deeds they had done in this world. In other words Allah promises that true Muslims will attain salvation.

However, since Islam is not a new religion but a continuation of a previous true religion, Allah said further that those who believed in Him and followed the messengers sent to them

before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (*s.a.w.*) and did righteous deeds shall also be rewarded by Him, shall have neither fear nor grief as well, and shall also attain salvation. Also included were the Jews who believed in Prophet Moses (*Mūsā a.s.*) and adhered to the Torah (*Tawrāt*) until the advent of Prophet ʿĪsā (*a.s.*). They included the Christians who followed Prophet ʿĪsā (*a.s.*) and adhered to the Gospel (*Injīl*) until the advent of Prophet Muhammad (*s.a.w.*).

With regard to the Sabians, people did not know much about them. There were Jews and Christians in Arabia in the early period of Islam. There had been Jews in Madinah and its outskirts, and Christians in Najrān. In Mecca itself, Warāqah ibn Nawfal had been a Christian when the Prophet told him about his strange experience at the H.īrāʾ cave. Warāqah said that the strange night visitor was Nāmūs (Gabriel) who had brought revelations from Allah to prophets before him (Muhammad). The old Warāqah told him further that as a prophet his people would drive him away one day from his homeland, and Warāqah promised to help him if he were still alive when this happened. The Arabs in pre-Islamic Arabia, then, knew the Jews and the Christians, but only had a superficial idea about the Sabians. They thought that a Sabian was a person who was neither a Jew, a Christian nor a Magian, not even a polytheist, but a person who had no religion and remained in his natural disposition. Therefore, a person who followed the Prophet was sometimes called a Sabian. ʿUmar before converting to Islam had intended to kill the Prophet, saying, "I want to kill that Sabian."

Since the Sabians mentioned in the above verse were included among those who would attain salvation, they must have been monotheists. They must have followed a prophet, but who was he, and do they still exist? To these questions, Muhammad Asad has the following explanation:

“The Sabians seem to have been a monotheistic religious group intermediate between Judaism and Christianity. Their name (probably derived from the Aramaic verb *tsebha*, ‘he immersed himself [in water]’) would indicate that they were followers of John the Baptist - in which case they could be identified with the Mandaeans, a community which to this day is to be found in Iraq. They are not to be confused with the so-called ‘Sabians of Harran’, a gnostic sect which still existed in the early centuries of Islam, and which may have deliberately adopted the name of the true Sabians in order to obtain the advantages accorded by the Muslims to the followers of every monotheistic faith.” (Asad, *The Message of the Qur’ān*. Gibraltar: Dār al-Andalus, 1984, p. 14, n. 49).

The above verse was revealed to answer the question of Salmān al-Fārisī (the Persian). He asked the Prophet about the Christian monks he had met in Mosul (Iraq) and had followed before he came to Madinah and met the Prophet. These monks followed the *Injīl*, and told Salmān of the approach of the coming of a new prophet in Arabia and advised him to follow this new prophet if he were still alive when he arrived. Salmān wanted to know whether these people who had devoted themselves to worshipping God in their monasteries and believed in the advent and the prophethood of Muhammad would attain salvation.

In answer to this question Allah Himself said that not only they, the monks whom Salmān had referred to, but also those who had followed any prophet sent to them would attain salvation. This statement is the reminiscent of Allah's promise to Adam and Eve after accepting their repentance for eating the forbidden fruit. He said:

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ
تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ. وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا
بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ.
(البقرة ٢ : ٣٨-٣٩)

"(For although) We did say, 'Down with you all from this (state),' there shall, none the less, most certainly come unto you guidance from Me: and those who follow My guidance need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve; but those who are bent on denying the truth and giving the lie to Our messages - they are destined for the fire, and therein shall they abide."
(Qur'an 2: 38-39, Asad's translation).

This verse indicates the continuation of Allah's guidance to mankind through His messengers since the time of Adam till the Last Day. This message reached its culmination in Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) who was the last messenger and was sent to the whole of mankind.

With the advent of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) as the last messenger the Jews, the Christians and the Sabians mentioned in the above verse will no longer attain salvation unless they believe and follow him, embrace Islam and become Muslims. Allah states clearly that the only salvation is through Islam (lit., "self surrender unto Allah") when He said:

وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ .
(آل عمران ٣ : ٨٥)

"If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah) never will it be accepted of him and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost(all spiritual good)."
(Qur'an, 3: 85, A.Y. Ali's translation).

This verse was said to have been revealed shortly after the revelation of the verse mentioned in the beginning of this article. It was revealed after the apostasy of al-Ḥārith ibn Suwayd and twelve people with whom he departed from Madinah to join the idolaters in Mecca. His brother, al-Julās ibn Suwayd, after hearing this verse, sent a message to his brother al-Ḥārith asking him to repent. So he repented.

In conclusion, the verse in question states that the Jews, the Christians and the Sabians after the advent of Prophet Muhammad (*s.a.w.*) will no longer be entitled to salvation unless they believe in the messengership of Muhammad (*s.a.w.*), embrace Islam and do righteous deeds. If they do earnestly and become true believers, then they, like other true Muslims, shall have neither grief of the past nor fear of the future. They will no longer worry about anything, because they firmly believe in the Merciful Allah. This verse should not be misunderstood by holding on to its literal meaning and put it in conflict with other verses of the Qur'ān.

5

Wujūh and Nazā'ir in the Qur'ān (cont.)

Al-Zulm (الظُّلم, wrong doing). The basic meaning of *zulm* is “not putting something in its proper place”. The Arabic expression *أَرْضٌ مَّظْلُومَةٌ* (*ard mazlūmah*) means “a piece of land dug in the wrong place”, and the expression *إِلْزَامُ الطَّرِيقِ وَلَا تَظْلِمُهُ* (*ilzam al-tarīq wa lā tazlimhu*) means “keep following the track, and do not deviate from it”. Some of the meanings of this term in the Qur'ān are as follows:

a. *Al-Zulm* (الظُّلم, wrong doing), as in the verse:

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا
حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ
(البقرة ٢ : ٣٥)

"And We said: 'O Adam dwell thou and thy wife in this garden, and eat freely thereof, both of you, whatever you may wish; but do not approach this one tree, lest you become wrongdoers (zālimīn).'"

(Qur'ān 2: 35, Asad's translation).

It means that Adam (*a.s.*) and Eve (*H.awwā'*) were forbidden from approaching this tree. Just approaching it was a wrongdoing, let alone eating its fruit. What kind of tree and what garden are meant in this verse? In Qur'ān 20: 120 it is referred to as *shajarat al-khuld* (“the tree of eternal life”), a name falsely suggested by Satan to seduce Adam and Eve (*a.s.*) to eat its fruit, so that they would become immortal. This symbolic “tree of

immortality” is called in the Bible (Genesis II, 9) as “ the tree of life ” and “ the tree of knowledge of good and evil. ” After eating the fruit of this forbidden tree, Adam and Eve repented to Allah and were forgiven. In the Qur’ān it is mentioned that

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ
(البقرة ٢ : ٣٧)

*“Thereupon Adam received words [of guidance]
from his Sustainer, and He accepted his repentance:
for, verily, He alone is the Acceptor of
repentance, the Dispenser of grace”*
(Qur’ān 2: 37, Asad).

Therefore, there is no inherited sin in Islam. It is unlike a disease which can be inherited. Inherited disease is not punishment at all, but a test. Whoever suffers from it is urged to find a cure for it and be patient with it; Allah will reward him for his patience. Other tests with which many people do not pass are wealth, high position, and comfortable life. With regard to “the garden” commentators have different opinions: Paradise, a special garden in the heavenly region, or an earthly abode with perfect ease and happiness. It is also worthy to mention here that Allah refers to Himself in this verse as “We” (*nahnu*), which is a majestic way of referring to Himself.

b. Al-Shirk (الشرك), polytheism, idolatry), as in the verse:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ
(الأنعام ٦ : ٨٢)

*“Those who believe and obscure not their belief
by wrongdoing (bizulm, namely, by polytheism)
theirs is safety; and they are rightly guided.”*
(Qur’ān 6: 82).

When the above verse was revealed the Prophet's companions felt uneasy because they understood “*zulm*” as its basic meaning “wrong-doing”; therefore, they asked the Prophet: “Which of us has never obscured his belief by wrongdoing?” The Prophet said: “It does not mean what you mean. Have you ever heard of what the pious servant (meaning Luqmān) said:

يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ (لقمان ٣١ : ١٣)

‘O my dear son! Ascribe no partners unto Allah Lo! to ascribe partners (unto Him) is a tremendous wrong (lazulmun ‘azīm)’.

(Qur’ān 31: 13).

The wrong-doing meant in this verse is polytheism.

c. *Al-Nuqṣān* or *al-naqṣ* (النُّقْصَانُ أَوْ النُّقْصُ, decrease, blemish, imperfection). The expression ظَلَمْتُكَ حَقَّكَ *zalamtuka ḥaqqak* (lit. “I decrease your right”) means “I gave you less than what you deserve”. The example from the Qur’ān is as follows:

كُلْنَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ آتَتْ أُكُلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمِ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا (الكهف ١٨ : ٣٣)

“Each of the gardens gave its fruit and withheld naught thereof [wa lam tazlim minhu shay’an namely, without any shortage].”

(Qur’ān 18: 33).

This verse and the verses 32-44 deal with the parable of two men each of whom were given as a test a vineyard surrounded by date-palms. But one of them did not thank Allah; instead, he denied the Hereafter and thought that his garden would never

perish. When Allah ruined his garden he repented and realized that he was mistaken. This is a moral lesson for all of us.

d. Al-Jahd (الجُهد, denial, disbelief), as in the verses:

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ
فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ. وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ
خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَظْلِمُونَ
(الأعراف ٧ : ٨-٩)

*“And truth will be weighing on that Day:
and those whose weight (of good deeds) is heavy in
the balance - it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state;
whereas those whose weight is light in the balance – it is they
who will have squandered their own selves by their
willful rejection of Our messages.”*
(Qur’ān 7: 8-9, Asad's translation)

This verse portrays what will happen in the Hereafter. Those whose weight is light due to lack of good deeds and rejecting Allah's messages will suffer. In other verses Allah says:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ ، فَهُوَ فِي عَيْشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ ، وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ
مَوَازِينُهُ ، فَأُمُّهُ هَاوِيَةٌ ، وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا هِيَ ، نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌ.
(القارعة ١٠١ : ٦-١١)

*“..he whose weight (of good deeds)
is heavy in the balance shall find himself in
a happy state of life; whereas he whose weight is light
in the balance shall be engulfed by an abyss. And what
could make thee conceive what that (abyss)
will be? A fire hotly burning!”*
(Qur’ān 101: 6-11).

e. *Al-Sariqah* (السَّرِقَةُ, stealing), as in the verse:

قَالُوا جَزَاؤُهُ مَنْ وُجِدَ فِي رَحْلِهِ فَهُوَ جَزَاؤُهُ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ.

(يوسف ١٢ : ٧٥)

"(The brothers replied): 'Its requital? He in whose camel-train (the cup) is found - he shall be (enslaved as) a requital thereof! Thus do we (ourselves) requite the doers of (such) wrong.'"
(Qur'ān 12: 75, Asad's translation).

Prophet Yusuf, after telling secretly his identity to his younger brother Benjamin, wanted him to stay. He put a cup in Benjamin's camel-pack and told one of his men to call out that the caravan consisting of his brothers, who came to ask help from him, whom they did not recognise, had stolen the cup. In this verse the "wrong-doing" of Benjamin is specified, namely, his "stealing" of the cup which had been planned, and as "punishment" for the "crime" he did not commit, he had to stay with his brother Prophet Joseph in Egypt. In this way Prophet Joseph kept his younger brother with him while his other brothers did not know his identity. (For the whole story, read Q. 12, Surah Yusuf).

6

Commentary of the Qur'ān

Allah said in the Qur'ān:

ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ يُاذِنُ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ
(فاطر ٣٥ : ٣٢)

“And so, We have bestowed this divine writ as a heritage unto such of Our servants as We chose: and among them some who sin against themselves; and some who keep half-way (between right and wrong); and some who, by God's leave, are foremost in deeds of goodness: (and) this, indeed, is a merit most high!”
(Qur'ān 35: 32, Asad's translation).

This verse indicates that Allah gave the Qur'ān as an inheritance to whom He chose among His servants. Who are these chosen people? According to Ibn 'Abbās, they are the community of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), the Muslims. They are chosen for following the true religion, namely, Islam (lit., surrendering oneself to God), the religion propagated by prophets before Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).

Then Allah divides these chosen people into three categories: (a) those who sin against themselves (ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ, *zālim linafsih*, lit., “a person who wrongs himself”), and this is the lowest level; (b) those who keep half-way (مُقْتَصِدٌ, *muqtaṣid*, lit.,

“a person who adopts a middle-course in something”, or “a person who assumes a mediatory position”), this is the middle level; and (c) those who are foremost in deeds of goodness (بِالْخَيْرَاتِ سَابِقًا, *sābiq bi'l-khayrāt*), and this is the highest level.

In general, the first level belong to those who perform duties enjoined on them, but still commit some prohibited things; the second, those who confine themselves to performing what Allah enjoins them to do and avoid what He prohibits; in other words, they obey Allah in its simplest way; and the third, are those who obey Allah not only in what He orders and prohibits, but also in doing what He recommends and avoiding what He considers reprehensible; this is the highest level for Muslims.

Various interpretations of these three levels of Muslims are given by Muslim scholars, some are respectively as follows:

- (1) The ignorant—the students—the scholars (Sahl ibn ‘Abd Allāh’s interpretation);
- (2) Those who remember Allah with their tongue—with their heart—those who never forget Him (Dhū 'l-Nūn’s interpretation);
- (3) Those who love Allah for the sake of this world—for the sake of the Hereafter—those who worship Him for the sake of the Truth (Ibn ‘Aṭā’s interpretation);
- (4) Those who worship Allah because they fear Hell—because they wish Paradise—they worship Him for His own sake;
- (5) Those who are impatient with misfortune (affliction)—those who are patient with it—those who are happy with it;
- (6) Those who have received but refuse to give—who have received and give—who are deprived of gifts but are thankful;

- (7) Those who worship Allah with negligence and habit—with fear and desire—with reverence;
- (8) Those who are satisfied with their wealth—with themselves —with their Lord;
- (9) Those who read the Qur’ān without practising its contents —those who read and practice its contents—those who read, practice and understand its contents;
- (10) Those who enter the mosque after the *iqāmah* (the call to stand in prayer) has been called—those who come after the *ādhān* (the call to prayer) has been called—those who enter the mosque before the *ādhān* is called;
- (11) Those who miss the prayer in time—those who miss the congregational prayer—those who miss neither the prayer in time nor the congregational prayer;
- (12) Those who love themselves—love their religion—love their Lord.

Then Allah ends the verse with “this, indeed, is a merit most high!”. There are three interpretations of this highest merit: (a) it is the merit of giving the Qur’ān to the Muslims as inheritance; (b) it is the merit of choosing the Muslims despite their shortcomings; and (c) it is the merit of promising the Muslims Paradise, as the verse continues with:

جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا (فاطر ٣٥ : ٣٣)

“(Hence,) gardens of perpetual bliss will they enter,…”

(Qur’ān 35: 33, Asad's translation).

The view that all Muslims will finally go to Paradise—after suffering punishment for their sins if they are not lucky enough

–is also mentioned in the traditions of the Prophet, some are as follows:

- (1) Usāmah ibn Zayd reported that the Messenger of Allah read the above verse and then said: “They all will be in Paradise.”
- (2) ‘Umar read the above verse, and then said that the Prophet said: “The foremost among us will be foremost, these who are in the middle course will be safe, and those who wrong themselves will be forgiven.”
- (3) Abū Thābit said that a man entered the mosque and said: “Oh, Allah, bless my absence from my homeland, keep someone company to my loneliness, and make it easy for me to have good company. Abū al-Dardā' who heard this supplication said to him: “If you are sincere of what you are asking, then I would be luckier than you. I hear the Prophet reciting 'And so, We have bestowed this divine writ as a heritage ...' and said: 'Then the foremost (*sābiq bi'l-khayrāt*) will be brought forward and will enter Paradise without *ḥisāb* (reckoning); then the *muqtaṣid* will be brought forward with easy reckoning; and then these who wrong themselves will be brought forward, rebuked and punished, then they will enter Paradise; they are those who will say:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزْنَ إِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ

(فاطر ٣٥ : ٣٤)

“All praise is due to Allah, who has caused all sorrow to leave us: for, verily, our Sustainer is indeed much-forgiving, ever-responsive to gratitude.”

(Qur’ān 35: 34, Asad's translation).

We have seen that the Muslims are not all on the same level in manifesting their faith. It is, then, wrong to label our Muslim brothers and sisters who are still on the lowest level with

infidelity. It is because, in spite of their wrong doings, they still belong to the category of people who are chosen by Allah to inherit the last Scripture, the Qur'ān. Moreover, they might one day, through Allah's guidance, rise to a high level, higher than that we think we belong to. What we need is to help such people to improve themselves and raise them from the bottom of the lowest level to the top of it, then to the higher level until they reach the highest level. There is always room for us to become better Muslims and this is a continuous struggle throughout our lives.

Source:

Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 22 vols. (N.p.: N.p., 1384/1964), vol. 14, pp. 346-351.

7

Commentary of the Qur'ān

Allah says in the Qur'ān:

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ
وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا. ذَلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللَّهِ
وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ عَلِيمًا. (النساء ٤ : ٦٩-٧٠)

“All who obey God and the Apostle are in the company of those whom is the grace of God, - of the prophets (who teach), the sincere (lovers of truth), the witnesses (who testify), and the righteous (who do good); Ah! What a beautiful fellowship! Such is the bounty from God: and sufficient is it that God knoweth all.”

(Qur'ān 4:69-70).

The meaning of the above verses is as follows: Whoever obeys Allah by observing what He enjoins and avoiding what He prohibits, and obeys His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), by following his teachings and accepting his rulings willingly, he will be in Paradise with those who have been given grace by Allah: prophets, those who are sincere (*al-ṣiddīqīn*) such as Abū Bakr, martyrs (*al-shuhadā'*), such as 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī, and the righteous (*al-ṣāliḥīn*), such as the rest of the Prophet's companions. The sincere (*al-ṣiddīqīn*) are those who sincerely and without any doubt believe in the orders of Allah and the Prophet; they belong to the second rank after the

rank of prophets; the martyrs (*shuhadā'*), who belong to the third rank, are those who were killed in defending Islam; the righteous who belong to the fourth rank, are those who keep doing good.

The above verses were revealed to the Prophet as an answer to the questions of his companions, among which are as follows:

- a. Thawbān, a *mawlā* (مَوْلَى , client, freed slave) of the Prophet who loved him so much that he could not stand to be absent from him, came to him one day. The Prophet asked him: “Thawbān, what makes your health deteriorate?” “O, Messenger of Allah, it is not illness or pain, but if I do not see you I long for you until I see you. Then I remember the Hereafter. I am afraid I will not be able to see you there, for if I die and go to Paradise, you will be with prophets on a higher level than mine; if I do not go to Paradise, then I shall never see you again.” The Prophet did not give him an answer until Gabriel came to him with the above verses; (see al-Qurṭubī, al-Ṭabarī, and Ibn Kathīr).
- b. Some of the companions of the Prophet, such as ‘Abd Allāh ibn Zayd ibn ‘Abd Rabbih complained to him that they might not be able to see him in the Hereafter as they saw him in this world, for he would be placed in a high level with the other prophets.
- c. Rabī‘ah ibn Ka‘b al-Aslamī said: “I stayed the night with the Prophet serving him; then he said: 'Ask me.' I told him: 'O Messenger of Allah, I ask you that I may be able to accompany you in Paradise.' 'Or other than this?,' asked the Prophet. I said, 'That is it.' He said, 'Then preoccupy yourself with frequent prostrations.'”

d. ‘Amr ibn Murrah al-Jahmī said that a man came to the Prophet, saying, “I have witnessed that there is no god but Allah and you are the Messenger of Allah, have established the five-daily prayers, have paid the *zakāt*, and fasted in the month of Ramadan.” The Prophet said to him: “Whoever dies in performing all these, he will be with prophets, the *ṣiddīqīn*, and the *shuhadā’* in the Hereafter like this—and he joined his two fingers—as long as he does not disobey his parents.” (Reported by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal).

Being with or in the company of prophets in the Hereafter does not mean that one will be on the same level with them. It means that people of different levels in Paradise can see and accompany each other. When the Prophet said: “The sincere and honest trader will be with the prophets, *ṣiddīqīn* and *shuhadā’* in the Hereafter” (Reported by al-Tirmidhī) it does not mean that he will be elevated to the rank of the prophets, *ṣiddīqīn* and *shuhadā’*, but to indicate that he will be in their company in Paradise.

The fact that the term *al-ṣiddīqīn* was mentioned directly after *al-nabiyyīn* (prophets) in the above verse indicates its second rank after that of prophets. Since Abū Bakr had been given the epithet “*al-Ṣiddīq*” (the truthful) the Muslims considered him the most appropriate companion of the Prophet to occupy the position of caliph and therefore appointed him.

The above verse also indicates that the above-mentioned ranks and privilege companionship are the bounty of Allah, and nobody should boast of having it through their efforts alone, but only with Allah's bounty.

A true and sincere Muslim should love Prophet Muhammad more than any other human being. The Prophet said: “By Allah

in Whose Hand is my life, a servant is not truly and firmly a believer until he loves me more than himself, his parents, his wife, his son and the whole people.” When ‘Umar said to the Prophet one day: “I love you more than anybody except myself,” the Prophet corrected him, saying, “No, ‘Umar, even yourself.” ‘Umar realizing the mistake, corrected himself and said, “even myself.”

The name of Prophet Muhammad (*s.a.w.*) is probably the name most often mentioned by human beings. We Muslims who constitute about one billion (one-fifth) of the world population have to mention his name in our five daily prayers, testifying that he is the messenger of Allah, and asking Allah's blessing on him as an indication of love, respect and gratitude. The question whether we can see him in the Hereafter is answered by the above verses.

Bibliography:

1. Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān*, vol. 5, pp. 271-272.
2. Al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma‘ al-Bayān*, vol. 2, pp. 71-72.
3. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, vol. 1, pp. 534-536.

8

Metaphorical Expression in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth

Mystic meaning, not intelligible at first sight, is not inconsistent with the character of the Qur'ān as a “plain book”. Everyone can get out of the Qur'ān plain guidance for his life according to his capacity for spiritual understanding. As his capacity grows so will his understanding grow. Voluminous books had been written by the Islamic scholars (eg. Al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār*) explaining a single verse from the Qur'ān when Allah improved their understanding of the Qur'ān. It is necessary that we should improve our understanding so that we can get more and more benefit from the Qur'ān. Metaphorical expressions and figure of speech are used extensively in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. Failing to understand them properly may lead to wrong conclusions. This article explains some of the simple examples.

Allah says in the Qur'ān:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ
(البقرة ٢: ١٨٧)

“... and eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct to you from the black thread of the dawn”.

(Qur'ān 2: 187, Pickthall).

This verse indicates that Muslims are allowed to eat, drink and engage in sexual activity in the nights of Ramadan until

dawn. Although the verbs are in the form of commandments to eat and drink, the meaning is “you are allowed to eat and drink.”

This verse was revealed to extend the period of permission to eat and drink till dawn after it had been limited to night sleep. Once they woke up at night they should start fasting till dawn. In other words there would not be any *suḥūr* (pre-dawn meal) for those who had slept at night. This was harder for those who fell asleep before having their *iftār* (breaking the fast at sunset), for they would have to continue fasting till the sunset of the next day. This happened to Qays ibn Ṣirmah of the *anṣār* (lit., "the helpers", *i.e.*, the natives of Madinah who gave the Prophet and the Muslim emigrants accommodation and provision). While waiting for the meal prepared by his wife to break his fasting, he fell asleep. The next day he became very tired and weak. Another companion, Muṭ‘im ibn Jubayr, fell asleep before having his *iftār*. When he woke up he said: "I am not allowed to eat tonight." The next day when he joined the Muslims in digging the trench at the outskirts of Madinah to protect the city from the invasion of the Meccans he fell down unconscious. (al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma‘ al-Bayān*, vol. 1, p. 280). Then the above verse was revealed to give the Muslims more time for eating and drinking at night.

When the above verse was revealed, many of the Prophet's companions took the literal meaning of the "white and black threads". They tied a black and a white thread around their legs, and started fasting when the white thread became distinct from the black one.

Another companion called ‘Adī ibn Ḥātim put a white and a black thread under his pillow, then asked the Prophet the meaning of the two threads. The Prophet answered: "It was the

blackness of the night and the whiteness of the day." (Reported by Bukhārī). The dawn was called by the Arabs "a thread" because white light extending like a thread appears at dawn. An unidentified poet said:

الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ صَوَاءُ الصُّبْحِ مُنْفَلِقٌ - وَالْخَيْطُ الْأَسْوَدُ جُنْحُ اللَّيْلِ مَكْتُومٌ

*"The white thread is the light of the morning
that breaks the day, and the black thread is the
hidden dark of the night."*

(al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, vol. 2, p. 320).

In another verse Allah says:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا
وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا
(الأحزاب ٣٣: ٧٢)

*"We offered the trust unto the heavens
and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from
bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed
it. Lo! he hath proved a tyrant and a fool."*

(Qur'ān 33: 72, Pickthall).

The trust meant in this verse is the religious injunctions.

There is another metaphor in this verse. Allah means that the inanimate beings, however big they are, are unable to carry out this burden of trust. It is like saying "I offered the burden to the camel, but it declined," when we mean that the burden is too heavy for the camel to carry. (al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, vol. 14, p. 256).

In a *ḥadīth qudsī*, Allah said: "If my servant comes close to Me one *shibr* (the span of one hand), I shall come close to him one *dhirā'* (the span of one arm); if he comes close to Me one *dhirā'*, I shall come close to him one *bā'* (the span of the outspread arms); if he comes to Me walking, I shall walk quickly to him." (Reported by Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal).

This *ḥadīth* cannot be interpreted literally, as Allah is transcendental and beyond space and time. The expression is a metaphor for Allah's quick response to our approach to Him: the closer and the faster we come to Him the closer and the faster He comes to us. But how do we come close to Him? By obeying Him, not only in performing His injunctions and avoiding His prohibitions, but also in performing recommended acts (*sunnah*) and avoiding reprehensible ones (*makrūh*) for His sake.

When the Prophet knew that his death was approaching, he told his wives: "The person who has the longest hand among you will be the first one who would follow me (to death)." (Reported by Muslim). At first, this statement was literally understood by them. They measured their arms, whereas the Prophet meant the most generous among them. It was Zaynab bint Jaḥsh who was the most generous among them; she liked to give charity to the needy.

Speaking about the excellence of the area called Rawḍah in the Prophet's mosque in Madinah, the Prophet said: "Between my house (in another version: "Between my grave") and my pulpit is a *rawḍah* (a garden) among the gardens of Paradise." (Reported by Bukhārī, Muslim, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and others). This *ḥadīth* indicates that this area, known as "*rawḍah*", is a

good place to be frequented by Muslims with their prayers and supplications.

This Rawḍah is not the only “garden among the gardens of Paradise”. In another *ḥadīth* the Prophet includes the grave. He said: “ Verily, the grave is a garden among the gardens of Paradise.” (Reported by al-Tirmidhī). Visiting the graves to remind us of death and to make us more conscious of our duty in life to worship God will lead us to Paradise. Or, it may mean that for a good Muslim a grave is a good resting place like a garden of Paradise, since the grave of a bad person, according to another *ḥadīth*, is a pit among the pits of Hell.

Sometimes people rush to reject a *ḥadīth* because they take it literally. A man bought a collection of *ḥadīths* called *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. When he read that the Nile and the Euphrates are among the rivers of Paradise, he rejected the whole contents of the book. He should have read the commentary of this *ḥadīth* before rejecting it outright. It is worthy to note that even Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (d. 456/1064) who advocated literal meanings of the divine texts did not take this *ḥadīth* literally. He said that because of the blessing of these rivers they are included as the rivers of Paradise. In the similar expression, the "Rawḍah" in the Prophet's Mosque is called a garden among the gardens of Paradise. The metaphor in these *ḥadīths* is like saying of a good day: "This is one of the days of Paradise" and of the sheep, "It is one of the animals of Paradise". However, nobody misunderstands and hold to the literal meaning of the following *ḥadīths* since the metaphors in them are easily understood. These *ḥadīths* are as follows: "Paradise lies under the feet of mothers." and "Paradise is under the shadow of the sword." Such *ḥadīths* according to the literalist Ibn Ḥazm, will be taken literally only by ignorant people.

In conclusion, metaphorical expressions and figures of speech are used extensively in the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*. Failing to understand them may lead one to misunderstand and reject them.

9

Commentary of the Qur'ān

Allah says in the Holy Qur'ān:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ
الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا
وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ .

(النور: ٢٤ : ٥٥)

"God has promised those of you who have attained faith and do righteous deeds that, of a certainty, He will cause them to accede to power on earth, even as He caused (some of) who lived before them to accede to it; and that, of a certainty, He will firmly establish for them the religion which He has been pleased to bestow on them; and that, of a certainty, He will cause their erstwhile state of fear to be replaced by a sense of security –(seeing that) they worship Me (alone), not ascribing divine powers to naught beside Me. But all who, after (having understood) this, choose to deny the truth - it is they, they who are truly iniquitous"

(Qur'ān 24: 55, Asad's translation)

In this verse Allah promises that He will cause strong believers who do righteous deeds “to be successors on earth”, namely, to gain power and security, and in turn, to satisfy their worldly needs. This promise is an allusion to His natural law of

rising and falling nations depending on their moral qualities, such as the Children of Israel under the rule of their Prophets-kings David (Da'ūd) and Solomon (Sulaymān). There is also a promise that the religion of Islam will be established and fear among its followers will be exchanged for security.

The above verse was revealed when the Muslims were still weak and under constant threat from their enemies, the Meccan idolaters. They suffered from fear and threat, and became exhausted in defending themselves for ten years in Mecca, so that some of them complained to the Prophet asking him when this suffering would end. Then the above verse was revealed. This prophecy was fulfilled when the Prophet con- quered Mecca and became undisputedly the *de facto* ruler of the Arabian peninsula, and Islam became the predominant religion among the people.

The spread of Islam was so fast that about eighty years after the death of the Prophet, the Muslims reached the Indian peninsula in 711 C.E. Twenty-seven years later the Muslims reached Canton in China in 738 C.E. To the West, at almost the same time Islam reached Spain when the Muslims conquered Seville in 716 C.E. The conquest continued for seven centuries—namely, 781 years—until the Muslims were defeated in 1492 C.E.

With the Muslims' conquest of Spain a brilliant Arabic-speaking society flourished which brought prosperity to various levels of Spanish life. While Europe was still in the Dark Ages, Cordova's citizens were enjoying illuminated streets and its half million citizens worshipped in three thousand mosques. Cordova, Granada and Seville became the centres of institutions of higher learning where philosophy, law, literature, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, history and geography were taught. The Christians imitated the Muslims in their tradition and enjoyed the poems and prose words of the Arabs. They studied the works of Muslim theologians and philosophers, with

the intention not to refute them, but to acquire a correct and elegant Arabic style. They also read the Qurʾān to appreciate its beautiful style. Among famous scholars from this area were Ibn Rushd (Averrus), Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn ‘Arabī and the Qurʾānic commentator Muḥammad al-Qurṭubī (“the native of Cordova”).

After the eleventh century Muslim power declined. Civil strife and civil wars occurred among themselves. Sometimes they asked the help of Christians to fight their own Muslim brothers. Finally, they themselves were defeated and ousted from Spain in 1492 C.E. They were mercilessly killed, forced to abandon their religion and to leave the country. Books in Arabic were burned, and the Arabic language was considered to be the language of innovators and of low class people, after it had been the language of learning, art and literature. However, thousands of Arabic words passed into their daily speech. The word *hasta* and *usted*, for example, came from the Arabic word *ḥattā* (حَتَّى, until) and *ustādh* (أُسْتَاذ, mister, teacher). The exclamation *olé* was originally from God's name in Arabic, *Allāh*. The name of the longest river in Spain, *Guadalquivir*, came from the Arabic name, *al-Wādī 'l-Kabīr* (الْوَادِي الْكَبِيرِ, the Great Valley). The other river, *Guadalijara* (read as *Guadalahara*), came from *Wādī 'l-Hijārah* (وَادِي الْحِجَارَةِ, the Valley of Stones). Professor José Pita-Andrade of the University of Granada once said to Thomas J. Abercrombie, an American Muslim journalist and reporter of National Geographic Magazine, “You will find more than four thousand Arabic words still common in Spanish.”

The above promise of Allah remains valid till the Doomsday. The rise and the fall of a nation is based on its people's faith, good deeds (in all of its manifestations) and moral behaviour. The glory of Islam will return if its followers stick to their faith and work hard to achieve this noble end.

10

Tawakkul (التَّوَكُّلُ)

The word *tawakkul* is an Arabic term derived from *wakkala* which is the second and the transitive form of the verb *wakala*. The term *wakala* means “to be weak”. The term *wakkala* means “to show weakness and to rely on others”, and the act of showing one’s weakness and reliance on others is the literal meaning of the term *tawakkul*. The person who shows his meekness and relies on others is called *mutawakkil*, whereas the person whom one relies on is called *wakīl*, also translated as “representative”. He is then the representative of a living person. If he is a representative of a deceased person, he is called “*wāsī*”, not “*wakīl*”¹

Apart from the common meaning of *wakīl* as "representative", this term has many meanings in the Qur’ān. It means “guardian, protector”, as in

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ وَكِيلًا .

(الإِسْرَاءُ ١٧ : ٦٥)

“As to My (faithful) servants, thou [i.e., Iblīs] shalt certainly have no power over them, and sufficient is thy Lord as a Guardian.”

(Qur’ān 17: 65),

“lord” as in

وَأَتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَلَّا يَتَّخِذُوا مِن دُونِي وَكِيلًا .

(الإِسْرَاءُ ١٧ : ٢)

“And We gave Moses the Book and We made it a guidance for the Children of Israel, (saying), ‘Take none other than Me as (your) Lord.’”

“sovereign”, as in

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكُوا وَمَا جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ.

(الأنعام ٦ : ١٠٧)

“Had Allah willed, they would not have taken Others besides Him in worship. And We have not made you a watcher over them nor are you sovereign over them.”

(Qur’ān 6: 107),

and “a witness”, as in

فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضٌ مَّا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ أَنْ يَقُولُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ. (هود ١١ : ١٢)

“Perchance the disbelievers vainly hope that thou mayest be persuaded to abandon part of that which has been revealed to thee; and thy bosom may become straitened thereby, because they say, ‘Wherefore has not a treasure been sent down to him or an angel come with him?’ Verily, thou art only a Warner, and Allah is a witness over all things.”

(Qur’ān 11: 12).

The term *tawakkul* and its derivatives are mentioned in the Qur’ān several times to indicate their significance. Allah advised the Prophet to do the *tawakkul*, as an example for the Muslims (e.g., Q. 3: 59, 4: 61, 25: 58 and 26: 217). Prophet Moses (a.s.) also advised his followers to do the *tawakkul*. Allah says,

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ يَا قَوْمِ إِن كُنتُمْ آمَنتُمْ بِاللَّهِ فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوا إِن كُنتُمْ مُسْلِمِينَ

(يونس : ١٠ : ٨٤)

“And Moses said: O my people! If ye have believed in Allah then trust in Him, if ye have indeed surrendered (unto Him).

(Qurʿān 10: 84, Pickthall)

Tawakkul means “confidence in Allah and belief with certainty in His decree, and following the paths of His Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) in seeking the indispensable means for obtaining things needed, such as food, water, protection against the enemy, preparing arms against them, and using the means according to Allah's usual laws (of nature).”² *Tawakkul*, then is based on confidence in Allah and effort. The Prophet was reported to have said to a bedouin who let his camel go, for having confidence in Allah, “Tie your camel, then have confidence in Allah” (Reported by al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah).

It was reported that the pious man Shafīq al-Balkhī went for a business journey after saying “good-bye” to the *ṣūfī* scholar Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, but suddenly returned. Ibrāhīm who saw him in the mosque, asked him:

“What makes you return so early?” He answered:

“I saw something strange in my journey. While I was taking a rest in a ruined building, I saw a crippled blind bird. I wondered how such a bird could survive without seeing and moving. Suddenly, another bird appeared and fed the crippled bird. Then I said to myself, ‘Allah Who is able to give provision to this crippled bird is also able to give provision to me.’ So, here I come back.” Ibrāhīm said:

“It is strange that you are happy to be like the crippled bird; why don't you like to become like the other bird, as the hand

that gives is better than the hand that receives?” On hearing this, Shafīq stood up, approached Ibrāhīm and kissed his hand, saying:

“You are our teacher, O Abū Ishāq,” and returned to his business.

Confidence in Allah without seeking one's provision is also denounced by Ahmad ibn Hanbal. He was asked:

“What do you say about a person who stays in his house or in the mosque and says that he will not do anything until his provision comes to him?” He answered:

“This man is ignorant. Has not he ever heard the Prophet's saying, ‘My provision is made under the shadow of my spear’?”

Effort is sometimes misunderstood as lack of confidence in Allah. When ‘Umar suggested to his companions to leave an area infected with plague, one of them asked him:

“Do you mean to run away from Allah's decree?” He answered:

“I mean running away from one of His decrees to another.”

The *ṣūfī* al-Sha‘rānī was asked whether the *‘ubbād* (عُبَاد, worshippers) are better or the *ṣunnā‘* (صُنَاع, workers, craftsmen) he said that the *ṣunnā‘* is better, for the benefit of the *‘ubbād* is exclusively for themselves, whereas the benefit of the *ṣunnā‘* is extended to people in general. He also said: “How beautiful it is when the tailor uses his needle than his misbah (beads), and that the carpenter works with his saw than his beads.”

Muslims who really practice *tawakkul* are hard workers. They have full confidence in Allah and firmly believe in Allah's decree on one hand, and follow the examples of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) in working hard on the other. After fulfilling

these conditions, they will be content with whatever decree is given by Allah and whatever is the outcome of their effort; there is no complaint, no ill feeling, and no frustration from them, for they have done their best.

Reference:

- (1) Ibn al-Jawzī, *Nuzhat al-A'yun*, p. 607.
- (2) Al-Qurtūbī, *al-Jāmi'*, vol.4, p. 189.

11

Three Stages of Sending down the Qur'ān

The whole Qur'ān was sent down in three stages:

1. *Al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz* (اللَّوْحُ الْمَحْفُوظُ, the Preserved or Well-guarded Tablet),
2. *Bayt al-'Izzah* (بَيْتُ الْعِزَّةِ, the House of Glory) in the lowest heaven (the heaven of the world),
3. Finally, to the heart of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).

How and why was the Qur'ān revealed in these three stages is in the knowledge of Allah. However, we can see that this is an indication of the high position of the Qur'ān that this event was itself a proclamation to the entire universe of Allah's intention to guide human kind with this glorious Qur'ān.

a. Sending down the Qur'ān to *al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*

How and when the Qur'ān was sent down to the Preserved Tablet are beyond human comprehension. Allah says in the Qur'ān:

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَجِيدٌ . فِي لَوْحٍ مَحْفُوظٍ (البروج ٨٥ : ٢١-٢٢)

“Nay, but this (divine writ which they reject) is a discourse sublime, upon an imperishable tablet (inscribed).”

(Qur'ān 85: 21-22, Asad's translation).

The expression “an imperishable tablet” is Asad's translation of *lawḥ mahfūz*, literally means "a well-guarded tablet" This Well-Guarded or Preserved Tablet is also called *Umm al-Kitāb*

(lit., "the Mother of the Book", namely, the source of all revelation) as mentioned in the Qurʾān, as follows:

حم. وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ . إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ . وَإِنَّهُ فِي أُمِّ الْكِتَابِ لَدَيْنَا لَعَلِيَّ حَكِيمٌ
(الزخرف ٤٣ : ١-٤)

*"Ha. Mim. Consider this divine writ, clear in itself and clearly showing the truth: behold We have caused it to be a discourse in the Arabic tongue, so that you might encompass it with your reason. And, verily, (originating as it does) in the source, with us, of all revelation (fī umm al-kitāb, lit., "in the Mother of the Book), it is indeed sublime, full of wisdom."
(Qurʾān 43: 1-4, Asad).*

This tablet contains not only the Qurʾān, but also all that Allah has decreed, of things of the past, present and future. Allah says:

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا
فِي كِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ .
(الحديد ٥٧ : ٢٢)

*"No calamity can ever befall the earth, and neither your own selves (i.e., "the earth or mankind as a whole, or any of you individually": an allusion to natural as well as man-made catastrophes, and to individual suffering through illness, moral or material deprivation, etc.), unless it be (laid down) in Our decree before We bring it into being: verily, all this (i.e., God's decreeing an event and bringing it into being) is easy for God."
(Qurʾān 57: 22, Asad).*

The purpose of Allah in revealing to us His divine decree and pre-measurement is to prevent us from despair in losing and exult in obtaining good things. He does not want us to be depressed or too happy no matter whatever happens to us, because it has been decreed by Him. Whatever has happened had to happen, and therefore, could not have not happened. We should not become upset and frustrated whatever happens to us. He says:

لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا
 آتَاكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ
 (الحديد ٥٧ : ٢٣)

"(Know this) so that you may not despair over whatever [good] has escaped you not exult [unduly] over whatever [good] come to you: for God does not love any of those who, out of self-conceit, act in a boastful manner [i.e., attributing their good fortune to their own merit or "luck"]"
 (Qur'ān 57: 23, Asad).

b. Sending down the Qur'ān to *Bayt al-'Izzah* in the Lowest Heaven

There are many Qur'ānic verses referring to this occasion, among which are as follows:

حم . وَالكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ . إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ
 (الدخان ٤٤ : ١-٣)

"Hā. Mīm. Consider this divine writ, clear in itself and clearly showing the truth. Behold, from on high have We bestowed it on a blessed night."
 (Qur'ān 44: 1-3, Asad).

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ (القدر ٩٧ : ١)

*Behold, from on high have We bestowed this
(divine writ) on the Night of Destiny (Majesty)."*

(Qur'ān 97: 1, Asad)

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

(البقرة ٢ : ١٨٥)

*"It was the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'ān
was bestowed from on high as a guidance unto
man and self-evident proof of that guidance,
and as the standard by which to discern
the true from the false"*

(Qur'ān 2: 185, Asad).

Moreover, Ibn 'Abbās said that the whole Qur'ān was sent down at the Night of Destiny to the heaven of the world which is the lowest heaven, then it was sent down to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) over twenty years (Reported by al-Nasā'ī, al-Ḥākim and al-Bayhaqī). Ibn 'Abbās also said that the Qur'ān was brought to *Bayt al-'Izzah* from which Gabriel brought it down to the Prophet (reported by al-Ḥākim). When Ibn 'Aṭīyyah Ibn al-Aswad read the Qur'ānic verses, "*Behold, from on high have We bestowed this (divine writ) on the Night of Destiny (Majesty)*" and "*It was the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'ān was bestowed from on high*", he became confused, because he knew that some Qur'ānic verses were revealed in other months. He came to Ibn 'Abbās who told him that the whole Qur'ān was sent down in the month of Ramadan, then in stages (reported by Ibn Mardawayh and al-Bayhaqī). Al-Qurṭubī states that there is no disagreement among Muslim scholars that the whole Qur'ān was sent down from *al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz* to *Bayt al-'Izzah* in the Night of Destiny (see al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, vol. 2, p.

297). However, some scholars suggest that the above verses refer to the first revelation of the Qur'ān to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). Following this interpretation, Asad inserts the term "first" in the translation of the last verse above, i.e., "*(first) bestowed from on high...*", since the Qur'ān was revealed to the Prophet in stages over twenty years. Moreover, the *ḥadīths* mentioned above are the statement of Ibn 'Abbās and not directly and explicitly of the Prophet.

c. Sending down the Qur'ān to the heart of the Prophet

This is the last stage of sending down of the Qur'ān. It was revealed to the heart of the Prophet in stages, an average of five verses at a time. The archangel Gabriel (Jibrīl a.s.) brought the Qur'ānic verses to the Prophet in their exact wordings (verbatim). For example, when Allah revealed the verse:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (الإِخْلَاصُ ١١٢ : ١)

"Say: 'He is One God' " (Qur'ān 112: 1),

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ (الْكَافِرُونَ ١٠٩ : ١)

"Say: 'O you who deny the truth!'" (Qur'ān 109: 1)

and other verses starting with the word *say (qul)*, this very term was also conveyed by Gabriel to the Prophet, and by the Prophet to his companions and later to all the Muslims. Allah says in the Qur'ān:

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ . نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ .
عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ . بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ .

(الشعراء ٢٦ : ١٩٢-١٩٥)

"Now behold, this (divine writ) has indeed been bestowed from on high by the Sustainer of all the worlds: the 'Spirit of Trustworthy' (i.e., Gabriel) has alighted with it from on high upon thy heart, (O, Muhammad), so that thou mayest be among those who preach in the clear Arabic tongue."
(Qur'ān 26: 192-195).

Here, the term *al-Rūḥ al-Amīn*, the Trustworthy Spirit, is interpreted by classical commentators as Gabriel, whereas Asad prefers to translate it as "truth worthy divine inspiration", as the verse continues with "alighted from on high upon your (i.e., Muhammad's) heart."

Gabriel came down to the Prophet either in his original appearance, or as a human being seen by other people. He also came unseen by the Prophet, but the Prophet heard a sound like the ringing of a bell, which was most difficult for him. In this case, the Prophet appeared to be unconscious when he was, in fact, receiving revelation from Gabriel. When he became conscious again he recited what had been revealed to him.

This is one way of bringing revelation, namely, through Gabriel. Revelation can also come through direct contact between Allah and His servant, such as the speaking of Allah to Prophet Moses (a.s.). It could come as inspiration thrown by Allah into the heart of whom He wills and upon receiving this inspiration has no doubt of its coming from Him. It could also come as a true vision which later occurs exactly as seen in the vision.

The Holy Qur'ān was sent to man from high above in stages and revealed to the Prophet over twenty years. It was Gabriel who brought it down either in his real appearance, as a human being, or as an invisible being.

12

Eid al-Aḍḥā (عِيدُ الْأَضْحَى)

Eid (‘*Īd*) *al-Aḍḥā* is also called ‘*Īd al-Qurbān*, ‘*Īd al-Naḥr*, meaning “the Sacrifice Feast” and *al-‘Īd al-Kabīr*, “the Major Festival”.

The word *qurbān* is derived from *qurbah* (قُرْبَى, nearness). The term *qarīb* (قَرِيب, means “near” as well as “a relative”, a person who is near to us in blood relation. The word *qurbān* (قُرْبَان) becomes noun (*ism*) and verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) at the same time; the thing or the act of being near. People who are close to the king, such as his ministers and personal close friends are called his *qarābīn* (pl. of *qurbān*), his close associates (قَرَابِيْنُ الْمَلِكِ وَوَزَرَآؤُهُ وَجَلَسَاؤُهُ وَخَاصَّتُهُ). Later in religious sense the term *qurbān* means مَا يُتَقَرَّبُ بِهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى مِنْ نُسُكٍ وَصَدَقَةٍ وَعَمَلٍ صَالِحٍ ("acts by which make oneself near to Allah, such as living in piety, giving charity and doing good deeds."). It is in this sense that the Prophet Muhammad *s.a.w.* said: الصَّلَاةُ قُرْبَانٌ كُلُّ تَقِيٍّ which means “The prayer (*ṣalāh*) is the *qurbān* (act of nearness) for every *taqī* (pious person).” Then the term developed further and now becomes animals slaughtered as an act of making oneself closer to Allah.

The practice of *qurbān*, is a very old tradition. It goes back to the time of Prophet Adam (*a.s.*), when his two sons Qābīl (Cain) and Hābīl (Abel) both gave offerings. In the Qur’ān Allah said:

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا
وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ . لَئِن
بَسَطْتَ إِلَيَّ يَدِي لِتَقْتُلَنِي مَا أَنَا بِبَاسِطٍ يَدِيَ إِلَيْكَ لِأَقْتُلَنَّكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ
الْعَالَمِينَ . إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبُوءَ بِإِثْمِي وَإِثْمِكَ فَتَكُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ وَذَلِكَ
جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ . فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ الخَاسِرِينَ .
فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ غُرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُورِي سَوَاءَ أَخِيهِ قَالَ يَا وَيْلَتَا
أَعْجَزْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَذَا الْغُرَابِ فَأُوْرِي سَوَاءَ أَخِي فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ النَّادِمِينَ
(المائدة ٥ : ٢٧-٣١)

*“And convey unto them, setting forth
the truth, the story of the two sons of Adam – how
each offered a sacrifice, and it was accepted from one of
them whereas it was not accepted from the other. (And Cain)
said: 'I will surely slay thee!' (Abel) replied: 'Behold, God accepts
only from those who are conscious of Him. Even if thou lay thy
hand on me to slay me, I shall not lay my hand on thee to slay
thee: behold, I fear God, the Sustainer of all the worlds. I am
willing, indeed, for thee to bear (the burden of) all the sins ever
done by me as well as of the sin done by thee: (but) then thou
wouldst be destined for the fire, since that is the requital of evil-
doers!' But the other's passion drove him to slaying his brother;
and he slew him: and thus he became one of the lost. There-
upon God sent forth a raven which scratched the earth, to
show him how he might conceal the nakedness of his
brother's body. (And Cain) cried out: 'Oh, woe is me!
Am I then too weak to do what this raven did, and to
conceal the nakedness of my brother's body?'-
and was thereupon smitten with remorse.”*
(Qur'ān: 5: 27-31, Asad's translation).

In the Genesis: 4 it is said that Cain, being a farmer, "brought some of his harvest and gave it as an offering to the Lord." Abel, a shepherd, "brought the first lamb born to one of his sheep, killed it, and gave the best part of it as an offering." Abel's sacrifice was accepted while Cain's sacrifice was rejected.

How do we know that a sacrifice is accepted or rejected? After giving the sacrifice he prostrates praying to Allah that his sacrifice or offering will be accepted. If it is accepted, fire will come from the sky and burn it. If no fire, it means his offering is not accepted. As Qābīl's offering was not accepted by Allah, he became jealous and furious, and therefore, killed his brother Hābīl, who was the first man killed.

It is said that in the past when a prophet wanted to sacrifice, he slaughtered an animal, such as a sheep, a cow or a camel, and then prayed to Allah. White light, smokeless and roaring fire would come from the sky and burned the sacrifice indicating that his offering was accepted. So, it was like lightning, burning but smokeless. To some prophets this was evidence of their prophethood.

This practice was later abrogated and replaced with other miracles. Time, condition and the people changed. The evidence of prophethood also changed to suit the condition of people. Prophet ʿĪsā (Jesus) (*a.s.*) did not give sacrifice any longer, but healed the sick and revived the dead. This was one of the reasons the Jews rejected Prophet ʿĪsā (Jesus) (*a.s.*). He did not give an offering which would be consumed by smokeless fire from heaven as a sign of his prophethood.

This is also the argument of the Jews of Madinah in rejecting Prophet Muhammad (*s.a.w.*) as a messenger of Allah. He did not make a sacrifice the way they expected him to do. Allah says about them as follows:

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَهِدَ إِلَيْنَا إِلَّا نُؤْمِنَ لِرَسُولٍ
حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِينَا بَقُرْبَانٍ تَأْكُلُهُ النَّارُ قُلْ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّن قَبْلِي بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ
وَبِالذِّبِي قُلْتُمْ فَلِمَ قَتَلْتُمُوهُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ. فَإِن كَذَّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ رَسُولٌ
مِّن قَبْلِكَ جَاءُوا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ.
(آل عمران ٣: ١٨٣-١٨٤)

"As for those who maintain, 'Behold, God has bidden us not to believe in any apostle unless he comes unto us with burnt offerings' - say [unto them, O Prophet]: 'Even before me there came unto you apostles with all evidence of the truth, and with that whereof you speak: why, then, did you slay them, if what you say is true?'"
(Qur'ān 3: 183-184, Asad).

This is a highlight of the background of the sacrifice in general. With regard to the Feast of Sacrifice celebrating today, this feast of sacrifice is a commemoration of the sacrifice of Prophet Abraham (*a.s.*) of the ram as dispensation from Allah, to release him from sacrificing his only son Ismā'īl. This happened before his other son Ishāq (Isaac) was born. When he confirmed his obedience to Allah in carrying out His command, Gabriel came and brought a ram at the very last moment.

When Prophet Abraham (Ibrāhīm, *a.s.*) became old and still had no son, his wife Sarah permitted him to marry his servant Hajar. From Hajar, Ishmael (Ismā'īl) was born. The Old Testament said that Abraham was 86 years old at that time. (Genesis 16:16). Fourteen years later, when Abraham was 100 years old, Isaac (Ishāq) was born from Sarah. Before Ishaq was born Allah had ordered him to sacrifice his only son, namely, Ismā'īl, instead of a ram as done by prophets before. As mentioned in the Qur'ān:

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيَّهْدِينِ . رَبِّ هَبْ
 لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ . فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ . فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ
 قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَىٰ قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ
 مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ . فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ .
 وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ . قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ . إِنَّ
 هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ . وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذَبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ . وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ .
 سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ .
 (الصَّافَات ٣٧ : ٩٩-١٠٩)

"And (Abraham) said: 'Verily, I shall (leave this land and) go wherever my Sustainer will guide me!' (And he prayed:) 'O my Sustainer! Bestow upon me a gift of (a son who shall be) one of the righteous!' – whereupon We gave him the glad tidings of a boy-child gentle (like himself). And (one day,) when (the child) had become old enough to share in his (father's) endeavours, the latter said: 'O my dear son! I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice thee: consider, then, what would be thy view!' (Ishmael) answered: 'O my father! Do as thou art bidden: thou wilt find me, if God so wills, among those who are patient in adversity!' But as soon as the two had surrendered themselves to (what they thought to be) the will of God, and (Abraham) had laid him down on his face, We called out to him: 'O Abraham, thou hast already fulfilled (the purpose of) that dream-vision!' Thus, verily, do We reward the doers of good: for, behold, all this was indeed a trial, clear in itself. And We ransomed him with a tremendous sacrifice, and left him thus to be remembered among later generations: 'Peace be upon Abraham!'"

(Qur'ān, 37: 99-109, Asad's translation).

This is the Qur'ānic version. Although it is said in the Old Testament, Genesis 16: 16, that Ishmael was born when Abraham was 86 years old, and Genesis 21: 5 said that Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old, Genesis 22: 2 that God talked to Abraham: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into land of Moriah." (There is insinuation here that Abraham did not like his elder son Ishmael, as the only son he loved was Isaac).

Unlike the Qur'ānic version where Prophet Ibrāhīm told his son Ismā'īl about his vision, Genesis chapter 22 says that Abraham did not tell his son Isaac that God wanted him to be sacrificed. He kept it secret when Isaac asked: "...but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering..." (Genesis 22: 7-8). He did not ask his son's view. Isaac only knew that he was "the lamb" to be sacrificed when he was bound as mentioned in Genesis 22: 9.

As mentioned in the Qur'ān, Ismā'īl was consulted, informed, that he was to be sacrificed by the command of Allah. He told his father: "Do as you are commanded, I shall be patient." He was not bound. Both the father and the son were obeying Allah's command, a tremendous test for both. A man approaching his 100 years longed for a son, but when he was blessed with a son, the only son at that time, he had to sacrifice him. Following the example of Prophet Ibrāhīm *a.s.* we Muslims perform the pilgrimage at Makkah (Mecca), and throw pebbles at the stones symbolising Satan and sacrifice a lamb at Mina. Now the ritual is much easier. The sacrifice on ^ʿ*Īd* day is highly recommended. The Prophet was reported to have said that whoever can give a sacrifice on the *ʿĪd al-Aḏḥā* (sacrifice) day but does not want to do it, he should not come to our mosque. This statement of the Prophet was interpreted by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah as an incumbent act (*wājib*, obligatory but not with strong evidence) upon Muslims who can perform it. Other jurists, however, say that it is highly recommended.

13

Question and Answer

Question:

Are people free with their own body according to Islam? For example, free to mutilate themselves or commit suicide?

Answer:

According to Islam we do not possess our own bodies, for they belong to God, Allah. This is His law. In human law, we have a similar thing. We apply for a passport and pay for it, and get it; yet, it is written in it that it belongs to our government. We have a Medicare card. We use it when we go to see our physicians. Yet, we own only the benefit of it, whereas the card itself remains the property of Medicare as mentioned on the back of the card. Our bankcard also remains the property of our bank. We are required to take care of our passport, our Medicare and bank cards, not to lose or misuse them. There is a penalty for misusing them. Their owners could punish us if we abuse them. So it is with our body. Allah has given us penal laws for abusing bodies either of our own or of others.

The prohibition of committing suicide is mentioned in the Qur'ān, as follows:

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا . وَمَنْ يُفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ
عُدْوَانًا وَظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصَلِّيهِ نَارًا وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا.
(النساء ٤ : ٢٩-٣٠)

"... and do not destroy one another: for, behold, God is indeed a dispenser of grace unto you! And as for him who does this with malicious s intent and a will to do wrong - him shall We, in time, cause to endure[suffering through] fire: for this is, indeed, easy for God"
(Qur'ān 4: 29-30, Asad).

The verse *wa lā taqtulū anfusakum* literally means "and do not kill yourselves". This verse has many meanings: (a) people killing each other, in the sense of destroying each other, as translated by Asad above, and (b) people killing themselves, namely, committing suicide; (c). people working too hard putting themselves in danger of perishing, and (d) people having excess emotion, such as sorrow or anger which could lead them to perish.

The above verse was read to the Prophet by 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ at the battle of Dhāt al-Salāsīl. 'Amr refrained from taking a bath for fear for himself when he was in a state of major impurity (*junub*). The Prophet laugh, approved and did not say anything against 'Amr's deed (Reported by Abū Da'ūd).

Committing suicide is also mentioned in many *ḥadīths*, such as the following statement of the Prophet:

"Whoever throws himself from the mountain and kills himself he will also be thrown into Hell and remains in it forever; whoever drinks poison and kills himself, he will also drink the poison in his hand in the Hell, and will remain in it forever; and whoever kills himself with a piece of iron, the iron will remain in his hand and will thrust it to his stomach in Hell, and will remain there forever."

(Reported by Bukhārī and Muslim).

A person who commits suicide is not allowed to enter Heaven. Jundub ibn ‘Abd Allāh narrated that the Prophet said:

"There was a man among the people of the past who was wounded. He became impatient, took a knife, cut his hand and bled to death. Allah said of him, 'My servant has anticipated his death, so I shall not allow him to enter Heaven.'"

(Reported by Bukhārī and Muslim).

A similar incident occurred at the Battle of Khaybar. Abū Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet told his companions that there would be a man among them who claimed to be a Muslim (apparently a hypocrite), but will enter Hell. When the battle occurred the man seemed to have fought earnestly with the Muslims' side until he was seriously wounded. When this event was reported to the Prophet, and he kept saying that the man would be in Hell, his companions were surprised. However, news came later that the man committed suicide at night, for he could not stand the pain of his wound. On hearing this news the Prophet said the *takbīr* ("Allāhu Akbar", Allah is great) and said: "I bear witness that I am a servant of Allah and His messenger." Then he told Bilāl to announce to the people that those who commit suicide would not enter Heaven and that Allah would not strengthen this religion of Islam with godless people. (Reported by Bukhārī and Muslim). What a Muslim should do in this situation is to exercise *tawakkul*, ask Allah for forgiveness, and pray to Him for healing if it is better for him, and for death if it is better for him.

Suicide is more common among males than females, probably because males are more impatient than females. It is also more common among younger people. Recently, it has become common among teenagers. Apart from drug addiction,

among its causes according to the psychiatrists, is that these teenagers want to prove to their elders that they are in control of themselves, despite the pressures they suffer from them, especially from their parents.

14

Commentary of the Qur'ān

Allah says in the Qur'ān:

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ)
 وَالصُّحَىٰ. وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ. مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَىٰ. وَلَا آخِرَ خَيْرٍ لَّكَ مِنَ
 الْأُولَىٰ. وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَىٰ. أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَىٰ. وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا
 فَهَدَىٰ. وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ. فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ. وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ.
 وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ.
 (الضحى ٩٣: ١-١١)

(In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful).

*By the morning hours. And by the night when it is stillest,
 Thy Lord hath not forsaken thee, nor doth He hate thee, And
 verily, the latter portion will be better for thee than the
 former. And verily, thy Lord will give unto thee so that
 thou will be content. Did He not find thee an orphan
 and protect (thee)? Did He not find thee wandering
 and direct (thee)? Did He not find thee destitute and
 enrich (thee)? Therefore, the orphan oppress not.
 Therefore, the beggar drive not away. Therefore,
 of the bounty of thy Lord be thy discourse.*

(Qur'ān 93: 1-11)

This is one of the early *sūrah*s (chapters) of the Qur'ān. It was revealed in Mecca. It starts with two oaths, namely, the two contrasting things, the morning hours of the day and the night when it is calm. Allah made an oath with the starting of

the day to indicate its significance as the time where people start their daily-lives. It is also the time where Muslims are recommended to perform the *ṣalāt al-duḥā* (the morning prayer), consisting of one, two or four of two-*rak'ah* prayers before going to work. Allah made also an oath with the night when it is calm to indicate the significance of having rest to gain energy for the next day. At the last third part of the night the Muslims are also recommended to perform the *tahajjud* (night) prayer, after awakening from their night sleep. It consists of eight *rak'ah* (two four-*rak'ah* or four two-*rak'ah*) prayers, followed by a *witr* prayer.

After these introductory oaths, Allah entered into the topic, namely, that Allah had not forsaken the Prophet, nor had He hated him when revelation stopped for a period of time. This statement was made to reject the claim made by the non-believers among the Quraysh tribe at Mecca. Among them was Abū Lahab's wife who said that Muhammad's Lord had forsaken him. Here, to reject this claim, Allah made negations: He had not forsaken the Prophet and He had not been angry with Him when revelation stopped for a period of time.

The verses continue with two promises: the latter portion will be better than the former, and Allah will reward him so that he will be content. Allah promised the Prophet that despite the difficulty he had encountered in carrying the message of Islam at the beginning, the latter part of it would be much easier; he would succeed in the end. He had to be patient.

The verses continue with Allah's promise to the Prophet of abundant gifts, material as well as spiritual, so that he would be content. This was a hint that he would be rich and succeed in his mission, so that Islam would spread in the world. These two promises were consolation for the delay of revelation for a

period of time. They are also the first of the three triplets in this *sūrah*.

The following verses contain the second triplet. It contains three rhetorical questions: Did He not find thee an orphan and protect thee? Did He not find thee wandering and direct (thee)? Did He not find thee destitute and enrich thee? This triplet reminded him of his past and how he was protected, guided and enriched by Him. His father, ‘Abd Allāh, died when he was two months old in his mother's womb. He was nursed by Ḥalimah al-Sa‘diyyah (from the Banī Sa‘d tribe) until he was four years old. When he was six his mother died. He was then taken care by his grandfather ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. His grandfather died when he was eight years old. Then he was cared by his uncle Abū Ṭālib until he grew up and became a prophet.

The Prophet saw his people practising usury, worshipping idols, committing adultery, burying their infant daughters alive and waging war among themselves as well as enslaving their own fellow human beings. The young Muhammad wanted to cure these ills of his people, but he did not know how until he was guided by Allah with revelation.

The Prophet was poor in his early life until he was twenty-five when he married the rich woman Khadījah who put her wealth under his direction. He became a prophet at the age of forty. When war in self-defence became prescribed one-fifth of the booty went to the Prophet; he distributed his share to the needy in the community as well as for public welfare.

After reminding the Prophet of His bounty and care, Allah directed him in the last triplet containing three orders in the following verses: Therefore, the orphan oppress not, therefore, the beggars drive not away, and therefore, of the bounty of thy Lord be thy discourse. The Prophet had been an orphan himself.

He knew how difficult it was to be an orphan without protection. He showed his sympathy and care with the orphans. He took care of the children of Ja‘far ibn Abū Tālib. He also married the old widow Ummu Salamah to take care of her and her children. One of her children was Zaynab who became later a scholar in Islamic jurisprudence.

The term *al-sā'il* in the verse has two meanings: the person who asks for charity, and the person who asks for information or knowledge. The first meaning is the interpretation of al-Ṭabarī who said that the verse means: if a person comes to you asking for help because he is in need of material things, do not be harsh with him and turn him away. The second meaning is the interpretation of al-Rāzī who said that the verse means that if a person comes to you asking questions on matters of religion which seem to be difficult for him, give him satisfactory answers. Do not be disappointed if you find the questioner to be ignorant.

The last order is that the Prophet should talk about the bounty of Allah to him. It means that the bounty of Allah should be shared with the needy. The Prophet said: “One-fifth of the booty is my share, but I give it back to you.” He gave it to the poor, the sick, the weak, the orphans and old people in the community. When he passed away, he had only an old camel and a lance. He was far from being a collector of wealth. This *sūrah* gives us a moral lesson that we should remember and thank Allah for His bounty to us by giving charity and helping the needy.

15

The Individual and the Collective Duties in Islamic Law

Islam expects every Muslim to fulfil his obligation in performing his duties not only as an individual (personal) but also as an individual of a community. Prayer and fasting are important as individual duties: similarly attending community needs is also equally important. This article explains these duties.

Muslim jurists divided duties into two categories: the individual duty (*farḍ 'ayn*) and the collective duty (*farḍ kifāyah*). The individual duty is a duty imposed on Muslims as individuals, such as performing the five-daily obligatory prayers and fasting in the month of Ramadan. The collective duty is a duty imposed on Muslims collectively, such as performing the funeral prayer. If nobody in the Muslim community performs the funeral prayer on a dead Muslim, all the Muslims in that community become sinful. But if some of them perform it, then the rest of the community will become free from such obligation.

According to Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī of al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, the individual duty and the collective duty integrate each other in public life. This is because of interdependence of the members of the community. The administrative, cultural, health, economic and military systems in the structure of the nation are similar to the nervous, digestive, respiratory and circulatory systems in the structure of the human body.

Shaykh al-Ghazālī states further that the term "collective duty" is used only before selecting and appointing the suitable person for a particular duty. After the selection and appointment the collective duty becomes an individual duty for the appointed person. He is assigned that duty which he has to do the best he can. The five-daily prayers, for example, are an individual duty, whereas judging, teaching and engineering are collective duties, since no person can be a judge, a teacher and an engineer at the same time. When the government appoints suitable persons to these positions, they become individual duties for them similar to the five-daily prayers and fasting in the month of Ramadan. Neglect and indifference in this kind of duty is disobedience to Allah and an aggression against Islam. Any excuse by claiming that it is only a collective duty would be unacceptable, since that duty has turned into an individual one.

It happens that performing a collective duty takes more time than the individual duty. Judging a case, for example, may take much more time than that needed for praying. Let it be so, for both are *'ibādah* (worship).

A collective duty may take one's life-time to accomplish. Let it be so, since it is a way to please Allah and to protect the *ummah* (Muslim community), a way to spread justice and to preserve Islam in it. This is also applied to teaching, medical practice, engineering and other fields of work is a trust and a worker is required to do his best, as every work as a trust (*amānah*) to be conveyed and to be accounted for by every Muslim in front of his Creator.

The scholar Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Jawaynī gives preference of the collective duty to the individual duty. He says that the collective duty is more appropriate for gaining a higher position as a way to gain Allah's favour than the individual duty. This is because the individual duty is the responsibility of the

individual. He himself will bear the sin if he fails to do it. The collective duty is the responsibility of the whole community.

In some cases a collective duty automatically becomes an individual duty. For example, a person whose companion in travelling in an isolated place has as individual duty—rather than a collective one—to wash, to pray the *janāzah* (funeral) prayer on him, to shroud and to bury him.

Some people mistakenly think that the collective duty is only in worldly matters, whereas the individual duty is exclusively in the realm of religion. They neglect their duty as civil servants and employees, and concentrate on their individual duty. They forget that the security, the welfare and the prosperity of the state and the religion of Islam lie in their hands by doing their best in their works which belong to the category of the collective duties.

As good Muslims we should perform both our individual as well as collective duties the best way we can. In the meantime we make our daily activities, such as walking, eating, talking and sleeping a sort of *'ibādah*, obedience and submission to the will of our Creator Allah the Almighty. In this way we dedicate our whole lives to His will.

16

Islam and the Neighbourhood

An Arab proverb says: "Find the proper companion before travelling, and find the proper neighbour before finding the house (to live in)." This proverb indicates the importance of having a good companion in travelling and of having a good neighbour when moving into a house. The Prophet said:

“Gabriel kept advising me to be good with my neighbour, until I thought that he would make the neighbour have right in inheritance.”

(Reported by Bukhārī and Muslim).

Gabriel's advice was so strong as if we and our neighbours are like close relatives who can inherit from each other. In other words, we should treat our neighbour like a close relative (father, mother, brother, sister, son and daughter). Our neighbour is the person closest to us in distance than any of our relatives who do not live with us. Anything that happens to us will be first known to him. He is the first person who can help us instantly.

A neighbour in Islam has a special status. He has rights on us, depending on his position. A non-Muslim neighbour has a right on us as a neighbour. A Muslim neighbour has two rights on us: as a neighbour and as a Muslim. A Muslim relative and neighbour has three rights on us: as a neighbour, as a Muslim and as a relative.

A man asked the Prophet about the rights of a neighbour. The prophet said:

*“If he asks you help, help him.
If he wants to borrow something from you,
lend him. If he is dead, join his funeral procession.
If a good thing happens to him, congratulate him; if a bad
thing happens to him, comfort him. Do not make your house
higher so that it prevents him from getting wind except with
his permission. If you buy fruit, give him some of it, or put
it in the house without showing him, and do not let your
children take it out of the house to make his children
eager to have it, and do not disturb him with
the odour of your cooking unless you
give him some of it.”*

(Reported by al-Kharā’iṭī).

These are some examples only of good things we should do to our neighbour. The list can go on and on, depending on the era and the area we are living. If we live in a flat (apartment) we should not disturb our neighbour with the loud noise of our TV, radio, etc. We should not let the odour of our exotic food disturb him. If we live in a house we should not build our house so high that could prevent him from getting enough sunlight.

Mistreating a neighbour is against the teachings of Islam. The Prophet said:

*“A believer is a person whom
People feel safe; a Muslim is a person
whom people are safe from his tongue (i.e.,
bad words) and hand (i.e., bad deeds); a muhājir
(an emigrant) is a person who emigrates from
doing bad things. By Allah Who has me in His
Hand (power), a servant (of Allah) whose
neighbours are not safe from his bad
deeds will not enter Heaven.”*

(Reported by Abū Ya‘lā).

It means that in spite our good deeds and our worship we shall be punished by Him if we mistreat our neighbours.

In another tradition narrated by Abū Hurayrah the Prophet said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ
وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ جَارَهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ
بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ صَيْفَهُ
(رواه البخاري و مسلم)

*“Whoever believes in Allah and the Hereafter,
he should say good things only, or keep silent; whoever
believes in Allah and the Hereafter, he should honour
his neighbour, and whoever believes in Allah and
the Hereafter, he should honour his guest.”*

(Reported by Bukhārī and Muslim).

To be good with our neighbours is one of the teachings of Islam. Mistreating them is against Islam, a sin.

17

Commentary of the Qur'ān – A Goodly Loan

Allah says in the Qur'ān:

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ
أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ
(البقرة ٢: ٢٤٥)

"Who is it that will lend unto Allah, a goodly loan, so that He may give it increase manifold? Allah straiteneth and enlargeth. Unto Him ye will return."
(Qur'ān 2: 245, Pickthall's translation)

"A goodly loan" means a loan without thought of gain, namely, a loan without interest. Ibn al-'Arabī mentions three categories of people after hearing this verse, as follows:

The first category of people are those who said, "Muhammad's Lord is poor. He asks a loan from us, whereas we are rich." This was said by some of the Jews of Madinah, among them were: H.uyay ibn Akht'ab according to al-H.asan, and Munh.ās ibn Azūra according to 'Ikrimah and others. To this statement, Allah responded:

لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَقِيرٌ وَنَحْنُ أَغْنِيَاءُ سَنَكْتُبُ
مَا قَالُوا وَقَتْلَهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَنَعْمُ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ.
(آل عمران ٣: ١٨١)

"Verily, Allah heard the saying of those who said, (when asked for contributions to the war): 'Allah, forsooth, is poor and we are rich!' We shall record their sayings with their slaying of the Prophets wrongfully and We shall say: 'Taste ye the punishment of burning!'"
(Qur'ān 3: 181).

Although the Jews of Madinah did not actually slay prophets, their concurrence with such an act committed by their forefathers was considered by Allah like participating in the slaying. Among the Jewish prophets slain by their own people were Zakariyyā (Zechariah) and Yahyā (John the Baptist).

The second category of people is those who were stingy and miserly. They did not want to spend their wealth in the path of Allah or help the needy. They became slow in obeying Allah, and their faith decreased.

The third category are those who spontaneously responded to this offer from Allah, such as Abū al-Daḥdāḥ. According to Zayd ibn Aslam, there was a conversation between Abū al-Daḥdāḥ which ran as follows:

"My father and mother have become ransoms for you (a kind of expression indicating seriousness of the speaker), O Messenger of Allah! Does Allah ask a loan from us, when He Himself does not need it?" asked Abū al-Daḥdāḥ.

"Yes," said the Prophet, "He wants to make you enter Paradise by doing it."

"If I give Allah a loan, does He guarantee that I shall enter Paradise with my children?"

"Yes," answer the Prophet.

"Then, extend your hand to me!" The Prophet did, and Abū al-Daḥḍāḥ said:

"I have two gardens; one on the highland and the other on the lowland. By Allah, I have no other than these two gardens, and I have made them a loan to Allah."

"Make one of them a loan to Allah, and the other as provision for you and your family."

"Be a witness, O Messenger of Allah, that I have made the best of the two for Allah; it contains six hundred date-palms."

"Then Allah will reward you with Paradise."

Abū al-Daḥḍāḥ departed and met his wife and children in the garden. He composed and cited poetry of six lines stating that he had given one of his gardens as a loan to Allah. His wife responded: "What a good trade! May Allah bless your trade!" She also composed and cited poetry of three lines expressing her happiness. Then she came to her children, took out of their mouths and hands the dates they had taken and brought back to the garden which had been given as a loan to Allah.

The above Qur'ānic verse should not be misunderstood that the path to Heaven (Paradise) is exclusively through giving charity disregarding the Islamic prescribed injunctions, such as establishing the five-daily prayers and fasting in the month of Ramadan. The above verse emphasizes the importance of charity as an extremely meritorious act of devotion to Allah through serving the community.

Another example of those who promptly answered this offer of a loan to Allah was 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān. In the campaign of Tabūk when the Muslim army went to Tabūk to meet the enemy, he donated, as reported by Ibn Hishām, the biographer of the Prophet, one thousand dinar apart from camels and

provision. Seeing this huge contribution, the Prophet prayed for him: *"O Allah, be pleased with 'Uthmān, for, indeed, I am pleased with him."*

Allah's offer for giving Him a loan still remains till the Doomsday. Allah calls Himself metaphorically in need of a loan from us as an encouragement to give charity and to help the needy. He said in a *ḥadīth qudsī*:

"O son of Adam, I was sick and you did not visit Me; I asked you food, but you did not feed Me; and I asked you water, but you did not quench my thirst." Then it will be said to Him: "O Lord, how could You be sick, how could You be in need of food and water, since You are the Lord of the worlds?" Allah will say: "My servant So-and-so was sick, my servant So-and-so was hungry, and my servant So-and-so was thirsty, but you have not visited him, you have not fed him, and you have not quenched his thirst. Had you done this, you would have found Me with him."

(Reported by Bukhārī and Muslim).

Helping the needy is the path of Allah. There is always somebody somewhere who is in need of our help. Allah promises those who give charity with multiple rewards as mentioned in the above verse.

18

Islamic Ethics: Kindness

Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah reported from al-Sha‘bī that when Gabriel came to the Prophet with the verse:

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ (الأعراف ٧: ١٩٩)

"Keep to forgiveness (O Muhammad), and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant"
(Qur'ān 7: 199),

the Prophet asked him, "What is this, O Gabriel?" The angel Gabriel answered, "I do not know until I ask my Lord." He went away and came back later, saying: "Verily, Allah the Most High, has ordered you to forgive those who wronged you, to give those who deprived you, and to make good relation with those who severed their relationship with you."

The commentator al-Qurṭubī gave his commentary on the above verse. He said that the verse "Keep to forgiveness" includes the order to keep good relationships with those who sever their relationship with you, to forgive the sinners, to be gentle with believers and to possess other noble characteristics of obedience to Allah. "Enjoin kindness" includes the order to keep good relationship with relatives and friends, to fear Allah in dealing with *ḥalāl* (what is legal) and *ḥarām* (what is illegal, prohibited), to lower our sight (namely, to be humble and modest), and to prepare ourselves for the lasting abode, namely, the Hereafter. "Turn away from the ignorant" means an order to seek and have association with knowledge, to avoid

arguing with foolish people, to dissociate from ignorant people, and to have other noble qualities and behaviour.

Al-Qurṭubī states further that these noble characteristics need elaboration. They have been elaborated and combined by the Prophet in his advice to Abū Jūrā Jābir ibn Sālim who said: "I rode my camel and came to Mecca to see the Messenger of Allah. I stopped my camel at the door of the Mosque, and people showed me the Messenger of Allah. He was sitting and wearing a woolen garment with red stripes. I greeted him, saying, 'Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah.' He answered, saying, 'And you, too, peace be upon you.' I said to him, 'We, people of the desert, are people with roughness. So, teach me something with which Allah will give me benefit.' He said, 'Come closer, come closer, come closer!' So, I came closer to him. He said, 'Promise me that you will do what I shall tell you!' After promising to do what he would tell me, he said, 'Fear Allah, never underestimate any good deed, meet your Muslim brother with cheerful face, empty your bucket and pour its water to the container of the thirsty people; if anyone abuses you because of something he does not know from you, never abuse him (back) because of something you know he has, for Allah will give you a merit and will give him a demerit (*wizr*, lit., "a burden"). Never abuse anything over which Allah has given you power.' Since then, by Allah Who possesses me in His power, I have never abused any sheep or camel." (Reported in meaning by Abū Bakr al-Bazzār in his *Musnad*).

The Prophet said regarding good character:

"My Lord has ordered me with nine characteristics: honesty, either in privacy or in public; justice, either being content or angry; moderation, either in richness or poverty; forgiving those who wronged me; keeping relationship with those who severed their relationship with me;

giving those who deprived me; making my talk dhikr (remembrance of Allah); my silence contemplation; and my view an example." He also said: "You do not win people with your wealth, but with your cheerful face and noble characteristics."

The verse ended with "turn away from the ignorant" meaning "if you have given them evidence and told them to do good and still ignored you, then turn away from them". Although the statement was directed to the Prophet, it is a lesson for the all Muslims.

19

Commentary of the Qur'ān - the Creation of Adam (a.s.)

Allah refers in the Qur'ān about the creation of Adam as His vicegerent on earth and the rebellion of Iblīs (Satan), as follows:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (البقرة ٢ : ٣٠)

"And when your Lord said to the angels:

'I am about to place a vicegerent on earth.'

Then they said: 'Will You place thereon one who will work corruption there and shed blood, while we proclaim

Your praise and call You holy?' He said: *'Assuredly*

I know what you do not know.'"

(Qur'ān 2: 30)

Allah told Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) to tell to his people about the event when He told His angels that He was about to create Adam (or a group of people among his descendants) who would be a vicegerent (*khalifah*) who would carry out His laws on earth, the angels asked Him amazingly and curiously (without protest or envy), how would He create on earth someone who would work corruption on it. They wanted to know the wisdom behind creating human beings.

How did the angels know that human beings would work corruption and shed blood on earth? One commentator said

that Allah might have told them that Adam's descendants would work corruption there; another commentator said that probably because the *jinn* (demons) who had been created before had worked corruption and bloodshed on earth, the angels asked whether the new creatures would also do the same as the *jinn* did. According to Ibn 'Abbās, the *jinn* were the first to inhabit the earth; they spread corruption and shed blood on it. So, Allah sent Iblīs (who had been one of the custodians of the Garden) with an army of a tribe of angels (called *al-Hinnah*) to punish them, kill them and pursue them as far as the islands of the oceans and the summits of mountains. (Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*).

This verse also indicates the significance of consultation (*mushāwarah*). Allah could create human beings without telling His angels, and the angels could have kept silent when they were told about this creation. Allah wanted to teach the Prophet and the Muslims about consultation by giving an example. In another verse He told the Prophet to make consultation with his followers (Q. 3: 159), and they were happy to be consulted, although the final decision was in his hands.

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ
فَقَالَ أُنَبِّئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ. قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ
لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ. قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ
فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ.

(البقرة ٢: ٣١-٣٣)

"And He taught Adam the names, all of them;
then He presented them to the angels, and said: 'Now
tell Me the names of these, if you speak the truth.' They
said: 'Glory be to You! We know only what You have taught

us. Surely You are the All-knowing, the All-wise. He said: 'Adam, tell them their names.' And when he had told them their names, He said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the unperceivable things of the heavens and the earth? And I know what things you reveal and what you were concealing.'"
(Qur'ān 2: 31-33)

What kind of names were taught by Allah to Adam and presented to the angels? Some commentators, like Ibn 'Abbās and Qatādah, said that they are the names with which man is familiar, such as man, earth, mountain, and sea. This because although the pronoun *hum* (هُمْ , *them*) in '*aradāhum* (عَرَضَهُمْ, "He presented *them*) is applied to animate beings such as human beings, angels and *jinn*, the reading of Ubayy read '*aradāhā* (عَرَضَهَا) by using the pronoun *hā* (هَا , "*them*" used for animals or inanimate beings). Ubayy's reading was used here as commentary of the canonical reading. According to al-Rabī' they are the names of the angels, whereas according to Ibn Zayd, they are the names of Adam's future offspring based on the meaning of the pronoun *hum* as mentioned above.

It is a blessing from Allah that He sent Adam and his descendants rather than the angels as His vicegerents on earth. Angels were created from light, and did not need food to survive or any other material things, so that the wealth of the earth would not be utilised. Human beings are the only creatures on earth who could get the utmost benefit from the wealth of the earth. It is for them that it was created. Allah said:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا... (البقرة ٢ : ٢٩)

"He it is Who has created for you that is on earth.... "

(Qur'ān 2: 29).

It is our duty as Allah's vicegerents on earth to keep it in its beautiful shape and not to abuse and pollute it.

It is also a blessing from Allah that He sent human beings as His messengers on earth. Adam was the first messenger and Muhammad was the last, peace be upon them. Had the angels been sent as messengers to human beings, this would be difficult to communicate, since angels are different from humans. The infidels of Mecca once said to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) why Allah did not send an angel to testify that he (Muhammad) was really a messenger; or that He sent an angel as a messenger. Then Allah revealed to the Prophet the answer, that had He sent a angel, they would have become confused as they were confusing themselves. Allah said:

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ وَلَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكَ لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنظَرُونَ.
وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكَ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا وَلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَا يَلْبِسُونَ.

(الأنعام ٦: ٨-٩)

"They are saying, too, 'Why has not an angel [visibly] sent down unto him?' But had We sent down an angel, all would indeed have been decided [i.e., Judgment Day would have come - for it is only then that the forces described as angels will manifest themselves to man in their true form and become comprehensible to him], and they would have been allowed no further respite [for repentance]. And [even] if We have appointed an angel as Our messenger-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."

(Qur'ān 6: 8-9, Asad's translation).

The people's objection to believing a prophet among mankind is mentioned again in another passage of the Qur'an. They thought that a prophet should be an angel from heaven in order that they might believe. Allah says that an angel would be sent if the earth were inhabited by angels rather than men. He said:

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ الْهُدَىٰ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ بَشَرًا رَسُولًا. قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَلَائِكَةٌ يَمْشُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَلَكًا رَسُولًا. (الإسراء ١٧ : ٩٤-٩٥)

"Yet whenever [God's] guidance came to them [through a prophet], nothing has ever kept people from believing (in him) save this their objection: 'Would God have sent a [mere] mortal man as His apostle?' Say: 'If angels were walking about on earth as their natural abode, We would indeed have sent down unto them an angel out of heaven as Our apostle'"
(Qur'an 17: 94-95, Asad).

The verses dealing with Adam go further, as follows:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ . وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ . فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ .
(البقرة ٢ : ٣٤-٣٦)

"And when We told the angels: 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam!' - they all prostrated themselves, save Iblis, who refused

and glorified his arrogance: and thus he became one of those who denied the truth. And We said: 'O Adam, dwell, thou and thy wife in this garden, and eat freely thereof, both of you, whatever you may wish, but do not approach this one tree, lest you become wrongdoers.' But Satan caused them both to stumble therein, and thus brought about the loss of their erstwhile state. And so We said: 'Down with you, [and be henceforth] enemies unto one another, and on earth you shall have your abode and provisions for a specified period.'"
(Qur'ān 2: 34-36, Asad)

The word *al-jannah* (the garden, paradise, the heaven) is derived from the verb *janna* meaning "to hide", as the trees of the garden usually hide people in it. There are different views about the garden mentioned in the above verse. According to the Mu'tazilī and Qadarī schools, it was a garden in the earthly sense, an earthly abode, with an environment of happiness and ease and not the Paradise that awaits the righteous in the Hereafter. Their argument is as follows: (1) If it were paradise, Iblīs would not have reached it, as Allah said:

يَتَنَازَعُونَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا لَا لَعْنٌ فِيهَا وَلَا تَأْتِيهِمْ . (الطور ٥٢ : ٢٣)

"And in that [paradise] they shall pass on to one another a cup which will not give rise to empty talk, and neither incite to sin"
(Qur'ān 52: 23, Asad's translation),

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لُعْنًا وَلَا كِبْرًا (النبا ٧٨ : ٣٥)

"No empty talk will they hear in that [paradise], nor any lie"
(Qur'ān 78: 35, Asad),

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا تَأْتِيهَا (الواقعة ٥٦ : ٢٥)

*No empty talk will they hear there,
nor any call to sin"*

(Qur'ān 56:25, Asad).

Moreover, once one enters paradise the state of bliss will continue, as Allah says:

لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ. (الحجر ١٥ : ٤٨)

"No weariness shall ever touch them in this [state of bliss], and never shall they have to forgo it (lit., "never shall they be caused to depart from it")."

(Qur'ān 15: 48, Asad).

Paradise is a holy place, free from empty talk and sin, whereas in the garden mentioned in the above verse these things took place.

The Qur'ānic commentator al-Qurtubī refutes the above arguments and says that the garden meant in the above verse is paradise. (1) The definite article *al* (the) in the term *al-jannah* (the garden) indicates that it is the garden which means paradise. (2) Prophet Moses met Adam and told him: "You have made your children unhappy and caused them to be out of the Garden." If the Garden meant here was not paradise, Adam would not have kept silent. He would have talked back to Prophet Moses. (3) The Qur'ānic verses cited by the Mu'tazilīs and the Qadarīs are applied only to people who enter paradise in the Hereafter. The Prophet himself was reported to have entered paradise in his ascension to heavens, and came out of it. The angels are said to have entered paradise and went out of it. (4) It was possible that Iblīs had entered Paradise, as he had been the carrier of the keys of paradise until he disobeyed Allah

(rejecting to prostrate to Adam). (5) The holiness of the Holy Land (Palestine) does not necessary mean that it is free from lies, disobedience and disbelief. (Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 302-303). Al-Qurṭubī also says that the use of the term *uskun* (lit. "repose") indicates that Adam was to enter and stay in paradise temporarily (*dukhūl sakanī*) and not permanently (*dukhūl thawā*). (*Ibid.*, p. 299). However, there is also a third view stating that the Garden meant in the above verse is a special garden in the heavenly region.

The motive for Iblīs's disobeying Allah was his pride as mentioned in the above verse. Other verses in other chapters of the Qur'ān give us more details. Iblīs did not want to prostrate before Adam because, as he said:

أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ. (الأعراف ٧ : ١٢)

*"I am better than he: Thou hast created me out of fire,
whereas Thou hast created him out of clay"*

(Qur'ān 7: 12, Asad).

Asad's commentary on this verse is that Iblīs thought himself superior to Adam, because he (Iblīs) was created out of something non-corporeal. As "fire" is a symbol of passion, the above statement of Iblīs could contain "a subtle allusion to the Qur'ānic concept of the 'satanic forces' (*shayāt.īn*) active within man's own heart: forces engendered by uncontrolled passions and love of self, symbolised by the preceding characterisation of Iblīs, the foremost of the *shayāt.īn*, as 'one of those who think only of themselves as high'" (Asad, *The Message*, p. 38, n. 60). In other verses:

قَالَ لَمْ أَكُنْ لِأَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ.

(الحجر ١٥ : ٣٣)

"He (Iblīs) says, It is not for me to prostrate myself before mortal man whom Thou hast created out of sounding clay, out of dark slime transmuted!"
(Qur'ān 15: 33, Asad);

قَالَ أَسْجُدْ لِمَنْ خَلَقْتَ طِينًا . قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ...
(الإسراء ١٧ : ٦١-٦٢)

"He (Iblīs) says, 'Shall I prostrate myself before one whom Thou hast created out of clay? Tell me, is this [foolish being] the one whom Thou hast exalted above me?'"
(Qur'ān 17: 61-62, Asad)

Iblīs justified his objection to obey, and prostrating in respect to Adam by misusing *qiyās* (analogy): he is created from fire, whereas Adam from clay; since fire is better than clay, he must be better than Adam. For this reason, some scholars in the past warned people from using analogy, claiming that the first who exercised it was Iblīs. Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (the founder of the Ḥanbalī school of law) preferred weak *ḥadīths* (sayings or practices of the Prophet) to *qiyās* in finding the solution of various Islamic legal issues, whereas al-Shāfi'ī (the founder of Shāfi'ī school of law) used it as the fourth source of Islamic law after the Qur'ān, *Ḥadīth*, and *Ijma'* (consensus).

The pride of Iblīs and the elevated position given to Adam and Eve caused Iblīs to envy them. Therefore, he tried to put them down by persuading him to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. He said:

مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَائِكَةً أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ
(الأعراف ٧ : ٢٠)

"Your Sustainer has but forbidden you this tree lest you two become [as] angels, or lest you live forever."
(Qur'ān 7: 20, Asad).

Pride and envy became the earliest sin which led Iblīs (Satan) to disobey Allah and misled Adam and Eve.

The name "Iblīs" is derived from the verb *ablasa* meaning "he despaired", or "he gave up hope", or "he became broken in spirit", and is not the corruption of the Greek word *diabolos* (from which the word "devil" is derived), as many Orientalists assumed. The forbidden tree is alluded in the Qur'ān as *shajarat 'l-khuld*, "the tree of life eternal" (Q. 20: 120), whereas in the Bible, it is called "the tree of life" and "the tree of good and evil" (Genesis ii: 9).

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ . قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ . وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ .

(البقرة ٢ : ٣٧-٣٩)

"Thereupon Adam received words [of guidance] from his Sustainer, and He accepted his repentance: for, verily, He alone is the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace. [For I though] We did say, 'Down with you all from this [state],' there shall, none the less, most certainly come unto you guidance from Me: and those who follow My guidance need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve; but those who are bent on denying the truth and giving the lie to Our messages - they are destined for the fire, and therein shall they abide."

(Qur'ān 2: 37-39, Asad).

These verses clearly indicate that the mistake or sin of Adam and Eve has been forgiven before their coming to the earthly life. When Allah reminded him that he should not have approached the forbidden tree and eaten its fruit, he and his wife Eve (Hawwā') prayed to Him, saying:

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ .
(الأعراف ٧ : ٢٣)

*"O our Sustainer! We have sinned
against ourselves - and unless Thou grant us
forgiveness and bestow Thy mercy upon us,
we shall most certainly be lost!"*
(Qur'ān 7: 23, Asad)

There is no such a thing called "inherited sin" in Islam, for everybody should bear the consequence of his or her own deed. Allah says:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ...
(فصلت ٤١ : ٤٦ و الجاثية ٤٥ : ١٥)

*"Whoever does what is just and right, does so for
his own good; and whoever does evil,
does so to his own hurt..."*
(Qur'ān 41: 46 and 45: 15, Asad)

The verses dealing with the creation of Adam and the fall of Iblīs were revealed in Madinah where many Jews lived, but most of them did not want to accept Islam. Like Satan before, it was their pride and envy that prevented them from obeying Allah. They were expecting a prophet among themselves in Arabia, but a prophet among the Arabs appeared. The story was a warning for them and other people, so that they would not follow the example of Iblīs. This is obvious, as the verses continue with calling the Jews (Children of Israel) to Islam, as follows:

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي
أَوْفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ . وَأَمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ

وَلَا تَكُونُوا أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَإِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُونِ.
وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ.

(البقرة ٢ : ٤٠-٤٢)

"O Children of Israel! Remember those blessings of Mine with which I graced you, and fulfil your promise unto Me, (whereupon) I shall fulfil My promise unto you; and of Me, of Me stand in awe! Believe in that which I have (now) bestowed from on high, confirming the truth already in your possession and be not foremost among those who deny its truth; and do not barter away My messages for a trifling gain: and of Me, of Me be conscious! And do not overlay the truth with falsehood, and do not knowingly suppress the truth. "

(Qur'ān 2: 40-42, Asad).

Asad mentions his commentary on the above verses. He said that verse 40 refers to "the persistent Jewish belief that they alone among all nations have been graced by divine revelation," whereas the "trifling gain" in verse 41 means "their conviction that they are 'God's chosen people'—a claim which the Qur'ān consistently refutes." The words of Moses in the Biblical passage, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deuteronomy xviii, 15), and the words attributed to God Himself, "I will raise them up a prophet from among thy brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth" (Deuteronomy xviii, 8). The "brethren" of the children of Israel are obviously the Arabs, and particularly the *musta'ribah* ("Arabianized") group among them, which traces its descent to Ishmael and Abraham: and since it is to this group that the Arabian Prophet's own tribe, the Quraysh, belonged,

the above Biblical passages must be taken as referring to this event." (Asad, *The Message*, pp. 10-101, nn. 32-33).

As a matter of fact, Allah continued talking to the Jews of Madinah, as in verse 47, and reminded them of His blessings and grace upon them; then He mentioned the story of Prophet Moses. However, there was also a warning for the believers (and the warning still applies to contemporary believers), when Allah says:

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا
حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ...
(البقرة ٢: ١٠٩)

*"Out of their selfish envy,
many among the followers of earlier
revelation would like to bring you back to
denying the truth after you have attained
to faith - (even) after the truth has
become clear unto them..."*
(Qur'ān 2: 109, Asad).

The story of what some people call "the fall of Adam" is, if it is so considered, a fall from a temporary residence in paradise into a permanent and intended residence on earth, before going back into paradise. The story is, in fact, the fall of Iblīs (Satan) and those who follow in his foot-steps among *jinn* and men. We have seen that many moral lessons can be taken and learnt from this event.

20

Jinn

The word *genie* comes from the Arabic *jinn* (sing. masc., *jinnī*, sing., fem., *jinniyyah*). *Jinn* are invisible beings constituting a whole race like mankind. Unlike man who is created from clay, or the angels who are created from light, the *jinn* are airy or fiery bodies created from fire, a different kind of fire. It is called in one verse of the Qur'ān, (الرحمن ٥٥:١٥) , مَارِجٍ مِنْ نَّارٍ , translated as "*a confusing flame of fire*" (Q. 55: 15), namely, "*non-corporeal elements*" (M. Asad), "*smokeless fire*" (M. Pickthall), and "*fire free of smoke*" (A.Y. Ali). Many interpretations are given by classical commentators for the above verse, among which are as follows: Ibn 'Abbās: "*pure fire*", "*flame*", "flame which appears at the top of fire with different and mixed colours: red, yellow and green; Abū 'Ubaydah and al-Ḥasan: "mixed fire"; and al-Jawharī, "smokeless fire from which the *jinn* are created" (al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, 17: 161). It is also mentioned in a *ḥadīth* on the authority of 'A'ishah that the Prophet said:

*"The angels are created from light, the jinn
from smokeless fire, and Adam from what has
been described to you (namely, of clay)."*

(Reported by Muslim).

In another Qur'ānic verse it is said that *jinn* are created from (الحجر ١٥:٢٧) , نَّارِ السَّمُومِ (الحجر ١٥:٢٧) , translated as "*the fire of scorching winds*" (Q. 15:27, Asad), "*essential fire*" (Pickthall), and "*the fire of a scorching wind*" (A.Y. Ali). According to Ibn 'Abbās, it is "hot wind that can kill" and "smokeless fire" (thunderbolt is an example of

it), and it means "hot wind" according to al-Jawharī. We do not see them (unless they make themselves appear to us), but they see us (Q. 7: 27).

Jinn were created earlier than man as mentioned in the above verse:

وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ ... (الحجر ١٥ : ٢٧)

"and the *Jinn* race, We had created before, ..."
(Qur'ān 15: 27).

They are intelligent, imperceptible, and able to appear in different forms. Abdullah Yusuf Ali's understanding of *jinn* as "a spirit" and "an invisible or hidden force" (see his translation of the Qur'ān, p. 318, n. 929) has been corrected in a revision of his translation, as follows:

"... The authoritative Islamic texts show that they are not merely a hidden force or a spirit. They are personalized beings who enjoy a certain amount of free will and thus will be called to account."

(see *The Holy Qur'ān*, A.Y. Ali's translation
Revised and edited by the Presidency of Islamic
Researches, Iftā', Call and Guidance, in
Saudi Arabia, p. 372, n. 932).

Some *jinn* are good, believers, and others are evil and unbelievers (Q. 6: 130 and 72: 11 and 14). Like human-beings, many of them will also be punished in Hell, (Q. 11: 119 and 32: 13). Some of them heard the Qur'ān cited by the Prophet and believed (Q. 72: 1-2). There were also *jinn* among the army of Prophet-King Solomon (Q. 27: 17 and 34: 12).

Poets, prophets, mad people and genius were all accused of being possessed by *jinn*. When Prophet Noah called his people to worship Allah, he was accused of being possessed by *jinn* (Q. 23: 23-25). Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was also accused of being possessed by one of them (Q. 34: 8). Mad people and geniuses were thought to have been touched and taught by them respectively.

The relation of *jinn* to Iblīs and Satan (Shayṭān) is obscure. According to the view attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās: *al-Jān* is the father of the *jinn*, as is Adam the father of men and Iblīs the father of Satan. It is also said that *jinn* and men are mortal, whereas Iblīs and Satan will remain till the Judgement Day (al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘*, vol. 10, p. 25). According to the commentators al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Qatādah, Iblīs is the father of *jinn* as is Adam the father of man. Although created from fire and among the *jinn* (Q. 18: 50), Iblīs was formerly among the rank of angels (as implied in Q. 2: 34), according to the commentators Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn Mas‘ūd, Ibn Jurayj and Ibn al-Musayyab. But when Iblīs disobeyed Allah by refusing to prostrate to Adam, he was called Satan (al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘*, 1: 294). The word *satan* (Arabic *shayṭān*) is derived from the verb *shaṭana* meaning "to be far away from goodness".

The word *jinn* was derived from *janna* (to become hidden) or *ijtinān* (becoming hidden or concealed). The angels were also called "*jinnah*" (*jinn*) in a Qur’ānic verse, because of their being concealed from us. Allah says:

وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا. (الصافات ٣٧: ١٥٨)

"And they have invented a blood-relationship
between Him and the Jinn..."

(Qur’ān 37: 158),

The majority of commentators say that *jinn* here means angels, since they are according to the pagan Quraysh tribe, "the daughters of Allah".

According to al-Shāfi‘ī the Qur’ānic verse mentioning that the angels prostrated to Adam except Iblīs (Q. 2: 34) does not mean that Iblīs was one of the angels. Al-Shāfi‘ī contends that exception also occurs with something different in another verse of the Qur’ān, as follows:

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا تَأْتِيهَا إِلَّا قِيْلًا سَلَامًا سَلَامًا .
(الواقعة ٥٦ : ٢٥-٢٦)

"There hear they no vain speaking nor recrimination.
(Naught) but the saying: Peace (and again) Peace."
(Qur’ān 56: 25-26, Pickthall).

Here, the word "peace" is not a kind of vain speaking or recrimination. The example in the classical poetry is "... in a country where there is nobody except hyenas and white camels." Here the hyenas and the white camels do not belong to human beings, but animals. (See al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘*, vol. 10, p. 26).

There are many kinds of *jinn*. ‘*ifrīt* who is very powerful is one of them. He said that he could bring the throne of Queen Bilqis in Sheba to Prophet-king Solomon in Palestine before he rose from his place (see Q. 27: 39). Satan is a malicious *jinn*. When the Quraysh people discussed at Dār al-Nadwah (town hall) how to deal with the Prophet, either to kill him, imprison him or banish him, Satan appeared among them, disguised as an old man of Najd (Central Arabia) and suggested to them that the Prophet should be killed. Another kind of *jinn* is called *غَامِر* (‘*āmir*) who likes to accompany people. There is also another kind of *jinn* who likes to accompany babies. The Prophet called this kind of *jinn* which seemed to be female, *umm al-ṣibyān* (أُمُّ الصَّبِيَّانِ) (lit., " the

mother of babies"). He recommended us to read the *ādhān* (the call to prayer) on the right ear and *iqāmah* (the call to stand in prayer) into the left ear of a newly born baby as protection against harm. Dr. Muhammad Sadiq of Edmonton (Canada) related his experience as a child in Pakistan. One night he felt somebody patting his back. At first he thought she was his mother. When he looked back and saw an old woman smiling at him in the fairly dark night he was scared and screamed. The old woman hit him to show her disappointment and disappeared.

Like human beings, *jinn* also have animals. When the Muslims among the *jinn* asked the Prophet for provision he told them that the bones on which the name of Allah is mentioned that came to them are more abundant than the meat that had been on it, and that the dung of the animals of man are fodder to their beasts. (Reported by Muslim on the authority of Ibn Mas'ūd). In the early 1950s the writer who lived with his parents in a remote village in Indonesia used to hear in the dark night the wailings of a dog called by the local people (Buginese) *asu panting* (a devil dog) that seemed to come from a distant place but at the same time was clear as if it was from nearby, so that it was heard by the whole family. We do not know whether the so-called poltergeists (lit. "noisy spirits") belong to the category of *jinn*, animals of *jinn*, or of elementals (low level of spirits).

With regard to the habitat of *jinn*, according to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, some of them live on land, others at sea and in the air. It is said that they like to live in deserts, ruins, graveyards and impure places, such as dunghills and toilet rooms. Ghouls (desert demons), demons who haunt old and uninhabited houses and graveyards are examples of these *jinn*. However, in general they live everywhere on this earth. Therefore, apart from the Satan who constantly accompanies us, wherever we go, there is always

possibility of encountering these hidden creatures, either with their mischief or help. Occasionally, they appeared as human beings to help people. It was reported that when the great scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) was punished by the ruler for his opinion, he was put in jail. However, some people still saw him visiting and helping the sick and the needy. When this event was reported to him in his prison, he said that it must have been one of the *jinn* who took pity on people and helped them by disguising as Ibn Taymiyyah.

Satan is mischievous in two ways: among *jinn* and among *man*. Every prophet faced these two kinds of satan. (Q. 6: 112). In a *ḥadīth* the Prophet said that everybody has a satan with him. When he was asked "even you, O Messenger of Allah?", he answered that Allah had assisted him by converting the satan into a Muslim, so that he whispered to him good things only. (Reported by Muslim on the authority of Ibn Mas'ūd; a similar *ḥadīth* was reported by Bukhārī on the authority of 'Ā'ishah). The pious Mālik ibn Dīnār was reported to have said: "The satan among men is harder for me than the satan of the *jinn*. If I seek refuge by reciting the *ta'awwudh*, namely, **أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ** ('I seek Allah's protection from the accursed satan'), the satan of the *jinn* will run away, but of men will stay." Imām al-Ghazālī said that it is the duty of Muslims to know the temptation of satan, should free themselves from the satan of the *jinn*, and beware of the satan of man.

The influence of satan becomes very strong when one is angry, as the angry person cannot control his behaviour; also when there is a *jihād* (war in defending Islam), Satan reminds people of their family left behind, so that they would desert the front; and when a man is alone with a woman who is not one of his close relatives (*maḥārim*).

It is said that the *jinn* sleep in the day time and work at night. It is at nightfall that they are most frequently present. One is therefore urged not to let children play outdoors after sunset, and not to go to sleep with strong a food odour, for the *jinn* may come and lick the odour; the door should be closed, and food should be covered by saying *bismillāh al-rahmān al-rahīm* ("by the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful") (Reported by Bukhārī). This formula should also be read soon before eating, so that the *jinn* do not eat our food. Abū al-Dardā' among the companions of the Prophet related that a man was eating near the Prophet without saying the formula. Suddenly, he remembered the formula and cited it, saying *بِسْمِ اللَّهِ أَوَّلُهُ وَآخِرُهُ* ("by the name of Allah in the beginning and in the end"), and the Prophet laughed, saying: "Satan has kept eating with him, and when he remembered mentioning Allah, Satan vomited what he had just eaten."

Man is made of clay, but of a different kind of clay. He has no longer his nature of clay. His food is also of different clay. Fruit, grains and anything grows on earth takes their food from the soil, namely, the clay, and man eat from it. Similarly, the *jinn* are created from fire or flame, but a different kind of flame. They have no longer their fiery nature. Their food is also of different kind, food odour and vapour, and their drink is steam, water vapour or foam. When the Prophet said that bones are the food of the *jinn*, Ibn Mas'ūd asked him how these could be. The Prophet said that they would still find the meat in the bone as if it had not been touched by humans. What the Prophet means is that the taste and the odour which they need are still there in the bone.

Like human beings, the disbelievers among the *jinn* will also be punished in Hell. When a man asked a scholar how the *jinn* which

are created from fire will be punished by fire, the scholar threw some hard clay at him. The questioner felt the pain and complained to the ruler. At court the scholar said that what he had done was answer the questioner's question: as a human being created from clay and feels the pain of the clay thrown at him, so the *jinn* who are created from fire will also feel pain from fire in Hell.

Al-Shāfi‘ī and al-Bayhaqī reported the following incident: a man among the *anṣār* (الأنصار; lit., "helpers", namely, the natives of Madinah who helped the Muslim emigrants from Makkah) went to pray ‘*ishā’* (night prayer) in the mosque. Suddenly, he was captured by the *jinn*, and disappeared for many years. His wife who was not able to wait any longer found another husband. Several years later, the man appeared again in Madinah. When ‘Umar asked him what had happened, he said that a group of *jinn* had kidnapped him. Then they were attacked by a group of Muslim *jinn*, and the kidnappers who were non-believers were defeated. When the conquerors found him, they said: "You are a Muslim, and we should not capture you." They gave him a choice, either to join them or to return him to his family. He chose the latter, and they brought him back to Madinah.

"What do they eat?", asked ‘Umar.

"Beans and any thing in which the name of Allah is not mentioned", said the man.

"What do they drink?", asked ‘Umar again.

"Foam," said the man.

The *jinn* live among us, but can manifest themselves in many different forms, such as snakes, scorpions, dogs, birds and cattle.

What some people thought to be the spirits of their deceased relative who came to rescue them when they were in danger were most probably *jinn* who took forms similar to those of the deceased, rather than the deceased themselves came to them as spirits. Before the earthquake occurred in the Maharashtra area in India in January 1994, a snake had appeared in the house of a Muslim family. The person who saw the snake woke up his family and told them to leave the house immediately. Soon after they had been outside their house, at 03.58 at dawn the earth started shaking violently, and this Muslim family was safe. This snake might have been a Muslim jinni who came to warn this Muslim family from the disaster. Over forty thousand people perished inside their houses and over one thousand people were injured. However, a mosque in the midst of a destroyed village stood untouched, as well as a fifteen-day-old baby was rescued after being trapped under the rubble of her house for five days. She was the only survivor among her family.

Jinn are hidden, mortal and intelligent beings, although the level of their intelligence is beyond our perception. Some are good and helpful, and others are bad and harmful. Some are Muslims and others are non-believers. Like human beings, they will be accounted in the Hereafter for what they did here on this earth. Some of them will enter Heaven, others will enter Hell. Unlike human beings who live in the world of matter, they probably live in the world of what scientists call "anti-matter".

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تَمَّ الْكِتَابُ وَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ



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Muhammad Amin Abdul Samad was born in 1938 at Sengkang, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. He obtained his Ph.D. degree in Islamic Studies with a dissertation on Qur'anic studies at the University of Melbourne, Australia, and his M.A. degree in the field of Islamic thought at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, where he served as an assistant lecturer of Arabic for one year. He obtained his Diploma at the Institute of Islamic Studies, and B.A. in Cairo University in Cairo, Egypt. He taught Arabic and Islamics at Lac la Biche Muslim Association, Lac la Biche, Alberta, Canada, and served as a secretary and an assistant-imam at al-Rasheed Mosque, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He also assisted the lecturer and the students learning his mother tongue Buginese (Bugis) language at the Department of Linguistics at the University of Melbourne.

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