

AL-BAQARAH

(THE COW)

Salient Features

- 1. Revealed at Madinah.**
- 2. The Longest Surah of the Quran.**
- 3. Contains 40 Sections and 286 Ayat.**

سُورَةُ الْبَقَرَةِ

Sūrah al-Baqarah

This Sūrah, with reference to its revelation, is Madni and some of its Āyāt and injunctions pertain to the very last period of Qurānic revelation, but in order of placement it is in the very beginning. The Qurān, an answer to the prayer contained in al-Fatīhah, begins with this Sūrah. There was a basic difference in the life patterns of Makkah and Madinah. The addressees of Divine Revelation at Makkah in general, were the pagans and the idolaters; but at Madinah there were people who considered themselves to be the nearest to Allah and the true followers of Prophet Mūsā^{as}. Whereas, in reality, over the passage of time, they had not only forgotten his teachings, but had also distorted the Divine Scriptures. They had replaced worship with rituals, and true faith with absurd beliefs. Despite this they claimed to be on the right path. The Qurān in the first place, highlighted the difference between belief and disbelief. Thus the very first Āyāh of this Sūrah also spells out the fundamentals of Islām.

Section 1

In the Name of Allah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful.

1. ALIF, LĀM, MĪM.

آلَمْ

2. This is the Book, in which there is not the slightest doubt. Guidance for the Muttaqīn.

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١﴾

3. Those who believe in the unseen and establish Ṣalāt and spend out of what We have given them.

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ
وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٢﴾

4. And those who believe in what has been sent to you and that sent before you and are sure of the Ākhirah.

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ
مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٣﴾

5. It is they who are truly guided by their **Rabb** and it is they who are successful.

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾

6. As for those who disbelieve, it makes no difference to them whether you warn them or not, they will not believe.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾

7. **Allah** has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil. And for them is a great punishment.

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

ALIF, LĀM, MĪM. This is the Book, in which there is not the slightest doubt.

Alif Lām Mīm and similar Isolated Letters often precede Sūrah's of the Qurān. Believing in them is necessary and efforts to decode them unnecessary. These Letters are a secret between **Allah** and **His Prophet**^{SAW} only. A believer benefits from their recitation even without knowing their actual meanings. The Holy Qurān is a Book having no room for the slightest doubt. Thus, to benefit from this Book, revealed in response to the prayer, it is imperative that the reader must not doubt its content, whether dealing with past or future, as there is no chance, whatsoever, of any error in it. Generally, books or literature discussing supernatural phenomenon beyond the scope of human senses are not presented with absolute conviction even by their authors, because all their conclusions are based on assumptions. But, the Revealer of this Book is **Allah**, Whose Knowledge is all encompassing, thorough and perfect. He knows everything from the very beginning till the very end. Thus, the facts unfolded by Him are beyond any doubt. And to further eliminate any scepticism, **Allah** certifies the veracity and trustworthiness of all the connections and sources, which convey His Message to mankind.

The Sources of Conveying the Divine Message

The first source is the Angel who conveyed **Allah**'s Message to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. Mark his introduction: *This is in truth the word of an honoured Messenger*^{AS} *Mighty, established in the Presence of Rabb of the Throne. One*

to be obeyed, and trustworthy. (81:19-21). And note that he is trustworthy, mighty and honourable, attendant of the Divine Court. He is so strong that no one can snatch **Allah's** Message from him, or compel him to add or subtract anything from it. Although all angels are created from light but amongst them too are the commoners and the elite. The Angel mentioned here is Jibrīl^{AS}; he is the leader of them all and is obeyed by all. **Allah** testifies his honesty and integrity and he indeed is the direct source of delivering **Allah's** Book to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}.

The second source is the Holy Prophet^{SAW}; who is an embodiment of truth. Not only has the **Qurān** testified his truthfulness, but also his worst enemies acknowledged his honesty and integrity by calling him **Ṣādiq** and **Amīn** (truthful and trustworthy). The impeccable life of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} is a manifestation of his Prophethood. Whereas miracles and rationales establish his Prophethood beyond doubt; his pure, spotless and immaculate pre-Prophetic life provides the most assertive evidence. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} (addressing the Makkans) had said: "I have lived my life amidst you before this, can you accuse me of any falsehood?" *By your life (O Prophet)! And, your morals touch the heights of excellence attainable by a human being* (68:4), are the Divine declarations of the sublimity of this source. Hence, the Message of **Allah** is true. The Angel assigned to deliver it is too exalted to be doubted and **His** Prophet^{SAW} is indeed the most truthful. The entire foundation of Islām is on truth, nothing but the truth. However, the entire mankind does not have a direct access to the Prophetic source and between him and the Ummah is a whole class of intermediaries, who heard the Divine Word directly from the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, understood it, practised and conveyed it to the rest of mankind.

Integrity of the Companions^{RAU}

If, **Allah** forbid, this link is questioned, the Divine Declaration: *'This is the Book, in which there is not the slightest doubt'*, may not be proved. No one shall dare question the integrity of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and the Angel; but the Companions^{RAU} not being innocent like the Prophets, may not be spared by the critics. And what if they actually misquote some facts? It would simply render the entire structure of Islām doubtful. Therefore **Allah** discusses them at length in the **Qurān** and declares their faith as the standard, their truthfulness exemplary and ordains adherence to their model. Quote:

(1) *And if they believe as you believe, they are rightly guided.* (2:137).

- (2) *As for those who led the way and of those who gave them aid and those who follow them in good deeds, Allah is well pleased with them and they with Him. (9:100)*
- (3) *Those who lower their voice in the presence of Allah's Messenger, their hearts Allah has tested for piety. (49:3)*
- (4) *Only those are believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted, but have striven with their belongings and their persons in the Cause of Allah they are the truthful. (49:15)*

He does not praise them after observing their conduct, but declares that it was in My infinite knowledge and I had revealed their attributes in Torah and Bible even before their birth, that they would be My creation par excellence after the Prophets^{AS}. Indeed it was imperative that those carrying the ever-lasting Dīn from the Holy Prophet^{SAW} to the entire mankind be of exemplary character, who would spare no pains in the service of Allah! The fact is that these great men were not only the gallant guardians of Dīn during their lives in Makkah and Madinah and in their encounters with the Roman and the Persian Empires, but also continue to act as its sentinels. Even today Islām cannot reach mankind if this link is removed, they being the spokesmen and interpreters of the Prophethood. They are the ones who heard and understood the Qurān directly from the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, acted upon its injunctions in his presence and he himself endorsed their actions. Centuries have gone by, every wave rising from the darkness of schism always targets them, but is invariably forced to recede to its origin duly shattered. Influenced by the false and insidious propaganda of Ṭabṛī and Kalbī, some indiscreet Muslims also attempted to sit on judgement on them. Allah be Glorified! Despite all odds, their exalted status stands impeccable. The strength of the evidence provided by the Qurān in their favour leaves the critics hapless. Therefore, the Divine declaration: *This Book is without the slightest of doubts*, stands substantiated.

Indeed the status of Companionship signifies a special attribute not attainable outside the company of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. It is incorrect to argue that the saying: 'all the Companions^{RAU} are righteous and fair', refers only to their religious endeavour and not to their personal lives. It is against all logic that a sinner can at the same time be so truthful and trustworthy as to be entrusted with the responsibility of conveying the everlasting Divine Message to mankind. The enemies of Islām base their objections on the incident of Ḥadhrat Mā'iz, which in all fairness, is an exemplary repentance and should be quoted in the praise of the Companions^{RAU}. And there have been only two such inci-

dents over a period of sixty-three years. In a nutshell, these noble, pious and exalted souls are the living proof of the authenticity of Islām.

Guidance for the Muttaqīn

In the general sense of guidance and calling towards the truth, the Qurān is meant for the entire mankind, but it shows the right path to only those who develop in them the will to go along. The faculty is called Taqwa. Taqwa is generally translated as 'fear', which does not convey its true meaning. It actually denotes a particular form of fear, an apprehension of the possible annoyance of the most beloved. It is a strong feeling, a ready disposition to sacrifice everything for the beloved. It is the will, the resolve that restrains all desires, intentions, thoughts and actions only for the fear of displeasing Allah. And if unwittingly, a human error occurs; the feeling of guilt hurts and compels one to repent. Now then, how is Taqwa acquired and what are the characteristics and virtues of those who possess it?

Those who believe in the unseen

The first and the foremost prerequisite is the belief in the unseen. Those who trust and believe the word of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} in all matters that are beyond the scope of human senses. The greatest of all the unseen is Allah Himself. Although His Attributes reflect abundantly in His creation, yet He Himself can neither be seen nor conceived, because no similitude exists to facilitate the imagination. Then there are other mysteries pertaining to the Ākhirah, the Paradise and the Hell, the Reward and the Retribution; the Questioning in the Grave and the Resurrection; the Angels and the Guarded Tablet; indeed they believe in every transcendental reality divulged by Allah's Prophet^{SAW}. This belief is based entirely upon the trust in the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, for no intellectual endeavour can provide an access to such knowledge. This bond of trust has been weakened considerably by the span of time, which, coupled with the darkness of modern age, has deprived the Muslims of the twinge that pierces the heart when it feels the nearness of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. Given that trust, one believes in the unseen without any logical explanation, whereby the teachings of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} become the most authentic evidence on any issue. This faith drives a believer to mould his practical life according to the pattern required for attaining Allah's nearness. The very first step towards this nearness is Ṣalāt.

Those who establish Ṣalāt

This establishment does not refer only to offering Salat, but also to the prerequisites attending this important obligation. It is an unwavering thoughtfulness to attend congregational Salat in the mosque. It is a resolve extending from ablution to the whole range of the components of Salat.

lution to the whole range of the components of Salat. Establishment does not end here, but reaches its zenith when a person influences and inspires those he comes across, to indulge in Salat. This last level is difficult to be achieved by commoners; however, every one should at least offer his Salat properly and in time.

And spend out of that which We have given them.

See the effect of belief in **Allah** and the realisation of **His** nearness, that for **Him**, a believer can sacrifice all that a non-believer would die for. Although the Arabic word Infāq is translated as paying of Zakāt and other charities, but infact it refers to the economic aspect of the practical life. Economics is the most pressing issue of human life in every society. It is the root cause of social evils like robbery, bribery and usury, and the experts of all Schools of Thought seek to rectify the situation. However, the method prescribed by the Qurān for its reform is unique, which is to spend according to **Allah**'s Command. Obviously, if a person has to spend according to the Orders of **Allah**, why should he earn unlawfully. And the injunction *Out of that which We have given them* is so clear. When the Bestower is **Allah** why should one adopt illegitimate means to attain wealth? The difference is only of human outlook and viewpoint. When the subsistence is from **Allah**, then a person will only get what has already been proportioned for him, whether he steals or works hard to earn it. Infact everything bestowed by **Allah** on a human being falls under subsistence; his body and soul, his intellect, the physical strength, knowledge and the cognition or any skill. The right way of spending them is for **His** pleasure, and for **His** cause. This is no fable, but history bears witness to the noble society built on this foundation; its vestiges are present even today and shall Insha **Allah** remain forever.

Tasawwuf is not to be Concealed

The Āyāh also alludes to Taṣawwuf, the most precious of **Allah**'s bounties. It is not to be concealed, but conveyed to others. A Muslim is not only accountable for scrutinizing the permissible and the forbidden while earning his livelihood, but is also responsible for the manner in which he spends his wealth. He is not to spend a single penny against the wishes of **Allah**, a golden rule laid down only by Islām. Practically, it is most effective because where the expenditure is limited; the desire to amass wealth will not arise. This will only be possible by a total adherence to the Holy Prophet's^{SAW} teachings.

And those who believe in ... and that revealed before you.

A believer must accept from the core of his heart what has been revealed unto the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and also take as true the revelations that had been de-

scended before him unto other Messengers^{AS} of Allah. However, his actions must conform only to the Final Book. In fact the Divine Scriptures are so honourable and exalted that the denial of any one of them makes a person non-believer though it may not have even reached him. For example, if someone proclaims that he does not believe in the Scriptures revealed unto Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}, he instantly becomes a non-believer, even if he has no knowledge of what had been revealed therein.

Finality of Prophethood Proved

Had there been any possibility of the continuation of such Prophethood after the Holy Prophet^{SAW} or of any Revelation after the Qurān, more would have been said in addition to the mention of the previous Scriptures, because a denial of any forthcoming revelations too would have rendered a person non-believer. But here the words *revealed before you* provide an impressive proof that Prophethood and Divine Revelations have ended with the era of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. The return of Prophet 'Īsā^{AS} will not change the situation, because he is already acknowledged as a Prophet^{AS} by the believers. There is no possibility of a new Prophet and revelation coming. Those who have claimed Prophethood have only built castles in the air, have deluded themselves and have caused others to go astray.

Although belief in the Ākhirah is an essential part of belief in the unseen, yet its importance is such that the entire structure of human life is based upon it. It calls for an exceptionally strong and firm belief, which compels a believer to consider the eternal consequences of actions before hand, and at every step be mindful of the do's and don't's laid down by the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. As a result, his life begins to mould on the pattern of the Sunnah. The reason for the prevalent waywardness in today's world is the weakness of belief in the Ākhirah. The perfect faith is one's total acceptance from the core of the heart and such sure-footed believers are the ones who are guided towards the right path by their Rabb, and are successful. It was expected of His Providence to provide His creation with guidance. Just as He gave the sense of fulfilling physical requirements to every being, He has also shown the ways of achieving spiritual comfort and peace. Those who follow His guidance become truly successful.

Every human being strives for success in each aspect of his life. Every one has devised one's own criteria of right and wrong, which cannot be termed as absolute. The real standards are those set by the Creator of the universe. The guidance about these criteria began with Prophet Ādam^{AS} and continued through the ages, concluding on the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. If even after the advent of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} one fails to embrace faith, it would simply mean that

he has, because of his wrongdoings, lost the inherent capacity to accept the truth.

As for those who disbelieve ... they will not embrace faith.

Those who do not believe in **Allah**, even after listening to the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} directly, are indeed incapable of believing; as there can be none more exalted than the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, and no Divine Scripture superior to the one revealed to him. In order to grasp this point, consider that the physical body and the Spirit together constitute a human being. The former has its own needs and is dependent upon many things, of which foremost is the food and the clothing for its survival; but even more important is its health and the medical care. If health is bad, neither food benefits nor clothes give any comfort. While food can be had from anywhere and from anyone, medicine can only be prescribed by a medical practitioner, and we always consult him. The physical body consists of matter, and so do the food and the medicine. Therefore, anyone who gains knowledge of medicine from the physical sciences, whether a believer or a non-believer, man or woman, pious or sinner, can become a doctor.

But the Spirit is from the Realm of Command and is even subtler than the angel. Like the physical body, it has its needs too, which obviously are subtle, not material. And not everyone can become a spiritual healer. It is such a precious skill that people were chosen for it right from eternity, rather specially created. However hard one may strive, this faculty cannot be acquired. In the terms of Shari'ah they are known as Prophets^{-AS}; who do not prescribe anything at their own but rely on the nourishment and medication provided by Almighty **Himself**.

A Prophet^{-AS} has the capacity to directly benefit from the Divine Revelation and the rest of the humanity benefits through him. This is such an important task that not everyone can claim Prophethood, but only those raised by **Him**. They conveyed **His** Message to mankind that **Allah's** Zikr was the basic food of the Spirit, just as wheat was for the body. And just as there are schedules and manners of feeding the physical body, and medication to maintain its health, Zikr and worship too have prescribed timings and methods. The medication for the ailing Spirit is repentance. Like abstaining from certain food-stuff is imperative for physical health, so is the abstinence from certain actions imperative for spiritual health. The needs of the Spirit are as vital as those of the body. Amongst all the Prophets^{-AS} appointed for the mankind, the last and the leader of all, is a blessing and a Mercy of **Allah** for the entire universe. If a person cannot see anything in the dark, a candle may be lit for him. If he still cannot see, an electric light may help, or he has to wait for the daylight. But if he fails to see even in broad daylight he has certainly lost his vision. Similarly,

anyone sticking to disbelief after the raising of Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW}, the Final Prophet is indeed incurable. He is the Prophet^{SAW}, second to none in elegance and charm, eloquence and oration, chastity, honour and dignity. On top of that, he conveys the Word of none other than **Allah Himself**. No one, except a heartless can remain unmoved. Therefore, anyone not benefiting from this fountainhead of Divine Guidance and Lights can never gain anything from anywhere.

Allah has set a seal ... a great punishment.

The heart that is considered to be a mere pumping machine is infact something incredible. For a comparative study let us take the brain first. It is a collection of membranes and nerves but is a treasure of physical knowledge, having inherent powers to learn and conquer vast fields and to retain a ready memory. But despite all its excellence it did not qualify to receive Divine Revelations. This great blessing was conferred upon Qalb - the subtle heart (a vital organ of the Spirit, located within the physical heart): *Which the True Spirit has brought down, upon your Qalb* (26: 193-194). Thus the capacity of the Qalb turns out to be millions of times more than perceived, its immensity like an ocean without shore, and its greatness beyond measure. This Qalb is not merely a piece of flesh, or a machine, but it is within itself a vast kingdom and a complete universe. The Qulūb of the Prophets^{AS} receive and distribute Divine Beneficence while the Qulūb of the believers absorb it. But disbelief is a menace, which strips the Qulūb of this capacity. Although the one who commits suicide also dies by Divine Decree, but he himself becomes the cause of his death. Similarly continuous sinning leads to the death of the Qalb, termed as 'sealing'. According to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, when a person commits a sin, a black spot appears on his Qalb. If he repents, it is cleared. Otherwise, repeated indulgence in sin results in ultimate darkness of the entire heart. This has been termed as blindness of the Qalb, as well as its death. Now if one continues to live on physically, it is just like an animal. The real superiority a human being enjoys over an animal is his spiritual life. Another thing that comes to light here is that there exists between the Creator and **His** creation an extremely delicate, subtle and personal relationship, of which no one else is aware. Even the Holy Prophet^{SAW} knew only when **Allah** disclosed to him how **His** relationship with some persons had deteriorated to an extent that **He** had denied them the opportunity to repent. Since this personal relationship differs from person to person, **His** blessings also vary correspondingly.

The Wisdom behind Collective Zikr

The reason why Ṣūfī masters prescribe collective Zikr is that the Divine Lights diversify from individual to individual. Thus, the greater the number of par-

ticipants, the greater will be the variety of Divine Lights descending upon them, forming a bouquet of blessings. This also is the secret behind congregational Ṣalāt. These rewards lie within the domain of the Qalb. But those who do not care will realise when this material world and its comforts end, and only those blessings shall last which are related to the spiritual life. The oral and mental acceptance carries no weight before **Allah**, unless supported by the endorsement of the Qalb. Just as the physical body is born into this material world, the Qalb is also given life once it endorses the Divine Message. But practically people concentrate all their attention upon the development of their physical selves, leaving their Qulūb to gasp in desperation, and ultimate death. Don't we see how people born as Muslims are plunging into infidelity; with their physical senses intact they have lost the hearing and vision of their Qulūb. May **Allah** protect us!

Section 2

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| <p>8. And of people there are some who say, "We believe in Allah and in the Ākhirah". But they do not really believe.</p> | <p>وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾</p> |
| <p>9. They deceive Allah and those who believe. But they deceive none except themselves, and they perceive it not.</p> | <p>يُخٰدِعُونَ اللّٰهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ
اِلَّا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾</p> |
| <p>10. In their hearts is a disease and Allah has increased their disease. And grievous is their punishment because of their persistent lying.</p> | <p>فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللّٰهُ مَرَضًا
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٠﴾</p> |
| <p>11. And when they are told: "Do not make mischief on the earth". They answer: "We are only improving things".</p> | <p>وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْاَرْضِ قَالُوا
اِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾</p> |
| <p>12. They are, without doubt, mischief mongers. But they realise not.</p> | <p>اَلَا اِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلٰكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾</p> |
| <p>13. And when they are told: "Believe the way others believe", they cynically reply: "Should we be-</p> | <p>وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ
قَالُوا اَتُؤْمِنُ كَمَا ءَامَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ اَلَا اِنَّهُمْ هُمُ
السُّفَهَاءُ وَلٰكِنْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾</p> |

lieve as the fools believe?" Indeed it is they who are the fools, but they know not.

14. And when they meet those who believe, they assert: "We Believe". But when alone with their devils, they say: "We are actually with you, we were only making fun"

15. Allah (in return) mocks them and allows them to wander blindly in their transgression.

16. It is they who have traded guidance for error, but neither their trade has brought them gain, nor have they found guidance.

17. They are like the one who kindled a fire and as soon as it lit up his surroundings, Allah took away their light and left them in utter darkness, wherein they cannot see.

18. Deaf, dumb and blind, they will not turn back.

19. Or it is like a rain laden cloud from the sky, in it is darkness, thunder and lightning. They press their fingers into their ears to block out the thunderclap, in terror of death. And Allah surrounds the non-believers.

20. The lightning almost takes away their sight. Whenever it gives them light, they walk therein, but

وَإِذَا الْقَوَا أَلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا
خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيْطَانِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ
مُسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ
يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا
رَبِحَتْ بِحَرَّتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا
أُضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ
وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

صَمٌّ بكمُ عَمًى فهُمْ لَا يُرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ
وَيَرْقُ يُجْعَلُونَ أَصْبَعَهُمْ فِي ءَاذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ
حَذَرًا لِّلْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ
مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

when darkness grows on them they stand still. And if Allah so willed, He could take away their faculty of hearing and seeing. Indeed Allah has power over everything.

لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ إِنَّا اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Identification of a Hypocrite

Another kind of disbelief far more damaging, is hypocrisy. The first five Āyāt of this Section praise the believers, the next two explain disbelief while the following thirteen discuss hypocrisy to highlight this menace. Just as the hypocrite is more harmful, so is the punishment for hypocrisy far more severe than plain disbelief. The hypocrites will be confined to the lowest levels in Hell even below the infidels. This is because they only pretend to believe in Allah and the Day of Judgement. They try to deceive Allah, but how can they do it? They pretend to be Muslims but inwardly are enemies of the believers. Thus deceiving the sincere believers is in reality an attempt to deceive Allah.

The term *those who believe* refers to the Companions^{-RAU}, and the worst non-believers were those, who in spite of taking Shahadah, failed to develop any relationship with them, and were jealous of the progress and prosperity of the Muslims. It is said here that this conduct of the hypocrites is not harming the believers but is being disastrous for their own selves. They just deceive themselves unwittingly. This means that the love for the Companions^{-RAU} or sincerity towards them is a criterion of a person's faith; otherwise despite taking Shahadah, he will remain a hypocrite. And if he openly disparages them he becomes a non-believer. It is an open secret that all the pretenders of the Islamic faith have invariably targeted the Companions^{-RAU} for criticism. These may either be deniers of Ḥadīth or the pretenders of Prophethood, who wanted, without exception, to interpret the Qurān in a way that would serve their purpose. This could not be achieved without repudiating the Companions^{-RAU} who were the living interpretation of the Qurān. The Companions^{-RAU} learnt the Qurān directly from the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, acted upon it in his presence and obtained his endorsement. So now any preacher of infidelity in the guise of Islām has to begin with raising objections against them, which indeed is the greatest proof of hypocrisy. Some fallacious sects have not only resorted to abuse the Companions^{-RAU}, but have also given it the status of worship. They

are indeed a mixture of disbelief and hypocrisy, because of holding common traits with the disbelievers and the hypocrites. This is because their hearts are maligned and a diseased heart cannot absorb love, it rather develops the stinks of jealousy and malice. As a result, their opposition to the believers grows stronger by the day and *Allah increases their disease*. The hostility towards the Aulia is indeed hostility towards **Allah**, and failure to repent results in Divine Condemnation. Alas! If man, so caring about his body, would only have paid some attention to his spiritual health too, and looked for a healer, who could reform and enlighten his heart! But when the hearts remain afflicted, a painful doom is the natural consequence. In short, the standard or yardstick of belief and conduct are the Companions^{-RAU}, and their contradiction is downright hypocrisy destined to a grievous retribution.

And when they are told: "Do not make mischief ...improving things".

And when the hypocrites are told not to create trouble in the land, they say, that they desire correction. This Āyah sets a standard for mischief and reformation. If no limits are laid down, even a dacoit does not consider himself mischievous, rather, seeks justification for his actions. Personal opinions do not matter, unless the verdict is given by the Creator of this universe. **Allah** has termed those who inwardly opposed Islām, as mischief-mongers.

The Reality of Mischief

Reformation is thus synonymous to the precepts and practice of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} in all matters, whether worship or mutual dealings, as followed by the Companions^{-RAU}. And anything contrary to this will fall under the category of mischief. For example, Ṣalāt al-Fajr has two obligatory cycles. If someone offers only one it is not correct. And if he offers three, the third would nullify his other two as well. Thus, the standard of all goodness and reformation is the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} himself. Whosoever disagrees with him in any matter is indeed a mischief monger. Many celebrities have lived in history and every nation has its heroes as a source of pride. But how many of them have left a final word on any issue? Not even one! They enacted laws, laid down rules and regulations, which subsequently they themselves amended, proving that man-made laws always suffer from flaws. The Holy Prophet^{-SAW} is the only one, who fourteen centuries ago, gave a Divine Code of Life, a law, a social structure to mankind, which is so comprehensive and complete that neither time could render it obsolete, nor could any thinker present anything better. The ways taught by the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} to do things, are in reality the best. There can never be any better ways of doing things; rather a deviant will be a mischief monger, no matter how good he might think of his actions.

Now see the situation from another perspective that whatever the Prophet^{-SAW} said was practically acted upon by the Companions^{-RAU}. In other words, the practice of the Companions^{-RAU} is the most agreeable and pleasing presentation of any action. Thus any one opposing them will be mischievous. This indeed is the criterion of reformation and mischief; otherwise the hypocrites too claim to promote reformation. But **Allah** declares them as mischief mongers, though they fail to understand that every action produces a twofold effect: firstly, the outward and the short-lived, secondly the inward and the eternal. Outwardly, the illegitimate food eliminates hunger and may not cause any indigestion either, but inwardly, it creates a darkness, which not only darkens the Qalb, but also affects the surroundings to an extent. Similarly, every action in accordance with the Sunnah generates a light, and becomes a source of illumination and virtue in the environment. But every action in contravention of the Sunnah creates darkness and becomes a source of destruction in the society. This is what 'mischief on land' means, and the ignorant often term it as reformation, but the reality cannot be altered by merely switching names.

And when they are told: "Believe as the others ... as the fools believe?"

But little do they realise that their cynicism may be the greatest folly with **Allah**. Indeed, it is the darkness of their souls, which drives them to speak such words. When told to believe and act like the Companions^{-RAU}, their response is always negative. To them the Companions^{-RAU} are fanatics, who do not act wisely; while they wish to accept the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, but act in their own ways. Are they not indeed foolish? Certainly it is very foolish to take one's own intellect as one's guide, against the Divine Guidance coming through the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. Wise are the ones who consider their own wisdom of no significance before the sayings of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} and adhere to his teachings. For they realise that disobedience to him is the greatest of all follies. Those who disagree with the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, whether in belief or conduct, are not only foolish but also ignorant; for knowledge means perception of the reality, otherwise it is downright ignorance.

When they meet ... only making fun "

When the hypocrites meet the believers, they declare their fidelity to Islām. But when they revert back to their chieftains, they confess their loyalty to them, adding that they were just joking with the Muslims. With this description of the duplicity of the hypocrites, their chieftains have been called devils. In other words, all those who invent paths contradictory to the true faith and try to misguide people, play the role of the devil.

Allah himself mocks them.

It means that **Allah** disgraces such hypocrites by giving them respite, which drives them further into the abyss of ignorance. They apparently rejoice over their sly duplicity through which they enjoy the benefits of Islām, and at the same time manage to evade situations demanding sacrifice. They fail to understand that the real gain lies in sacrificing. Blessed indeed is the person whose faculties, schedules and wealth are dedicated to the Cause of **Allah**. On the contrary, the hypocrites are the people who have bartered waywardness for guidance.

These are they who have traded error for guidance.

Error and guidance are two opposite attitudes, which cannot co-exist. Divine Guidance is the basic human need. Whosoever opts for waywardness indeed rejects guidance. Here is a point to ponder for today's erroneous society, which practically contradicts Islām and yet considers itself to be on the right track. Rather, it tries to combine guidance and error, which is absolutely impossible. The hypocrites are at utter loss in their bargain.

They are like the one who kindled a fire.

They can be compared to a people who lost their way in the wilderness on an eerie dark night. Bewildered, they lit a fire, which illuminated the surroundings. But **Allah** snapped its luminosity, leaving them in total lurch. Man by nature, is a seeker of guidance. Before the advent of Islām, the darkness of ignorance prevailed all over and people wished desperately for a light to shine on their way. Then dawned upon them the light of the Revelation that illuminated the entire environment! But the ingrates could not value it, were deprived of the light and they no longer could benefit from it. Thus they were left to wander aimlessly in the wilderness of ignorance.

Deaf, dumb and blind they will not turn back.

They can neither see nor hear, nor speak. When their inborn capacity to receive guidance was lost, it paralysed their senses. They can neither speak nor hear, and when the senses are lost there is no turning point for them. They continue to pursue their evil ways. They are like the people stranded in a rain-storm attended by wind and thunder. Scared of death, they plug their ears against thunderclaps. But how can this futile planning save them from Divine Wrath, as they stand surrounded by **Him**. They take a few steps, but stand still in the intervals between the blinding flashes of lightning, totally helpless like a wayfarer caught in the thunderstorm in a dark night.

Similar was the condition of mankind when the Holy Prophet^{SAW} appeared, flashed upon it as the light, and led it in the right direction. Whenever these

hypocrites pay heed to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, they feel inclined towards virtue. But when their inborn darkness overtakes them, they remain standing dumb founded in the pit of their waywardness. Had Allah willed, He would have deprived them of their eyes, ears and all the faculties. Since they failed to see and hear the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, why should they be allowed to have eyes and ears at all? And Allah is All-Powerful to do so. This world is a trial and a respite for a period ordained. If a person opts for the right path, it is for his own good; otherwise he is free to spend his life as he pleases. Such free lancers will certainly be deprived of their faculties in the Ākhirah and will stand on the Day of Judgement as deaf, dumb and blind. In the Hell they will bray like donkeys, an outcome of their misdeeds. This is invisible to the physical vision now. May Allah protect us!

Section 3

21. O mankind! Worship your **Rabb**, **Who** created you and those before you, so that you may remain conscious of **Him**.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ
وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

22. **Who** has made the earth your carpet and the sky a canopy and has sent down rain from the sky and with it, has brought forth fruits for your sustenance. So do not, knowingly, set up rivals with **Allah**.

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً
وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ
رِزْقًا لَكُمْ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

23. And if you doubt what **We** have revealed to **Our** servant, then produce a Sūrah of this merit and call your helpers beside **Allah**, if you are truthful.

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا
بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ، وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ
اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

24. But if you cannot and most certainly you cannot, then beware of the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for those who do not believe.

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي
وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

25. And give good news to those who embrace faith and act righteously,

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

that, for them are Paradise, beneath which streams flow. Every time they are given its fruit to eat, they exclaim, "We have received this before!" For, they will be given things resembling. For them will be spouses pure. And therein they will live forever.

كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأُتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

26. Allah does not mind to quote the example of even a gnat or anything lesser. Believers know that it is the truth from their Rabb. But those who do not believe say, "What does Allah mean by such an example?" By this He causes many to go astray and guides many. Yet He causes none to stray except the evildoers.

﴿٢٦﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

27. Those who break their solemn promise with Allah after its confirmation. And break what Allah has ordered to be joined and make mischief on earth. It is they who are the losers.

الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

28. How can you refuse to acknowledge Allah, seeing that He gave you life, when you were lifeless. Then He will cause you to die and will give you life again. And to Him you shall ultimately be brought back.

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

29. It is He Who has created for you all that is in the earth, then He applied His design to the heavens and balancea them into seven heavens. And He has the perfect knowledge of all things.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Two Nations

*O mankind! Worship your **Rabb**, ...may remain conscious of **Him**.*

After indicating the difference between faith and disbelief, and the corresponding qualities, **Allah** divides the entire human race in two nations; the believer and the non-believer. This is not just an idle talk; rather, the criterion has been laid down. Those disbelievers have also been identified who claim to be Muslims but hold false beliefs and cause trouble in the name of reformation. This is the most dangerous form of disbelief. By no means are they a third nation, but are amongst the disbelievers. After the right and wrong have been manifested, there is a general invitation to the entire mankind. People are asked to give up their erroneous paths and to embrace and practice what is true, and to worship the Creator, owing all their loyalties to **Him** alone. **He** is the **Rabb**, which means that **He** is fulfilling all needs of the entire creation continuously and simultaneously, and is gradually taking everything towards its climax.

The essence of worship is obedience, and the basic instinct behind obedience is to acquire some gain or else, at a secondary level to avert a loss. This is indeed the stimulant behind all human activity. No one undertakes any venture without hoping to gain something out of it. In this pursuit, he obeys anyone who to his mind, can help him in attaining his goal. Although **Allah** deserves to be worshipped unconditionally as the Supreme Being yet to comprehend this is beyond the normal level of understanding. Therefore, the invitation towards **Allah** is extended by introducing **Him** through **His** Attribute of Sustenance *Worship your **Rabb** as **He** is your Creator, and also the Creator of your ancestors.* When **He** has created, **He** will certainly provide the means of sustenance. Here the Attribute of Creating is presented as evidence to **His** Providence. Besides, the emphasis on the point: *created all those before you*, clarifies that this Ummah is the last to come, as it gives no hint about any succeeding Ummah. **He** alone is the Creator and the rest all are created. The 'created' is always dependent for its own existence, and cannot possibly provide for and sustain others. The best way for the mankind is to realise **His** greatness as the only Creator and Sustainer, and obey **Him**. This will certainly help develop Taqwa, generally translated as fear. Infact it is a state of the heart, a deep-rooted devotion that compels a person to obey **Allah**, and the very idea of annoying **Him** becomes unbearable.

Allah's Cognition, the Reason for Human Superiority

Man has been blessed with the ability and the power to attain **Allah's** cognition, while the rest of the creation is instinctively obeying **Him**, whether it is the sun, the moon, the earth, the seasons or the wind. In short, each and every particle of this universe is busy observing its own pattern of obedience to **Allah**. They only follow the instructions and have no other choice. They have no knowledge of **His** Elegance, **His** Magnificence and **His** Splendour, because they have not been given the capability to conceive it. This power is associated with Prophethood, and is an honour conferred upon mankind only.

Human personality has two aspects. In one, man is no different than other creation, for example, birth, death, sickness, health, appearance, gender, poverty or richness etc. These are beyond his control and he too flows with the decisions of destiny. However, the other aspect of his personality is the sense to appreciate beauty and employ various means to fulfil this instinct. This is the stimulating force behind his struggle for attaining an abode, raiment and food. Whereas the attractions and the beauty of this world lie bare before him, the capacity to attain **Allah's** cognition has also been bestowed on him. If the latter is lost, all efforts are diverted to the attainment of mundane pleasures. And if he manages to attain even an iota of Divine Cognition, he is ready to sacrifice the beauty of the entire world for it. Once he beholds the Divine Grace, he can never turn back to temporal desires. The spirit that keeps him anxious to sacrifice everything for **Allah**, is called Taqwa, attainable through worship. **He** is far beyond the access of human intellect, understanding and imagination. The physical eye cannot behold **Him**, and there is no simile, which can facilitate imagination. How can then one attain **His** recognition and nearness? The only course open is of **His** worship and obedience. **His** Light illuminates the forehead doing Sajdah in submission before **Him**, and the heart that adores **Him** becomes the reception centre of **His** Splendour. Worship is the only means to attain **His** cognition. And if a trace of **His** cognition is acquired, it leads to more worship, as one seeks to adore **Him** endlessly. Anyone who does not obey **Allah** or invents his own ways of worship and yet claims accomplishment is unreliable. Remember that only that worship is valid and sound, which leads to **His** cognition. And cognition shall pave the way for further worship eliminating the desire for momentary pleasures and temporary excellence such as Kashf and Karāmah. These may be acquired automatically, but are not the goal. This is an important point, because some seekers, when blessed with Kashf, begin to believe that they have attained the goal and become less zealous towards their worship, which impedes progress. They sometimes get so much engrossed in it that they eventually lose all that they had achieved. The seekers must be extremely cautious and must not settle for any-

thing other than **Allah**. May **Allah** bless us with **His** love and with the love of **His** beloved Prophet^{-SAW}!

Who has made the earth your carpet

Allah is so Powerful, that **He** has created the earth as a place of comfort for mankind, which inspite of its spherical shape is levelled for everyone. It is equipped with all the necessities and provisions of life for its inhabitants, soft enough to be scooped with a needle and hard enough to bear the weight of castles. It is so trustworthy that it gives every living being its due share, without depriving the other. It does not give away the share of the future occupants to the present dwellers and vice-versa. Full of treasures, the life-giving water flows through its veins. A beautiful resting-place equipped with all provisions of life but not a place of permanent abode, only a break in the journey. We have to move on to the real destination.

The sky is a canopy for the earth, free from any support. Everyone benefits from it without ever having to worry for its repair and maintenance. It distributes to all what is ordained, but does not take anything in return. It is a canopy, which by virtue of its creation will remain intact till the Yaum al-Qiyamah. Thither, the water descends on earth. **Allah** is so Powerful that **He** diffuses the water in the atmosphere. Winds carry the clouds and as they begin to pour, water is splashed over the land, often spurting out of rivers and brooks. It is a demonstration of **Allah's** Omnipotence that **He** keeps it suspended in the air. It is a famous proverb that anything descending from above is said to be coming from the heavens and it is quite possible that the water originally came from there. Stranger than the downpour are its effects on the soil, making flowers bloom in a spectrum, crops ready for harvest and fruits ready to be picked. Colourless and tasteless itself, water dispenses a wide range of tastes and colours all around us, and is vital for the production of food for us.

In short, the creation of mankind, the earth and the sky with all their excellence and meritorious qualities are all manifestations of **Allah's** Omnipotence, and symbols of **His** Greatness. Any excellence or virtue, whether personal or universal, is from **Him**. It is **He**, **Who** fashions human figures in the wombs in blood and filth. **He** has created the earth and the sky and dissipates greenery and fertility by showering water. Will man ignore **Allah** and begin to worship the clouds, the mountains, the trees and the stones instead? If he does so he will still fail to worship each and every one of them, and will not gain anything, as these things are themselves dependant on **Him**. Therefore, do not ascribe partners to **Allah**, nor worship anyone besides **Him**, especially after witnessing these living manifestations of **His** Magnificence. Islām indeed is the acceptance of the Unity of **Allah** and **His** Attributes. It is the only way of at-

taining peace and tranquillity in life, so that no transition in life may ever depress man. Rather every upheaval begins to depict **His** Magnificence. Since no one but **He** becomes the focus of all hopes, there can be no frustration. Anyone attaining this state can move the mountains with his toe as **Allah's** support accompanies him. And if a relationship is not developed with **Him**, there is no peace at all. Be it a king or a pauper, anxiety becomes his lot.

And finally, who introduced the concept of Unity and acquainted humanity with **Allah's** Greatness? Who delivered mankind from the worship of creation and adorned their foreheads with the light of the One and the Only Supreme Being? And what was the panacea he had, which turned raw copper into pure gold? This celebrity is the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} and that panacea is the Qurān.

If someone thinks that like so many other fabricated religions, Islām is also an invention of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, he has to face the Divine challenge: If this Book, which the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} has presented before mankind, is a human endeavour, then let all the non-believers unite to produce something similar to it or just one Āyah like it. It was impossible for them, despite the fact that the Arabs living in the sparsely inhabited desert without any schools or educational institutions, rearing camels and goats, were naturally gifted with such eloquence and wisdom that their poetry and prose amazed the non-Arab writers. Amongst these Arabs was a personality, born in a noble family, an orphan who experienced the tragic death of his mother in early childhood, and shortly thereafter the loss of his grandfather. By worldly standards, he was a destitute in childhood who never attended any literary congregation. His childhood was spent in a family of shepherds and when he grew up, he had to look after the herds on wages to help his poor uncle Abū Ṭalib, who had a large family to support. He never indulged in poetry nor composed an ode, nor had any inclination towards such things. Being totally unlettered, he was blessed with the highest morals, and his honesty and trustworthiness were adorned with such wisdom and sagacity that he was honoured by all and became known as Ṣādiq (truthful) and Amīn (trustworthy).

Having spent forty years of such a noble life amongst his people, he begins to present a Scripture, which outclasses the literary skills of all poets and authors in term of its text and composition. At the same time, he declares it to be a Divine Message. His personal conduct, his nobility and his truthfulness were enough to make people accept it, as expressed by Walīd bin Mughīrah during a meeting of the Makkans. He said: "It is very difficult to accept that a person, who never lied about anyone in forty years, can suddenly begin to lie about **Allah.**"

And if you doubt ... for those who do not believe

Nevertheless, those having doubts about the Qurān being **Allah's** Message are welcome to bring a single **Āyah** similar to it, and to call anyone for their assistance in presenting **Āyāt** of such eloquence and rhetoric, covering complete human civilisation, imparting guidance on politics and government, social norms as well as matters of trade and commerce, family relationships and standards for friendship and enmity.

Therefore, this Qurān is certainly a Divine Message. Had it been a human brainchild people all over the world would have competed to possibly produce similar or a better version. But this is impossible because the man-made and the Divine creation are poles apart. Man can manufacture jetliners but cannot make a fly. Any machine cannot make a wisp of hay. When there is no comparison here, how can anyone possibly produce a Scripture like the Qurān, which is an Attribute of **Allah**, **His** Personal Word, outside the pale of **His** creation? The most voluminous books of the world fail to discuss any single topic completely, inspite of the fact that their scope is limited to the span of human life from birth to death. The Qurān not only reveals the period before human birth, but also the times prior to the very creation of the universe. It converses at length over the creation of the universe, of man and his requirements, and of the means of attaining them. It goes on discussing human culture, social norms and realities pertaining to death and its aftermath. The Qurān presents this short span of worldly life as a foundation for the eternal life of **Ākhirah** and certainly only a Divine Scripture can do that.

While the human intellect laboured on many a stratagem in formulating various codes of life, yet no one could present an exemplary society like the one that emerged through the practice of the Qurānic teachings. This is not a fable but an historical fact, which even the anti Islām forces are compelled to accept. The cultures of a society are the ramifications of the requirements of a particular time; as times change, the cultures also begin to distort. A man-made law can never remain applicable or useful forever; infact the very legislative agencies, which formulate a law, sooner or later are forced to amend it.

The civilisation based on Qurānic laws is eternal. It is neither confined to geographical boundaries, nor affected by the passage of time. In fact these laws are applicable, practicable and beneficial in every era, for every nation. Any virtue in a society, when carefully analysed, will owe its existence to its unperceived compliance to Qurānic teachings in that particular field. The principles of the Qurān are so wonderful that even if a non-believer adopts them gains worldly benefits, although his disbelief deprives him of eternal salvation. Then the spectacular historical events, which could be known only

through the distinguished Jews and Christian scholars, were reported with flawless accuracy by a personality who had never stepped in a school in his life. Leaving the reports of past events aside, just see how true his prophecies proved to be. Like the prophecy about the Romans regaining power after their crushing defeat, seemingly impossible at that time, did come true and the disbelievers lost all their bettings.

At the time of Hudaibiyah Truce, the tidings of the conquest of Makkah, and of the believers performing 'Umrah fearlessly in the company of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, was given by the Qurān. And a 'Great Victory' preceding the conquest of Makkah was also foretold. Now, a contingent of fourteen hundred souls denied permission to perform 'Umrah by the Makkans, are returning unhappy after signing a treaty, the terms of which are apparently favourable to the disbelievers and the Quran proclaims it to be a prelude to the conquest of Makkah and a great victory! History bears witness that this retreating contingent from Hudaibiyyah set off for Khyber, and after crushing the Jewish forces lodged in the fort, performed Sajdah before **Allah**, thanking **Him** for blessing them with a great victory. And take a look at the conquest of Makkah that followed and see how true the prophecies of the Qurān proved to be. Many a bosom secret, buried deep in people's breasts and never expressed, were revealed by the Qurān and were later confessed by them. Moreover, the unexplainable pleasure and exhilaration derived from its recitation and audience is not only enjoyed by a believer but also mesmerizes a non-believer.

The knowledge of the Qurān has not been completely encompassed by anyone to date, nor will it ever be possible in the future. It holds a fathomless ocean of secrets and deep meanings only known to **Allah**. And its open challenge to the Jews on matters, apparently within their control that they simple cannot do so, like asking them to wish for death if they were truthful. Indeed the Jews, in spite of their extreme hostility, dared not accept this challenge. Not even a single punctuation mark could be altered in spite of all the joint efforts of its enemies. **Allah** had made the hearts of the believers its abode, whereby even a child can correct the most erudite person making a mistake.

All these facts notwithstanding, the Divine announcement that all human beings put together cannot produce even a single Āyah comparable to the Qurān testifies that it is **His** Scripture. The entire Arabia failed to come up with anything remotely similar to the Qurān, or even to make a false claim to that effect. Had anything similar to the Qurān ever been presented, it would have been recorded in history. And all those striving with their wealth and life during the past fourteen centuries to eliminate Islām, would certainly have capitalised on it, but they failed to outclass the Qurān. Even today the Qurān challenges each and every person to come up and offer a complete code of life if

they can; a system so pure and ideal for the human temperament that people convert to it willingly, abandoning their own customs and traditions, and it is enforced on the world in a short period, Never! Then beware of the Fire foretold by the Quran, of which the fuel is rocks and the people who refute the Qurānic teachings. But for the believers are the glad tidings.

And give good news to those who believe ... therein they will live forever.

Those who accept the Unity of **Allah** and the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}, and practise the Qurānic teachings, shall reside in Paradise, beneath which streams flow. The Arabic word Tahti-ha has been translated as 'beneath' here, but it may also mean that the streams will be under the command of the dwellers of Paradise.

The Meaning of Min Tahti-ha (beneath)

The plantation and growth of gardens depends on the availability of canals in this world. But in Paradise, the streams will have to flow wherever the gardens shall be. This is endorsed by a saying of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} that in Paradise the springs shall change course as commanded by the dwellers. The fruit offered to the residents would be similar to the fruit of this world in appearance, but different in taste. They will be blessed with chaste women, who would have either been created in the Paradise or the believing women admitted to it. A married believing couple will be reunited in Paradise. The non-believer spouses will be accordingly replaced by a Divine plan; for instance believing women who had died as spinsters, or those whose husbands were non-believers, will be given into the marriage of those believing men who were either bachelor, or had non-believing wives. Chastity, cleanliness and purity are the characteristics of Paradise. There will be no excretions, neither will the women go through any phase of impurity, nor will there be any impurity of morals, but there will be perfection of beauty, character and physical appearance. In short, the basic needs for food, abode and spouse, as well as all the desires of the fortunate ones entering Paradise, will be fulfilled in a splendid way, free of any form of pollution. There will be no posterity, nor will there be any need for it. All the bounties in Paradise shall be eternal, so much so that all the dwellers of Paradise will be permanently returned to youth. But all these pleasures put together shall not match the pleasure of seeing **Allah**! The real meaning of the verse: *The believers love Allah the most* will be practically demonstrated in Paradise, the place where desires are fulfilled and the dreams realised!

These pure women will be the models of perfection in terms of their beauty, morals and temperament and the spouses will together reside in Paradise forever. In other words, all the bounties that a human being covets in this world

viz. palaces, affluence, health, best food, a noble companion, will be the hallmarks of eternal life in Paradise. To qualify for it, one must induct Qurān in practical life both in letter and in spirit.

A brief account of Paradise and Hell is given here. The Qurānic view is that the human being is immortal, this ephemeral existence being one of the stations of life, but a term of trial for the eternal life. If this span of life is lived in compliance with Divine Injunctions it will result in eternal salvation, which will be a great triumph. Otherwise, it will be a tremendous loss! To prove that the result of this life will be seen in the eternal life of the Ākhirah, it has been argued that when a human being does not undertake any futile venture, how could it be expected of the Creator of this universe to make something meaningless and in vain. So the end result of the creation of mankind will be **His** nearness for the obedient, manifested as Paradise, and **His** distance from the disobedient, manifested as Hell. From amongst **His** creation even the most insignificant insects like a fly or a mosquito bear witness to **Allah's** Powers, and **He** does not hesitate to quote them as examples.

Allah does not mind to quote ...none to stray except the evildoers.

Now, when the disbelievers could not meet the Qurānic challenge of producing a single Āyah of its kind, they resorted to baseless objections: "Had it been a Divine Scripture, there would have been no mention of a fly and a mosquito". The Qurān makes a mention of these small insects to highlight the worthlessness and helplessness of the idols that cannot even ward off a fly, and to bring home to the idolaters that idol worship cannot give them any benefit. It is said 'Why should **Allah** be embarrassed while mentioning a fly or a mosquito?' Besides, this creation though tiny in structure, speaks volumes on **His** creative skills. A mosquito obtains its food, builds an abode, procreates and moves around at free will! Who has placed such understanding and sense in a tiny body having wonderful physical features? Take the example of a fly; look at its tiny head, its two eyes, each having approximately eighteen thousand eyes! Who teaches the bee to build a hive, obtain nectar for making honey, obey its queen and to protect and raise its young? All praise be to **Him**! The teachings of Qurān can be compared to rainfall, which brings many blessings with it. While the rain causes the flowers to bloom, it makes the piles of garbage to stink. Similarly, the believers derive comfort and peace of mind from the Qurān while the wrongdoers are confused and led further astray because of their impiety and evil conduct.

Those who break their solemn promise ... they who are the losers.

Such people break the Covenant taken from the entire mankind, in the Realm of Spirits. When asked, *Am I not your Rabb?* All replied, *Yes, we bear witness*

(7:172). But once born in this world, physical self and spirit together, man contravened this Covenant by obeying and pinning his hopes on those other than **Allah**. Those who claim to be believers, but actually indulge in sin, also fall in the category of Covenant breakers. They disobey **Allah's** commands and actually indulge in mischief, irrespective of their claim of promoting peace. If the beliefs are against Islām, they create mischief in beliefs; and if actions are contrary to Islām, they cause mischief in practice. History bears witness to the fact that mankind only experienced peace and tranquillity under the benevolent rule of Islām. Elsewhere firearms are employed to enforce peace! The effect of a sin does not remain confined to the sinner alone, but spreads around and becomes a source of destruction across the globe, for which he is responsible, proportionate to his contribution. Those who create trouble on **Allah's** land will never be exonerated before **Him**. **He** warns the deniers of **His** Greatness and **His** Attributes.

How can you refuse to acknowledge Allah, ... ultimately be brought back.

He brought you to life from a state of non-existence! Even after the creation of the universe, you were no more than lifeless particles, scattered in the atoms of various foods and water in the world. **He** gathered the Four Elements of your physical body through various stages and stored the seed in the loins of your father and the bosom of your mother. In the womb of the mother, through various developmental stages, **He** fashioned the body and gave you life, which shall culminate in death and the body will scatter in elements once again. This is the rule in general, whereas the physical bodies of the Prophets and the martyrs remain intact.

The aim is not to discuss the life in Barzakh here, because that too is a temporary abode. Neither is it the place for action, nor of recompense. Rather it is a waiting place till the Day of Resurrection and the nature of stay will be according to one's status. Here only the permanent life is being discussed, that **Allah** will reassemble all the particles and bring mankind to life. No one shall then be allowed respite for action, but all will return to and stand before **Him** for reckoning.

It is He Who has created ...has the perfect knowledge of all things.

Allah is so kind that **He** created everything on earth to serve the mankind. Then **He** created the seven heavens with perfection. **He** indeed is the Knower of everything. The earth, the heavens, and their bounties like days and nights, sun, moon, fruits and flowers, crops, rivers and oceans, lightening and winds, are the forces created by **Allah**, for the service of man. Then how can it be proper for him to forsake the Creator and worship any of the creations meant for his service? Such behaviour becomes even more absurd and ridiculous.

Considering the fact that everything is under **His** observation and in the end everyone has to face **Him** for accountability.

Section 4

Uptil here was discussed the call to **Allah**, and the importance of worship as means of showing gratitude to **Him**, as well as **His** right of worship upon mankind, **He** being the Provider. Then the rewards of obeying **Him** and the consequences of defiance have been highlighted. Now another argument to invite people to **Allah** is being presented. Man is being asked to ponder over his beginning, how **Allah** gave him superiority in creation, and in the process, Satan became his enemy. So now if he does not obey **Allah**, he will certainly be following Satan, to whom the other path belongs, and this choice does not benefit a human being under any circumstances.

30. And when your **Rabb** addressed the angels, "Indeed I am placing a Deputy on earth". They said, "Would **You** place one who will spread corruption therein and shed blood? While we glorify **You** with **Your** praise and proclaim **Your** Holiness". **He** replied, "I know that which you do not know".

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّیْ جَاعِلٌ فِی الْاَرْضِ خَلِیْفَةًۭۙۙۙ قَالُوْۤا اَتَجْعَلُ فِیْهَا مَنْ یُّفْسِدُ فِیْهَا وَیَسْفِكُ الدِّیْمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَۙۙۙ قَالَ اِنِّیْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾

31. And **He** imparted to **Ādam** the names of all things. Then **He** placed them before the angels and said, "Tell **Me** their names if you are right".

وَعَلَّمَ ءَادَمَ الْاَسْمَآءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَی الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ فَقَالَ اَنْۢبِئُوْنِیْ بِاَسْمَآءِ هٰۤؤُلَآءِۙۙۙ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِیْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾

32. They said, "Glory be to **You**! We have no knowledge, except that which **You** have given us. Indeed **You** are All-Knowing, Most Wise".

قَالُوْۤا سُبْحٰنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَاۤ اِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَاۙۙۙ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَلِیْمُ الْحَكِیْمُ ﴿۳۲﴾

33. **He** said, "O **Ādam**! Tell them their names". As soon as he had

قَالَ یٰۤاٰدَمُۙۙۙ اَنْۢبِئْهُمْ بِاَسْمَآئِهِمْۙۙۙ فَلَمَّآ اَنْۢبَاَهُمْ

told them their names, **Allah** said, "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the heavens and the earth and I know what you reveal and what you conceal"?

34. And when **We** commanded the angels, "Do Sajdah before **Ādam**", they all fell in Sajdah except Satan. He refused and was arrogant and was of those who deny the truth.

35. **We** said, "O **Ādam**! Dwell you and your wife in Paradise and eat freely whatever you wish, but do not approach this tree, lest you become wrong-doers".

36. Then Satan caused them to stumble therein and brought them out of their abode. And **We** said, "Get down, some of you as enemies of others. On earth is your stay and livelihood for a while".

37. Then Adam learnt some words from his **Rabb** and **He** accepted his repentance. No doubt **He** is Ever-Relenting, Most Merciful.

38. **We** said, "Get down all of you from here. There shall, nonetheless, come to you guidance from **Me**, and whosoever follows **My** guidance shall neither fear nor grieve.

39. But those who disbelieve and belie **Our** Signs, they are the dwell-

يٰۤاٰنْمَا يٰۤهٖمۡ قَالِ اَلَمْ اَقُلۡ لَّكُمۡ اِنِّىۡۤ اَعْلَمُۢمۡ غَيْۢبَ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاَعْلَمُۢمۡ مَا تُبْدُوۡنَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَكْتُمُوۡنَ ﴿٣٤﴾

وَ اِذۡ قُلْنَا لِلۡمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسۡجُدُوۡا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوۡا
اِلَّاۤ اِبۡلِیۡسَ اَبٰی وَاَسۡتَكْبَرَ وَاَنَّ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِیۡنَ

وَقُلْنَا يٰۤاٰدَمُ اسۡكُنۡ اَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا
رَعۡدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُوۡنَا
مِنَ الظَّٰلِمِیۡنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

فَاَزَلَهُمَا الشَّیْطٰنُ عَنْهَا فَاَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِیۡهِ
وَقُلْنَا اهۡبِطُوۡاۤ اَبۡعَضُكُمۡ لِبَعۡضٍ عَدُوٌّ لَّکُمۡ فِیۡ الْاَرْضِ
مُسۡتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَعٌ اِلَیَّ حِیۡنٍ ﴿٣٦﴾

فَلَقَّیۡۤ اٰدَمُ مِنْ رَّبِّهِۦۤ اٰیٰتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَیۡهِۤ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ
التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِیۡمُ ﴿٣٧﴾

قُلْنَا اهۡبِطُوۡا مِنْهَا جَمِیۡعًا فَاِمَّا یٰۤاٰتِیۡنَکُمۡ مِنِّیۡ
هُدًیۡ فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَاۤیۡ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَیۡهِمْ
وَلَا هُمْ یَحْزَنُوۡنَ ﴿٣٨﴾

وَالَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا وَكَذَّبُوۡا بِآیٰتِنَاۤ اُولٰٓئِکَ اَصْحٰبُ

ers of the Fire and therein they shall abide forever."

النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Man is Allah's Deputy on Earth

And when your Rabb addressed ... and was of those who deny the truth.

Before the creation of Prophet Ādam^{AS}, Allah informed the angels that He was going to create a deputy on earth, who would make His rule prevail and inhabit the earth according to a given plan. Although in terms of size and volume, earth is far too insignificant as compared to other planets, but its status is the highest in terms of importance and for that reason, it is the centre of attention of all the planets. Whether it is the sun or the moon, the clouds or the winds, or those living in the heavens, all are busy in its administration. It is the centre of attention of all planets and stars and fully benefits from them. While the volcanoes spew lava at one place, snow clad peaks stand at another, sand blows in the deserts while flowers bloom in the gardens. When one place is engulfed in darkness, the other is illuminated with broad daylight. Not only are there droughts and autumns but also monsoons and beautiful springs. Treasures of gold and silver as well as jewels lie buried in it. It has the capability to nurse any sown seed and yields variety of fruits. It caters for the livelihood of a tiny worm as well as gigantic animal. Wild beasts and flocks of deer are simultaneously amongst its throngs. In short, earth is the centre of attraction of all the celestial bodies. So the Almighty Allah planned to create a being, who would rightfully act as His deputy, and would run this planet according to the system approved by Him.

The words *Fil Ardh* (in the earth) indicate that man can according to his capacity exercise his right to explore, consume and exploit the resources of the earth, but not on other planets. For instance, he can utilise and benefit from the rays of the sun reaching the earth, but cannot alter the behavioural pattern of the sun. Similarly he can utilise the moonlight, but cannot modify the moon cycle, for he is only a deputy on earth. Same principle applies to other planets, if he had been given sway over them, who knows what havoc he would have played there. He holds authority even on the earth within given limitations and cannot interfere in matters he is not authorised to, for instance, he is not empowered to alter the rotation of the earth. This is because a deputy does not wield any authority by himself, but only exercises the powers delegated to him

within the framework of his responsibilities. So his first honour is of being **Allah's** deputy on a planet, which is the centre of attraction of all the heavenly bodies. The privilege to exercise given authority on all other creations on this planet is not an ordinary honour indeed. The angels had pleaded, "O **Allah!** You are the Sustainer, free from any want. Why do you plan of a creation, with the capability to select and reject? When their choice will conflict with one another, they would resort to violence and would try to impose their views on one another through war, bloodshed and mischief." Probably their apprehension was based on their previous experiences with the Jinn, who inhabited the earth long before the creation of man. They too were granted the power to exercise their choice to a certain extent, and frequently became disobedient, and were a cause of mischief and wickedness on earth. **Allah** sent down angels to destroy the disobedient, sparing only the pious. But soon trouble would start again.

Satan was one of them and was such a devout worshipper that he often resided with angels in the heavens. So the angels expressed their apprehension about this new creation and submitted that they were always at **His** service, hymning **His** praises and obeying **Him**, and thus acting as a blessing for the other creations. When there already existed a creation never defying any Divine Command, what was the secret behind the creation of yet another?

Allah said that only **He** knew best, and that the knowledge of the angels was limited. Infact all the creation is bound by a predetermined programme, within a given sphere of activity, which it cannot exceed. It only obeys **Allah**, but can neither attain **His** cognition, nor love **Him**, nor is free to make changes in its scope of action. The proposed creation would be free in its sphere of action, with the ability to make decisions. It would have the beauty of the universe spread in front of it and blessed with the faculty of appreciation. It would then be blessed with the power to appreciate the Divine Splendour, and recognising **His** Greatness, would seek **His** nearness to the extent of sacrificing its desires willingly over **His** Commands. And it would not obey only as a matter of duty, but as an act of total devotion to **Him**.

Thus the first human being, Prophet **Ādam**^{AS}, was created. He was blessed with the aforementioned powers and was given the necessary knowledge to master the universe. All the knowledge required to fulfil his needs for existence as well as for the attainment of excellence, whether physical or spiritual, was conferred upon him. Knowledge, in fact, is nothing more than a collection of names. Every word is a name for a thing, a person, a place or an action. In short, whatever amount of knowledge was required to live in the universe and to exploit its resources or to attain nearness to **Allah**, was gifted to Prophet **Ādam**^{AS}. In other words, the dictionary too, was handed down by the Creator.

Now **Allah** commanded the angels to talk over worldly skills and names, and explain the functions of various things. But how could they possibly have done it as the knowledge given to them pertained only to their assignments? The one entrusted with the administration of the clouds would have no knowledge about the mountains; and the one assigned with the distribution of provisions would not know anything else. How could they comment on anything beyond their scope? For instance they can have no idea of the pangs of hunger or the joy of satiation, or the effects of heat and cold. Therefore, they respectfully submitted; "O **Allah** Praise and Glory to **You**, only **Your** Knowledge is perfect and unlimited. We can only tell what we have been taught by **You**." Prophet **Ādam**^{AS} was now commanded to tell the names of the things presented and to explain their function and utility. When he did that, **Allah** declared: *Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the heaven and the earth. My Knowledge does not depend on anyone and I know the extrinsic as well as the intrinsic aspect of human life! See what a masterpiece have I created; having a comprehensive knowledge of the secrets of the earth and the heavens, of acquiring physical and spiritual excellence, and a knowledge of all things created. This is the creation that has the capacity to know Me. Just as the earth is the centre of attraction for all the heavenly bodies; so is human being the essence and the centre of attraction for the other creations and rightfully qualifies to be My deputy on earth.*

The angels were ordered to do Sajdah, in respect, before Prophet **Ādam**^{AS}. In the terminology of Shari'ah, Sajdah denotes a definite, formal state of a Muslim in ablution, facing the K'abah, his hands, his toes, knees, nose and forehead touching the ground. This Sajdah cannot be done before anyone except **Allah**, and is only **His** right over mankind. **He** Alone is worthy of being worshipped in this manner. Literally, it means lying on the face in submission or humility for a monarch or master. Before the advent of Islām it was customary to call the rulers or masters as **Rabb**, and do Sajdah before them. Shari'ah eliminated all such practices that could indicate polytheism. But at that time it was the beginning of mankind, and there was no fear of anyone misunderstanding it.

Now to unify all the forces scattered in the universe, and to put them to work could not have been achieved by man alone. He needed the assistance of angels already appointed on these affairs. In fact, man himself is dependent on the assistance of the angels assigned to maintain the operations of his various body organs. Maulāna Ashraf 'Alī Thānvī^{RA}, while explaining the Āyah 4:86 states that a number of angels are assigned to every human being. The processes of chewing food, swallowing, digesting and its transformation into blood, flesh and bones, excretion of waste products and functions of the heart,

brain and the sensory organs are all attended by different angels. The human body is a complex machine with delicate components, employing many technicians. Whenever the technicians, in compliance with Divine Command, cease to perform their duties in the areas assigned, there is onset of some disease. Just as the assistance of angels is necessary for a man in the maintenance of his physical self, it is equally necessary for the universe around him. Natural resources such as air, gas, minerals, celestial objects and their effects, clouds and rain need the co-operation of the angels appointed on them. **Allah** cautioned the angels that man was **His** deputy and was free to act on **His** earth, as he desired. Therefore, they must not impede his activity. Even if he kills another man, the angels must not object to it, but simply seize the spirit of the slain.

The Meaning of Sajdah

Thus in the literary sense we can say that the angels were told to bow their heads before Prophet **Ādam**^{AS} and the Sajdah did take place. After all upto now the Muslims do Sajdah before the K'abah, which is but a structure of stone and mortar. The point to understand is that it is not to the K'abah that they bow down, but to the **One Who** has appointed it as the Qiblah for the mankind for **His** worship. Had the Sajdah been for the building, it would mean that if the masonry is removed elsewhere and re-erected, it would also enjoy the status of K'abah. Will any Muslim ever do Sajdah before it? Certainly not, for it is not the masonry he worships but **Allah Who** has made the K'abah a point of descent of **His** Personal Lights. Similarly, the angels in reality, did Sajdah before **Allah**, with Prophet **Ādam**^{AS} as the Qiblah and a source of access to **Allah**, for he was crowned with Prophethood, the only way leading to **Him**. But this by no means forms a pretext for doing Sajdah for respect. Those who draw inference from this **Āyah** in favour of such a Sajdah or also from the incident of Prophet **Y'aqūb**^{AS} and his sons doing Sajdah before Prophet **Yūsuf**^{AS} must remember that, firstly, we are obliged to follow Prophet **Muḥammad**^{SAW} and not other Prophets^{AS}. Secondly Prophet **Y'aqūb**'s^{AS} Sajdah was the typical homage traditionally paid to kings, and he did it to demonstrate his extreme happiness. Otherwise it does not appeal to the heart that a Prophet^{AS} of **Allah** would demand his exalted and elderly and loving father, who is also a Prophet^{AS}, to do Sajdah before him. According to Ibn-e Kathīr, Sajdah for respect remained valid till Prophet **ʿĪsā**^{AS}, and was banned by Islām. **Allah** knows the best.

However, the angels were made to pledge service to Prophet **Ādam**^{AS}. For instance when the President appoints a Governor, immediately the entire administration of the Province is at his service, whether his orders are right or wrong is none of their concern. That is between the Governor and the Ap-

pointing Authority. But when the President himself orders the arrest of the Governor, the entire administration turns against him and arrests him. Similarly, whatever a person embarks on doing within the framework of his authority, takes place accordingly. Had **Allah** seized the urge of an adulterer at the time of the crime, or of a thief, or numbed the hands of anyone trying to misuse anything in the universe, man could no longer be held accountable. He would rather be a helpless prisoner. Therefore, when a man is involved in an activity, no matter how much to the dislike of the angels, they do not interfere, until they are told by the Supreme Ruler to do so.

Anyway, all the angels bowed down before Prophet **Ādam**^{AS}, except Satan, who wasn't an angel but resided amongst them and refused to bow out of sheer arrogance. According to Qurān, Satan was a Jinn, but a devoted one, and since the Jinn also possess a subtle body, they by virtue of their creation had access to the heavens which was denied only after the advent of the "Holy Prophet"^{SAW}, by a Divine Decree. Until then, their excursions were a normal routine. Sometimes they were driven away by the angels, while at others they would pick up some secrets enroute, add something and whisper to their agents on earth; the sorcerers. Before the creation of Prophet **Ādam**^{AS}, the wicked amongst them were often punished. But Satan proved to be such a devout that he found a place in the ranks of the angels and would often accompany the angels deputed to punish the rebel Jinn. Now when he disobeyed Divine Orders, the Qurān says: *Wa kāna min al-Kāfirīn*. Its translation; "and so became a non-believer", does not seem appropriate because it would mean that **Allah** learnt about his disbelief only after the event. While in actual fact, it had ever been in **Allah**'s Knowledge that Satan was certainly a disbeliever. He was temporarily inclined towards obedience only for the attainment of authority, and continued to progress until put to trial, when his disloyalty, hitherto known only by **Allah**, was disclosed to everyone. **Allah** too declared that he had always been a non-believer. He nurtured a desire in his heart to establish his own importance and greatness, whereas, the entire creation is of no worth vis-à-vis the Almighty, the Creator, the Sustainer. How can anyone dare to disobey **Him** and yet claim any importance for himself?

It is **Allah**, **Who** protects the humble creation from disgrace, preserves the self-respect of each and commands them to bow only before **Him** and no one else. Respect is something else and must be paid, as the status enjoyed by anyone is directly commensurate with his responsibilities. But everyone has his own rights, and in terms of being **Allah**'s creation, all do Sajdah before **Him** only. None is obliged to worship the other, which is a heinous crime and an affront to **Allah**'s Greatness. But here the obedience to man amounts to **Allah**'s obedience. The Qurān reiterates, *whosoever obeyed the Prophet*^{SAW} *indeed*

obeyed **Allah**. It reassures that this obedience does not injure the self-respect of anyone, because it is in essence the obedience of **Allah**; and this man is the pride of humanity and its greatest benefactor, as he conveys us the Message of our **Rabb**. Anyone who does not accept this fact from the core of his heart cannot become a true believer. Though the outward confession of Islām is sufficient to enjoy all the rights as a Muslim, yet sooner or later the inner disbelief manifests itself by renouncing Islām, either during one's lifetime, or at the time of death! However, as long as a person does not accept the faith from the core of his heart, he remains a non-believer with **Allah**. Satan also acquired a status from his outward devotion, just as some people today manage to be taken as saints by their outward display of devotion and worship. Satan, too, became a quasi saint but was soon exposed just as the pseudo saints will be forced to speak the reality at the approach of death. Satan was put to trial by the creation of Prophet Ādam^{AS}, and the true feelings of his heart were verbalised. Hence, whether one is an erudite or a worshipper, a saint or an orator, a general or a ruler, he owes it all to **Allah**; it is totally improper to be arrogant before **Him**. This is a satanic attitude adopted by the majority of mankind.

If a person forsakes the Sunnah and follows his own customs, he displays the same inner impurity, because he obviously thinks that he knows better than the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. It is important to look for the cure of this ailment through a spiritual master so that the vanity and arrogance are replaced by acknowledgement of **Allah**'s Greatness. Only a true descendant of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} can affect this cure, because it is from the realm of Prophethood and is extremely rare. The real excellence of Prophethood is the capability of healing the hearts through Divine Lights. And the true heirs of Prophethood are those who have acquired this excellence according to their own capacity. Otherwise it is all a façade, which will sooner or later fall apart.

We said, "O Adam! ... lest you become wrongdoers".

Now the training of Prophet Ādam^{AS} begins as to how will he live on earth. He is not being told to dwell in Paradise forever but the word *Uskūn* indicates a temporary stay, during which he and his wife may enjoy the food, clothing and begin their family life. Every new born learns the ways of life from his predecessors, but Prophet Ādam^{AS} being the very first man and also a Prophet^{AS}, receives guidance directly from **Allah**. Both are told to stay in Paradise, but as a pre-training step for their next destination, which is a place of trials and restrictions, they are told to observe a restriction here too. They are allowed to eat whatever they wish but are forbidden to go near a specified tree, lest they become transgressors. However, the description of that tree has not been given anywhere, probably because it was not required. And anything not explained by **Allah** and **His** Prophet^{SAW} need not be probed into unnecessarily. This stay

in Paradise was not like the one promised in the Ākhirah, as the latter is characterised with permanence, while this was only temporary. Thus Prophet Ādam^{AS} started to live in Paradise and began to enjoy Divine hospitality. There was no restriction on his movement besides that single restraint; he was free to eat, drink and go about at will.

Here, it is important to recall a unanimous belief that the Prophets^{AS} are innocent. If this state of innocence is detached from them even for a moment, the entire religion given by them will be rendered unreliable because of the possibility of an error. But despite this innocence Prophet Ādam^{AS} erred. The point to ponder is whether, Paradise is a place of trial and are there any restrictions imposed on its residents? Not at all, as they will be of such fine temperaments that they will naturally act piously just as the Prophets^{AS} do in their worldly existence. And is there a tree in Paradise, poisonous or harmful to the residents? Certainly not! Then why this discrimination with Prophet Ādam^{AS}? It was because he was not going to stay permanently in Paradise as a reward, but was being prepared and trained for deputation to this world. It was his school, and his mentor was **Allah Himself**. He was being trained that in the worldly life there would be restrictions together with the bounties, and an enemy would always be in search of an opportunity to mislead him, to whom he must not listen. He practically experienced it when deceived by Satan.

Then Satan ... stay and livelihood for a while "

The entry of Satan to the heavens had not been prohibited, and it is possible that he may have spoken to Prophet Ādam^{AS} from there. After all the dialogue between the dwellers of Paradise and Hell is also mentioned in the Qurān and they will also be able to see one another. So it is also possible that Satan may have spoken to Prophet Ādam from a far off distance. It also declares that Prophet Ādam^{AS} forgot. Besides, Satan swore in **Allah's** name and Prophet Ādam^{AS} thought that no one could swear in **Allah's** name over falsehood. Amidst these feelings, he ate from the forbidden tree and had to depart from Paradise. He was told that for a certain period ordained by the Almighty, he would have to live in the world, where all provisions of life are available. And he must not forget that Satan was his avowed enemy. There could never be any truce between them.

He was not sent to earth as a punishment. He had in fact been created to act as **Allah's** deputy on earth. But the mistake committed by him made his heart restless. The spouses landed miles apart from each other and had to go through hardship, though what they had violated was not a formal law of Shari'ah, nor was Paradise a place of trial.

Kashf of a Wali is no Authority for Others

This brings out a principle of Sulūk that even though the Kashf and intuition of a Wali constitutes no authority for others, yet if he himself does not abide by it, he would suffer in two ways. Firstly, he would experience decline in his spiritual status and secondly suffer worldly setbacks. However, his faith would be preserved. It must, however, be remembered that Kashf and intuition must not be contradictory to any aspect of Shari'ah whence these ought to be rejected.

Then Ādam learnt some words from his Rabb ...Ever Relenting, Most Merciful.

When Prophet Ādam^{AS} found himself in distress, he turned to **Allah**, seeking guidance. His prolonged silence became a tacit petition, which was finally answered by Divine Grace and he was taught the redeeming words. This is Providence that **He** blesses man with the knowledge necessary for him, just as **He** provides him with food and other necessities. But the blessings are bestowed commensurate with one's needs and capacity. Those content with bare bread are not forced to have butter. Similarly, knowledge is not given without quest, while a seeker is never deprived.

It has also been clarified that the recital of only those words and prayers would be beneficial, which have been prescribed by **Allah**, and taught by the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. The Barakah of those taught by the Shaikh cannot be denied but these must be in conformity with the Qurān and the Sunnah, and not invented by him. A physician can only dispense medicine for a disease, but cannot create new herbs that are within the exclusive domain of the Almighty. He is, however, given the requisite knowledge about the illness and its cure, which is his distinction. Similarly a Shaikh may prescribe the recital of certain phrases or Āyāt from the Qurān or Sunnah, according to the circumstances, but he can never invent any thing on his own accord. For example, Ḥadhrat 'Abdul Qādir Jilāni^{RLA} devoted his entire life in teaching the Qurān and the Sunnah, but his so-called followers concocted Qaṣīdah-e Ghauthia (a eulogy). Why not read what the accomplished Shaikh had read himself? Did he only recite his own eulogy?

Prophet Ādam^{AS} was also blessed with the knowledge of certain words of prayer for his deliverance. According to a majority of reports the words are: "*O our Rabb! We have wronged ourselves. If You forgive us not and have not mercy on us, we are surely of the lost.*" (7:23). If this Āyah is recited eleven times, after each Ṣalāt regularly, it will Insha **Allah** be not only a source of deliverance from any specific distress but also a perfect formula of protection against general turmoil. Thus the repentance of Prophet Ādam^{AS} was accepted

as **Allah** is most Merciful and **His** Mercy is boundless. This also highlights the fact that neither reward is mandatory to worship, nor punishment to error. Rewards are entirely **His** blessing from which **He** does not deprive **His** servants. **He** also awards punishments; though **He** may spare anyone **He** pleases. But **He** has made repentance a pre-requisite to forgiveness, without which **He** will not pardon anyone, contrary to the misplaced belief of the masses that even if not worshipped, **He** is so Generous and Merciful that **He** will still forgive them. No doubt **He** is very Generous and Merciful, but **He** is also very Just, Wise and Truthful. **He** has given **His** verdict that man has to repent for his mistakes. The acceptance depends upon **His** Mercy. Without repentance, it is foolish to expect **His** Mercy and feel over-confident. Mark **His** command:

We said, "Get down all of you from here. ... therein they shall abide forever."

Allah ordered them to leave Paradise for earth and **His** guidance will continue to come and he who, from their progeny, abides by that guidance and spends his life accordingly would neither fear nor grieve. Fear pertains to the future and grief to the past, but the followers of Divine Guidance would be free from both. For obedience, they would be blessed with bounties in the future, and would be satisfied with their past. But all those who would follow Satan and deny or refute **Allah's** guidance, their destination is Hell, where they will reside forever and shall never be admitted to Paradise. Denial and refutation are one and the same thing. Just as one might say, "I don't believe this", this is denial, while the other may say, "This is not true", it is refutation. In the *Āyah* under discussion, refutation has been mentioned alongwith denial; probably because refutation has two levels, one is verbal and the other practical that can be seen everywhere today. For example, it is accepted that *Ṣalāt* is a very important worship, but is not offered; that *Zakāt* is a duty, but never paid. Same is the case with other Divine Injunctions. When told to observe *Sunnah*, some say that it will abase them. This is the boundary of disbelief and anyone who says so cannot escape it. They may renew their faith later on, but little do they realise that these words had also invalidated their marriage, which was not renewed, and thus they indulge in adultery all their lives. The children thus begotten indulge in evil and crime because of their illegitimacy. This is the state of those who verbally and practically prefer their own customs and rituals to *Sunnah*. But there are some who do not dare to speak against the *Sunnah* and accept it as the best way of doing things, but express their inability to follow on one pretext or the other. They too, are guilty of practical refutation, which in itself is enough to condemn them to Fire, although not forever as clarified by *Aḥādīth*. The ignorant today have taken every heretic as a saint. Anyway, those who deny or refute Divine Injunctions will not be able to return to their original home i.e. Paradise, but will dwell in the Fire forever.

40. O Children of Isrā'īl! Remember My favour bestowed upon you and fulfil your promise with Me, whereupon I shall fulfil My promise with you. And of Me stand in awe.
41. And believe in what I reveal, confirming what you already have, and do not be the first to deny it. Nor sell My Ayāt for a trifling gain and of Me remain conscious.
42. And do not cover Truth with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the Truth.
43. And establish Ṣalāt, and pay Zakāt and bow down with those who bow down (in worship).
44. Do you enjoin people to be good and forget your own selves, yet you read the Book? Will you not understand?
45. And seek Allah's help through patience and Ṣalāt. It is indeed difficult save for the humble.
46. Those who are convinced that they shall meet their Rabb, and unto Him they shall return.

يٰۤاَيُّهَاۤ اِسْرٰٓءِیْلَ اذْكُرْ اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَیْكُمْ
وَاَوْفُواۤ بِعَهْدِیْ اَوْفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَاِتٰی قَارِهُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾

وَاٰمِنُوْا بِمَاۤ اَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا
تَكُوْنُوْا اَوَّلَ كٰفِرٍۭ بِهٖ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِآیٰتِیْ ثَمٰنًا قَلِيْلًا
وَإِنِّیۡ فَاتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ
وَتَكْفُرُوا بِالْحَقِّ وَانْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾

وَاقِیْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَءَاتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَارْكَعُوْا مَعَ
الرَّكَعِیْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾

۞ اَتَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ اَنْفُسَكُمْ
وَانْتُمْ تَتْلُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

وَاسْتَعِیْنُوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيْرَةٌ
اِلَّا عَلَی الْخٰشِعِیْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾

الَّذِیْنَ یُظَنُّوْنَ اَنْهُمْ مُّلتَقُوْا رَبِّهٖمْ وَاَنْهُمْ اِلَیْهِ
رٰجِعُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

As mentioned earlier, this Sūrah was revealed in Madinah, where the Jews were very influential. They owned fortresses and properties, and were successful entrepreneurs. There were renowned scholars amongst them and they also claimed to be the followers of a Divine religion.

O Children of Isrā'īl! ... And of Me stand in awe.

After highlighting the traits of a believer, the qualities of a non-believer and a hypocrite, and after extending a general invitation to the entire mankind, **Allah** directly addresses the Jews, also called 'Bani Isrā'īl' (the Children of Isrā'īl). Isrā'īl was the title of Prophet Yaqūb^{AS}, and all Prophets^{AS} from him down to Prophet 'Īsā^{AS} were from the Children of Isrā'īl. This singular honour, that the institution of Prophethood remained for centuries within Bani Isrā'īl, is in itself very grand. By the virtue of this blessing, they not only enjoyed worldly affluence and power but also the eternal bliss. One very important information given as an essential article of faith by all Prophets^{AS} to their people, including the Prophets^{AS} of Bani Isrā'īl', substantiated by Divine Books, was the advent of Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW} as 'Khātam al-Unbiya' (the Final Prophet). This was not only given as information to people but as an injunction, and believing in him was part of their faith. Anyone denying it was termed as a non-believer. So when believing in him even before his advent was mandatory for the Bani Isrā'īl, it became the basis of faith after his arrival. Now, they were not only to believe in him, but were also obliged to help him in every possible way. The Jews had long awaited the raising of the last Prophet^{SAW}, but when it actually happened they denied it.

Allah reminds them of the promise they had made with **Him**, generation after generation. If they fulfilled it, **Allah** would also honour **His** promise of blessing them with both worldly and eternal honour. And this will only be possible if they feared only **Him**, for if they attached their hopes or fears with others than **Allah**, they would also end up following the wrong path.

And believe in what I reveal...and of Me remain conscious.

The Jews must believe in the Qurān revealed by **Allah**, which not only endorses their Books Torah and the Bible as Divine Scriptures, but also practically confirms their prophecies about the advent of the last Prophet^{SAW}. Thus it does not befit the Jews to be the first to deny him, because all others who look up to them as scholars will also follow them. In that case they will not only be accountable for their own denial but also for the disbelief of others. According to Ḥadīth, a person who guides others to do good receives an equal reward, and the one who invites people to evil and invents sinful ways receives his

proportional share of their sins. Herein is a delicate point for the Sufis, lest their careless actions lead others into harbouring doubts about the Aulia, for which they will be directly responsible. And when people practise something contrary to the Sunnah, a constant burden of wrongdoing is being put on them. Therefore, a Şūfī ought to be vigilant over his habits, being a trendsetter and a guide.

The Jewish scholars are being directed not to bargain over Divine verses for mundane benefits. Even if the entire world is attained in barter, it is a petty gain. So do not alter the text of Torah, and fear **Allah** and **His** displeasure more than any other loss. The point whether scholars can receive remuneration for their jobs in the mosques or can be paid for teaching the Qurān have been discussed at length in Mu'ārif al-Qurān. But this Āyah does not refer to that; it rather warns those who sell their verdicts in matters of Shari'ah, against the spirit of Islām, for money, status or any other benefit. This is a direct insult to the Divine Commands, and this is exactly what the Jewish scholars practised. They knew that the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} was **Allah's** Messenger, but issued verdicts against it. Therefore, **Allah** tells them to fear **Him** alone, if they are righteous as they claim, and not to fear the loss of power and worldly achievements.

And do not cover Truth with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the Truth

The truth must not be mixed up with falsehood, nor the facts be concealed deliberately. The Jewish and Christian scholars and the Patriarch knew about the excellence of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} and the attributes of his Companions^{-RAI} so well, that they had willingly surrendered Bait al-Maqdas to Ḥadhrat 'Umar Fārūq^{-RAI}, recognising him as the conqueror, foretold by their Books.

And establish ... with those who bow down (in worship)

To remain steadfast on truth, it is important that the Ṣalāt is established and Zakāt is paid as prescribed. The performance of these physical and fiscal acts of worship with complete dedication is the very spirit of Islām. 'Establish' does not only mean to offer Ṣalāt, but to fulfil all the conditions diligently, such as purity of body and garments, ablution, timings, and congregation. The components of Ṣalāt i.e. Qiyām (standing up), Rukū' (bowing down), Sajdah and Jalsa (to sit up in pause between two Sujūd) must all be properly performed. Inviting others to Ṣalāt and imparting knowledge of Ṣalāt is also part of establishing it. Moreover, bowing before **Him** collectively, as well as paying Zakāt are obligatory.

Many scholars have taken this Āyah as evidence to declare Ṣalāt in congregation as compulsory. They maintain that without a genuine excuse, a man's obligatory Ṣalāt cannot be offered at home and laziness is no genuine excuse.

The amount of emphasis laid on congregational Ṣalāt in Ḥadīth corroborates the above stance. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} did not exempt even a blind Companion^{RAD} from attending the congregation in the mosque. All men of the locality, within which the Aẓān is heard, must offer their Ṣalāt in the mosque. This hearing is confined to the voice of an average person and not to the loud-speaker. It also proves that Muslims must remain united. The present trend of deriding and ridiculing attendants of one mosque by those of the other mosques is totally wrong. It is surprising that the extremists, who do not hesitate in issuing the verdicts of disbelief in this context, do not raise a finger at those who go to gambling clubs or spend their nights in the dens of debauchery, whereas even these acts, though great sins, are not infidelity. The righteous scholars have highlighted this quality of a true believer that if he is sincere in the service of Islām, he will appreciate the endeavours of his fellow brothers for the same cause. Otherwise he will feel jealous, a common phenomenon today.

Do you enjoin people to be good ... Will you not understand?

The Jewish scholars advised their relatives who converted to Islām to remain steadfast, as it was the right path, but would not embrace it themselves. This attitude should be an eye opener for those who deliver sermons to others but do not mend their own ways in practical life. They do what they prohibit others from doing. It was the Jewish scholars who had the knowledge of the Divine Scriptures, whereas the common man merely followed them. They should have had better sense to realise that the basis of all virtues is belief, and anyone who does not pay attention to correct the base can do no other good. Their preaching of virtue without correcting the beliefs was an effort in vain. The belief in the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} was the basis of faith, but they neither preached nor practised it. Their pursuit was the mundane power and wealth, so that life be spent in luxury and comfort. Indeed, such thinking is against the transcendental reality. This world is a place of trials and tribulation. A person can desire things, but the fulfilment of his desires is beyond his control. The unrealised dreams make his life miserable. Therefore, it is best not to run after wealth and power but to pursue the path of truth.

And seek Allah's help through patience and Ṣalāt. ... Him they shall return.

Patience denotes the quality to compel oneself to comply with Allah's commands, and to restrain the soul from disobedience.

Two Principles of Leading the Life

In other words abandon the 'Principle of Suggestion' in favour of the 'Principle of Trust'. Do not suggest anything to Allah and place your trust totally in Him. First of all, restrain yourself from all activities prohibited by Shari'ah.

Once this is achieved, a great deal of worries is over. Now work in the non-prohibited field to the best of your ability, pray for success, but leave the results to **Allah**. Never must you feel that the result of your effort would be according to your expectation, as this is beyond your control. Nor put your supplication to **Allah** as an order, which **He** must fulfil, but always beg **Him** for help. If the results are according to your expectations, there is nothing like it. You have attained eternal bliss by following Shari'ah, availed the opportunity of conversing with **Allah** through prayers, and your goal is also realised. And if the outcome is not according to your expectations, you have still got the other two benefits, not knowing that **Allah** may bless you with something even better than what you worked for, and this is what exactly happens.

This Principle of Trust in **Allah** also leads to comfort and respect in the worldly life, and one does not resort to theft, bribery and concealment of truth. This also spares you all the troubles. However, to adopt this principle is very difficult for all, save those who bear a deep-rooted fear of **Allah's** annoyance in their hearts. It is the feeling developed in the heart by the realisation of one's helplessness and worthlessness before the Grandeur and Magnificence of the Creator of the entire universe, **Who** is also the Owner, Provider and Sustainer. This earth is only a speck in the expanse of the vast universe, which is inhabited by countless living species; amongst them the entire mankind constitutes only one unit. Now what is the comparative position of a single human being? Just try adding zeros after the decimal and see if you can ever get to write one during your lifetime.

The understanding and realisation of **Allah's** Greatness is a feeling generated within the subtle heart and is termed as humility. It is this feeling that makes a person believe that one day he has to face **Him**. Had it not been the destiny of mankind to return to its Creator, the entire activity of creation would seem meaningless. Any assignment without an outcome is futile and anyone undertaking such an enterprise cannot be termed as **Rabb**.

It was also essential for the manifestation of **His** Providence to appoint a Day of Judgement when the results of all virtues and evils will be announced. That is why the term used here is *Mulaqu Rabbihim* (meet their **Rabb**), because all these matters are manifestations of **Allah's** Attribute of Providence. Hence life is the first prerequisite to develop and experience those feelings of exuberance. How can the dead feel cold, experience sorrow or joy? Thus a heart will only be able to feel when it is alive. It is indeed due to listlessness of the heart, that all worship is ignored. If it isn't already dead, it is certainly unconscious, a state which often culminates in death. Such people do get trapped into false beliefs and cults. Therefore, it is imperative to look for an accomplished re-

deemer, whose heart is illuminated with Barakah of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, and who can convey this light to the hearts of others.

The blessings and spiritual beneficence emanating from the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} are of two types: firstly, the beneficence of his teachings and secondly, of his company. Only those benefited from his teachings, who received the Barakah of his company as Muslims. Otherwise, even the infidels had the chance of hearing him. Right now the Barakah of his company are equally essential, as the teachings alone are not giving the desired results. His teachings have been handed down the generations; so have the Barakah of his noble company been transmitted, illuminating the hearts till today. Just take a look at the Şūfi Orders; they are there like the authentic Aḥādīth. Should you find anyone from these Orders, really possessing an illuminated heart, with the ability to initiate the hearts of others, the problem is solved. Only then will humility and a firm belief in meeting **Allah** be attained, and the capability to evaluate human activity with reference to its results in the Ākhirah acquired. Otherwise, peace in this world is an impossibility.

The Status of Intention in Worship

Without humility, Ṣalāt often falls under the category of impudence, because you pretend to converse with **Allah** while your attention is elsewhere. But when a Muslim adult fails to offer his Ṣalāt and ignores his obligations altogether, he crosses the limits of impudence into transgression, a situation of self-destruction. It is better to offer Ṣalāt without humility, than not to offer at all. But efforts must be made to keep one's innerself attentive towards **Allah**, Who is extremely kind, with a strong hope that **He** will accept. Given the spiritual uplift by an accomplished saint, the lights of the heart touch **His** Sublime Throne creating a special state during worship. Slightest negligence affects that state, but the disruption is immediately discerned, and the worshipper, becoming attentive again, spiritually advances still higher.

I witnessed this phenomenon personally while on my way to Peshawar. I was accompanied by a scholar and a friend blessed with Kashf. I had earlier handed over my revolver, being a hindrance in driving, to the former. Enroute we stopped for 'Asr Ṣalāt and he led the congregation carrying the revolver on his person. After Ṣalāt my friend asked the scholar as to what did he do, for which the Recording Angel had noted down greater reward in his Register of Conduct than ours? He replied that he had a revolver on his person in adherence to the Holy Prophet's Sunnah of offering Ṣalāt duly armed. Although it was not his personal weapon, yet he intended to follow the Sunnah. Praise be to **Allah**! What wonders can an intention do in winning additional reward. O Muslim! If you could only cherish and value the Sunnah! May **Allah** bless us

with the habit to follow the Sunnah in every sphere of our lives! Illumination of the heart forms the basis of humility and for this reason Qadhi Thana Ullah Pani Patti asserts that the attainment of Taṣawwuf is compulsory for both men and women, because without it, all worship is reduced to mere rituals.

Section 6

47. O Children of Isrāil! Remember My favour bestowed upon you, how I exalted you above others.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَإِنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

48. And be mindful of the Day, when no soul shall, in any way, avail another, neither shall any intercession be accepted, nor shall any compensation be taken from anyone, nor shall they be helped.

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

49. And when We delivered you from Pharaoh's folk, who tormented you dreadfully, slaying your sons and sparing your women. And therein was a tremendous trial from your Rabb.

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ
يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ
وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَٰلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ
مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٩﴾

50. And We parted for you the sea, rescued you and drowned the folk of Pharaoh and you witnessed it.

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمْ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ
وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ نَظُرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾
وَإِذْ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ أَخَذْنَا
الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

51. And We appointed forty nights for Musa. And in his absence you took the calf (for worship). And you were the transgressors.

52. Even after that We pardoned you to give you a chance of being grateful.

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

53. And when We gave Musa the Book and the Criterion, so that you are led aright.

وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

54. And when Musa said to his people, "O my people! You have indeed wronged yourselves by worshipping the calf, so be penitent before your **Rabb** and kill yourselves, this is better for you in the sight of your **Rabb**". Then **He** forgave you, for **He** is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful.

55. And when you said, "O Musa! We shall not believe you, unless we see **Allah** openly". So the thunderbolt seized you and you were witnessing.

56. Then **We** gave you life after your death, in order that you might become grateful.

57. And **We** caused the cloud to provide you shade and sent down Manna and the Quails for you. "Eat of the pure things that **We** have provided you". They did no harm to **Us**, but harmed only themselves.

58. And when **We** said "Enter this town and eat at pleasure, and enter the gate prostrating and say 'Hittatun', **We** shall overlook your faults and further reward those who do good".

59. But the transgressors changed the word taught to them with another, so **We** brought down on them a calamity from the Heaven, for their (repeated) evil acts.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَنْقُومِ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ
أَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ فَتُوبُوا إِلَىٰ
بَارِبِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِنْدَ
بَارِبِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥٤﴾

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَمْوِسَىٰ لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَىٰ اللَّهَ
جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَأَنْتُمْ
نَظُرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

وَوَهَبْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ
وَالسَّلَوى كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ
وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ
شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا
حِطَّةٌ نَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ وَسَيَرْزِقُ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ
لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِنَ
السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

*O Children of Isrā'īl! Remember **My** favour ... how **I** exalted you above others.*

In the preceding section, the covenant of Banī Isrā'īl came under discussion and they were ordered to follow the Islamic Shari'ah in fulfilment of that covenant. Now they are being directly addressed and reminded of the blessings bestowed upon them so far. Keeping in view these fabulous rewards, it seems unbecoming of them to disobey **Allah**, **Who** is so Generous that **He** increases **His** favours for the obedient. The Banī Isrā'īl are being emphatically addressed because, firstly, they were the pedigree of the Prophets^{AS}, and secondly only they had the learned scholars amongst them. Most of the polytheists consulted these scholars, and sought their advice regarding the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and his Message. **Allah** reminds them of **His** rewards; how **He** had blessed them with superiority over all contemporary people and had honoured their nation with Prophethood and knowledge. They should fear the Day when no one shall be of any avail to the other.

And be mindful of the Day ... nor shall they be helped.

That great Day must be feared when no one will be able to share the grief of the other. No one will be able to intercede to lessen the punishment of anyone, as the intercession of a non-believer will not be acceptable in favour of another. This address is to the non-believers and does not relate to the intercession of the Prophets^{AS}, which shall only be available to the believers. Neither will the Prophets^{AS} intercede for the non-believers, nor will such intercession be permitted. The address refers to those chieftains of the infidels in whose servility the Jews were forsaking the truth. The former would be of no avail to them on that Day. They would be unable to alleviate their burdens or intercede, for it would not be permitted. Neither would anyone be allowed to pay any compensation in lieu of his disobedience and be released, nor would these leaders be able to use any force or influence. In short, no conceivable method for evading punishment will work on the Day of Judgement. And there is no way out but to embrace Islām, a blessing that entitles a believer to intercession and carries a promise of safety against eternal fire. And yet O Jews! After so many Divine Favours bestowed upon you, your forefathers and your nation, you are still devoid of faith!

*And when **We** delivered you from Pharaoh's folk ...and you witnessed it.*

Recall the time when **He** saved you from the atrocities of the Pharaoh. It so happened that when Prophet Y'aqūb^{AS} took his family to Egypt to reunite with his son Prophet Yūsuf^{AS}, it comprised approximately seventy-two members. The latter was the driving force behind the prevalence of Divine religion and justice in Egypt. Thus the family became leaders in a way. But in due course of time they faced a decline, abandoned righteousness and became irreligious. The Egyptians, too, not only forgot **Allah**, but their rulers also proclaimed divinity for themselves. From amongst these tyrant rulers, the one contemporary to Prophet Mūsā^{AS} surpassed others in oppressing the immigrants, the Bani Isrāil. They were treated like animals and were put to service without wages, eating the leftover of their masters. They had neither honour nor wealth, nor the right to live. The Pharaoh was led to believe by his dream, or by the astrologers who interpreted his dreams, that a boy would be born in Bani Isrāil who would be the source of his destruction. He, therefore, ordered the assassination of all male children of Bani Isrāil, which continued for years, till the natives (i.e. the Qibtīs) protested against it themselves. They said that all the male infants of Banī Isrāil were being killed while their elders were dying off, and in due course there will be no male left to work for them. The Bani Isrāil were so worthless that no one cared about their genocide; their masters were concerned only about their own service. Thus the orders were changed to assassination of male infants every alternate year. Prophet Hārūn^{AS} was born in the year of exemption, while Prophet Mūsā^{AS} was born in the year of killing. The events of his life will come up later at an appropriate place. The point to take note of here is that, when the very people who are blessed and chosen by **Allah** turn disobedient, they will not only be punished but also be degraded and abased in this world.

The Effects of Disobedience

It is a common observation that when a Šūfī abandons the Path, he is condemned forever. His life becomes worse than death. Bani Isrāil, as the heirs of Prophethood, were to strive for the reformation of the Pharaohs and their folk, but blinded by the mundane greed, they themselves began to follow the misguided, and thus had to face humiliation. This is the case of the Muslim today, whose assignment is the reformation of entire mankind, but he is trailing the infidels of the world. As a result he is down trodden and in deep distress everywhere. Even today if he decides to turn back to his origin, things are bound to change, as it is not in the least difficult for **Allah**.

May **Allah** grant the Muslims the capacity to return! This is a universal principle known to every sensible person that anyone seeking honour outside the laws of **Allah** has always been degraded, just like the Bani Isrāil, who are being reminded of their life of torment and degradation, when their sons were

assassinated and their daughters spared for service. This was indeed a punishment from their **Rabb**. **His** Providence ensures that the appropriate thing is delivered where it deserves to be. They were to experience much more for their wrongdoing but **Allah's** Mercy rescued them by raising amongst them an exalted Prophet Mūsā^{AS}. He not only emancipated them from the darkness of infidelity, but also rescued them from the Pharaohs, and by **Allah's** Command led them out of Egypt. It is said that they were six hundred thousand in number at the time of their exodus. After prolonged confrontation with the Pharaoh, when all efforts including continuous manifestation of miracles to reform him had failed, Prophet Mūsā^{AS} was ordered to leave Egypt along with the Children of Isrāil.

When the news of the exodus reached Pharaoh in the morning, he set out with his army in hot pursuit, which according to some scholars comprised seven hundred thousand soldiers. Near the Mediterranean Sea he managed to catch up with the Bani Isrāil, who were terrified, as before them was the raging sea while behind them were the swords of the Pharaoh's Army! **Allah** declares: 'And We parted for you the sea'.

Prophet Mūsā^{AS} struck his staff in the sea and it split into twelve paths for the twelve tribes of Bani Isrāil. These paths were dry without the slightest signs of any dampness. The flowing water stood like a solid rock. They crossed safely and reached the far bank. The Pharaoh stood flabbergasted. **Allah** tasked Angel Jibrīl^{AS}, who led him and his entire army into the sea. As soon as they all got in, the water was released. The whole army along with the Pharaoh were drowned and perished. The Bani Isrāil stood witnessing the whole spectacle, as the Pharaoh they dreaded and the Qibṭis who tormented them were helplessly drowning before their very eyes.

The Company of a Shaikh

An accomplished Shaikh similarly splits a way through all hurdles in Dīn faced by a seeker and drowns the chasing Pharaoh of arrogance and ungratefulness. As a result, a seeker can analyse the changes in his life, after being blessed by the company of an accomplished Shaikh.

And We appointed forty nights for Mūsa. ...And you were the transgressors.

Allah reminds the Bani Isrāil of the time when **He** had commanded Prophet Mūsā^{AS} to spend forty nights in worship and days in fasting on Mount Ṭūr in seclusion. He was not allowed to meet or speak to anyone so that the angelic power and the capacity to receive Divine Secrets were generated prior to the revelation of Torah. This also proves the basis of 'Chillah' (forty-day programme).

Method of Attaining Spiritual Levitation

In reality, a reduction in diet, conversation and interaction with other people is the best method of weakening the soul and strengthening the Spirit. In fact, the strength of one is the weakness of the other.

Prophet Mūsā^{AS} concentrated on the attainment of his goal, while his people took to Sāmri's cult in his absence. Samri moulded gold into the shape of a calf, which produced a certain sound. Some accounts of the incident have it that the ground where the hoofs of Angel Jibrīl's^{AS} horse had touched turned grassy and green. Samri picked up soil from such ground and put it in the calf, which became alive. While according to some scholars, Samri had perforated the calf in a way that channellised the air to whistle through. **Allah** knows the best! However, majority of the people from Bani Isrāīl prostrated before the calf. Thus **Allah** reminds them, in brief, of all the favours **He** had done to them, the details of which will be given later. **He** condemns their calf-worship, an act of grave transgression, which they committed despite witnessing so many miracles and the presence of a great Messenger^{AS} amongst them like Prophet Mūsā^{AS}.

Even after that We pardoned you to give you a chance of being grateful.

But look at **Allah**'s favour **Who** still pardoned them, so that they may express their gratitude and indebtedness to **Him**.

And when We gave Mūsa the Book and the Criterion, so that you are led aright.

Not only did **Allah** pardon them, but for their guidance, blessed Prophet Mūsā^{AS} with Torah. It was a Book that differentiated between truth and falsehood, so that his people could find the right path. In other words the conferring of a Divine Scripture upon a Prophet^{AS} is to provide his Ummah with a criterion of right and wrong, whereby everyone in general, gets the honour of being addressed by **Allah**. How imperative it was to appreciate all these favours! All this has been revealed for the benefit of the Muslims, to make them realise that if the Banī Isrāīl were blessed with Prophet Mūsā^{AS}, the Muslims have the honour of being the Ummah of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. The Qurān in its pristine purity is with them as an eternal criterion of truth and falsehood. Anything said or done individually or as a nation against the Quranic injunctions will be nothing but waywardness while adherence to it is the guidance.

And when Mūsa said to his people, ... He is Ever Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Allah reminds the Bani Isrāīl to recollect the time when Prophet Mūsā^{AS} made them aware of the gravity of their offence and taught them the mode of repentance. This is the office of a Shaikh in Taṣawwuf. He must instil in the seekers

a disinclination to sin, and embed the method of repentance in their hearts. The difference is that a Prophet^{AS} receives guidance directly from **Allah**, while a Shaikh receives it through adherence to the Prophet. If these qualities cannot be attained in the company of a Shaikh, then the time spent with him will be a sheer waste, in addition to the danger of being totally misled.

To expiate for the grave sin of calf-worship by the Bani Isrā'īl, **Allah** commanded the execution of those who had prostrated before the calf, by those who had not done so. Only then the repentance of the executed was to be accepted, as the stain of polytheism can be washed away only by the blood flowing from the veins. Such expiation is also decreed by Islamic Shari'ah for crimes like intentional murder and adultery, because these crimes cannot be atoned for with repentance alone. But if the matter has been a part of the forgotten past, and no one besides **Allah** knows about it, then the only method of atonement is repentance. This is a special favour to the Ummah of Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW}. The beauty of Tasawwuf is that the seeker becomes as if he is dead, his soul lies assassinated in the control of Shari'ah, just as a dead body lays in the hands of the one who gives it a bath before burial; moving only when moved! It was the excellence of the company of Prophet Mūsā^{AS}, that those who had indulged in polytheism in his absence, became so clean-hearted in his presence that they willingly accepted execution, and a large number of them were slain. Prophet Mūsā^{AS} then prayed to **Allah**, so those who survived were pardoned, while those slain were blessed with Shahadah. Thus **Allah** was indeed generous towards them. **He** accepts the repentance of people and is Most Merciful.

When Prophet Mūsā^{AS} put forth the Torah to his people, they said that it would be easy for them to accept and believe in it if **Allah Himself** spoke to them, telling them that it was **His Book**. The Prophet^{AS} agreed and took a fairly large number of selected men from all the tribes to Mount Ṭūr. He prayed to **Allah** to bless them with the power and capability of hearing **Him**. Thus they heard **Allah**, which was indeed a marvel conferred upon them because of their Prophet^{AS}. This also proves that there could be men amongst **Allah's** truly devoted personages who, because of their complete adherence to their Prophets^{AS}, could be blessed with Divine audience, though by no means it could be termed as Revelation.

Addressing the Bani Isrā'īl, **Allah** reminds them of the time when they were honoured by **His** audience, but instead of being grateful, they said that they were not sure of the speaker. They insisted that they would obey only if **Allah** spoke to them face to face. This was impudence going beyond limits, because no one in this world has been given the power to behold the Divinity. In fact,

Prophet Mūsā^{AS} himself had once expressed this desire but was told; *"You will not be able to see Me"*.

This honour was conferred only upon Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW} in the entire creation, that he was blessed with the observation of Divinity, though some scholars differ. Two points may be considered in this context. Firstly, there is no difference of opinion between Ahl-e Sunnah, on the fact that the Holy Prophet^{SAW} visited the Higher Realm with his physical body, so the matter no longer pertains to this world but to that Realm. Secondly, all agree that the Holy Prophet^{SAW} inspected the Paradise, and the greatest of its pleasure is the observation of the Divinity. If he did not see **Him**, what else did he see? This point goes in favour of the contention that the Holy Prophet^{SAW} did observe **Him** and this honour is singular, which cannot be claimed by anyone else. However, the dwellers of Paradise will be blessed by this honour in accordance with their status, in the Ākhirah.

And when you said, "O Mūsā! We shall not believe you...become grateful.

When they demanded something far above their status, lightning struck them and they instantly perished. Whether it was lightning or a flash of Divine Light beyond their tolerance, no one knows. However, Prophet Mūsā^{AS} prayed to **Allah** to give them a new life to spare him of the blame for their death. Since this was not the irreversible natural death, but had been inflicted upon them as a punishment, they were quickened again. Countless were the blessings and honours conferred upon Bani Isrāīl because of their exalted Prophet Mūsā^{AS}.

It was an occasion of showing gratitude to **Allah** by the Bani Isrāīl for **His** favours but they did just the opposite! When Prophet Y'aqūb^{AS} had migrated to Egypt, his native land had been taken over by people called 'Amaliqah. It was now that **Allah** ordered the Bani Isrāīl to fight 'Amaliqah and regain the control of their ancestral land. Moreover, they would also earn the merit of Jihād. They moved on as directed but on their way heard about the strength and might of 'Amaliqah. They lost the nerve and resorted to retreat saying that Prophet Mūsā^{AS} should fight along with his **Rabb**, and spare them the trouble.

They walked away, travelling during the day and resting at night. Thus they walked for forty years, reaching nowhere, and finding themselves each night right where they had started from in the morning. They had been stranded in a valley, a few miles wide lying between Egypt and Syria, without food, shelter or any provisions. They begged Prophet Mūsā^{AS} to pray for forgiveness, which he did. Hence **Allah** granted them provisions but they had to wander in the valley for forty years.

And We caused the cloud to provide you shade ...but harmed only themselves.

They are being further reminded of **Allah's** blessings, how the clouds would descend to protect them from the scorching heat and Mann and Salva would cater for their dietary needs. Mann was a kind of honey-glue mixed with lemon juice, which would pile on the bushes overnight and was picked in the morning, while Salva were quails, which would flock around for use as ready meat. Their garments would neither soil nor wear out, while the clothes of their children would grow in size with them. A sort of radiance overcame the darkness at night. In short, all the necessities of life were provided miraculously for them, and they were free from all worries on this account. In spite of all these Divine Favours they failed to obey **Him**. This arrogance and ungratefulness could not do any harm to **Allah** but it sure did prove to be a great turmoil for them and resulted in the discontinuation of Divine Blessings, as will be discussed later.

And when We said "Enter this town ...those who do good".

They must recall the moments when **Allah** granted them victory over a city and ordered them to enter it and enjoy all facilities therein. The only condition was to do Sajdah before **Him** while entering the gate, so as to display their humility, and acknowledge **His** Greatness by uttering the word, 'Hittatun' in repentance. **Allah** would forgive them all the mistakes committed and in **His** Infinite Generosity would increase **His** favours for the virtuous. It meant that the greater the sincerity and humility displayed by these repentant sinners, the more rewards they would get, and the closer they would be to **Allah**. Ihsan is the name of the devotion and sincerity of the heart towards **Allah**, and its level varies in every heart. The stronger this feeling gets in a heart, the more a person is rewarded in both the worlds. But the Bani Israil failed to obey such a simple order and some of them even changed the word.

But the transgressors changed the word ... for their (repeated) evil acts.

When they entered the city they neither did Sajdah, nor said "Hittatun" as directed, but said 'Hinatun', which meant 'bread'. Thus, as a punishment for changing the word and not doing Sajdah before **Allah** as directed, distress descended upon them from the heavens. Had they uttered another word though having the same meaning, even then it would not have been proper. But they changed the word altogether with different meanings. The words are not to be changed in matters of worship, such as in Aзан or the Āyāt recited in Ṣalāt, even while preserving the meanings, else these will not be acceptable (Mu'arif al-Qurān) However, there is evidence that Aḥadith can be quoted based on their meanings. Qarṣi has noted this from Imām Malīk, Shāf'i and Abū Ḥanīfah^{RA}. This exception is valid only for the one who is an expert of the Arabic

language and can understand the subject or the meaning keeping in view the occasion and the circumstances attending a particular Hadith. It is not everyone's domain, and if someone does it without requisite knowledge, he will also suffer worldly loss.

Similarly, it is not proper for a seeker to make a change in the words prescribed by his Shaikh for recital; otherwise, he will be at a loss, in matters of religion as well as this world. The Bani Isrāil were punished by the outbreak of plague because of their disobedience and wrong doings.

The Philosophy of Hardships

The wrongdoers experience hardships because of their crimes, while those faced by the noble are in reality a reward. Some higher stations of Divine nearness call for certain hardships as their pre-requisite. For example, to attain Shahadah it is imperative to be slain in Allah's cause. Sometimes it so happens that the worship of a Wali lacks in comparison to his spiritual status and this shortcoming is compensated by mundane hardships. At times these hardships are intended at making one to struggle. This is an involuntary endeavour, which earns the desired reward. The forthcoming Āyāt discuss the time, when Bani Isrāil were dying of thirst in the valley of Tiyyah and Prophet Mūsā^{AS} had prayed for water.

Section 7

60. And when Mūsā asked for water for his people. We said, "Strike the rock with your staff". There gushed forth twelve springs from it. Each group knew its drinking point. Eat and drink from the provisions of Allah and do not make mischief on the earth.

وَإِذِ اسْتَقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَا عَشَرَ نَبِيعًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرِبَهُمْ كَلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾

61. And when you said, "O Musa! We cannot (always) endure one type of food, so ask your Rabb, to bring forth for us what the earth grows, its vegetables, its cucumbers, its garlic, its lentils and its onions". He said, "Would you exchange the better for the worse? Go down to any town and there

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَآئِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصِلَهَا قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْفَىٰ بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ أَفَظِلُّوا بَصُرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مِمَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَصُرِيتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلِيلَةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَاءُوا

you shall find what you ask for". Humiliation and misery befell them and they were surrounded by the wrath of Allah. That was because they (repeatedly) denied His Signs and wrongfully slew the Prophets. That was for their defiance and (continued) transgression.

يَغْضَبُ مِنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ
بَنَائِيَتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّنَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ
ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

And when Mūsa asked for water ...and do not make mischief on the earth.

Allah provided them water miraculously, by commanding Prophet Mūsā^{AS} to strike the rock with his staff. Immediately, twelve springs sprouted and began to flow and each person was guided to the spring from which he was to drink. What a Divine Favour indeed, that for twelve tribes of Bani Isrā'īl, twelve springs were provided in a supernatural way! Under the normal circumstances human endeavour is essential for every task. Had it been provided through rain, they would have had to build ponds and reservoirs to store the rain water, which in due course would become muddy or create various other problems. **Allah** bid them to enjoy **His** provisions, not to make mischief on land and be grateful to **Him**, because the elegance and peace of the world is directly dependent upon the human conduct. If human character is evil, it will affect the environment and be a source of mischief on land.

The reason why man, inspite of his technological advancement, has failed to establish peace on earth is that he has alienated himself from **Allah**. He is disobedient and wrongdoer and that is why there is disturbance everywhere. In fact this world is like a home and when its dwellers begin to misbehave, it certainly causes disruption. Do eat and drink, but it is important to consume only what is permissible and the means employed to earn the livelihood must be legitimate in terms of Shari'ah. One should not grab anything and everything that comes his way without having regard for the permissible and the forbidden. Such an attitude will not only lead to self-destruction but will also disrupt peace all around, which is extremely undesirable.

And when you said... for their defiance and (continued) transgression.

Inspite of all the Divine Blessings and favours, the Bani Isrā'īl began to complain to Prophet Mūsā^{AS} that they were irked by eating the same food every-day and it was difficult to live on a single diet for long. So he should pray to **Allah** to grow for them some crops from the land, such as lentils, cucumbers, onions and garlic. Despite this blatant ingratitude and rudeness, **He** fulfilled their desires, though Prophet Mūsā^{AS} did try his best to persuade them to give up their foolish demand of the inferior against the superior that had been provided to them without any effort whatsoever.

The Hunted Meat

The food that Bani Isrā'īl miraculously received from **Allah** was purely legitimate whereas when man earns his living through his own efforts, there is always a chance that a mistake committed somewhere in the process may render the earnings illegitimate. Shah Muḥammad Ismā'īl Shahīd^{RA} was asked as to why he preferred hunting. He replied that the meat so obtained was the purest form of food as it came directly from **Allah**, without the involvement of any butcher or trader.

Inspite of Prophet Mūsā's^{AS} pleadings, the Bani Isrā'īl insisted on their demands and always called upon him to tell his **Rabb** to meet their demands, as if **Allah** was only his **Rabb**, and not theirs. They did not even for once proclaim **Allah** as their **Rabb**, **Who** was still so forgiving and generous to grant their wish. **He** ordered them to enter any township, wherein they would find all that they had demanded. Then they were hit with hardships and indigence for they had to labour hard with little time to rest and a meagre income. Thus humiliation fell to their lot forever, as their characters were stripped of perseverance and determination. Agriculture, in general, is an occupation that usually leaves the peasants poor, while others reap the benefits of their labour.

Vile and baseness is part of Jewish character. Even a billionaire will pose as a pauper. Moreover, they stand deprived forever of power and a homeland, except that **Allah** may alleviate this punishment to a certain extent for some of them, or they may gain power temporarily, relying on others: The present State of Isrā'īl is nothing more than a colony of USA and Britain, established only to harm the Muslims and keep them entangled in various conflicts. Otherwise, from that early period to this Age, and forever, the Jews have been condemned to lead a life of dishonour. They have, and will always live as parasites propped by others.

Because of their defiance and indifference, they qualified for **Allah**'s wrath. Consequently, they got deeply involved in the mundane affairs and drifted away from the faith. This alienation culminated in hostility towards it, to the

extent that they no longer tolerated the biddings of their Prophets^{AS}. In order to preserve their own rituals and traditions, which would have obliterated if **Allah's** Commandments were to be enforced, they even resorted to the wrongful murder of their Prophets^{AS}. Slaying a Prophet^{AS} is always wrongful, as he is innocent; how can an innocent person deserve to be killed? The Qurān, by stating this act as wrongful, has highlighted the fact that the killers themselves knew that they were transgressing; yet they committed it. This was because continuous indulgence in sin had gradually taken them to a point where they had crossed all limits. This indeed is the fruit borne by continuous disobedience.

Section 8

62. Those who believe (in the Quran) and those who are Jews and the Christians and the Sabā'in; those who believe in **Allah** and the Last Day and do good works, their reward is with their **Rabb**. On them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.
- إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٢﴾
63. And when **We** took a pledge from you and raised **Tūr** over you, (saying) "Hold fast that which **We** have given you and remember what is therein so that you may observe **Taqwa**"
- وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا ءَاتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٣﴾
64. And even after that you turned away. Had it not been for the Grace and Mercy of **Allah**, you would have been amongst the losers for sure.
- ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٤﴾
65. And you very well knew those of you, who transgressed in respect of Sabbath. So **We** said to them, "Be you apes, despised and rejected".
- وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ ءَعْتَدُوا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

66. And We made this an example for their time and their posterity and a lesson for the Muttaqin.
67. And when Musa said to his people, "Allah commands you to slaughter a cow". They said, "Are you making fun of us?" He said, "Allah save me from being an ignorant".
68. They said, "Pray to your Rabb, on our behalf to make clear to us what it is?" He said, "He says: the cow should neither be old nor too young, but of middle age. Now do what you are commanded".
69. They said, "Pray to your Rabb on our behalf, to make clear to us, of what colour should it be?" He said, "He says: it is a yellow cow, bright in colour, pleasing the on-lookers".
70. They said, "Pray to your Rabb on our behalf, to tell us more about it, because all cows appear alike to us. Allah willing, we shall then be rightly guided".
71. He said, "He says: a cow un-yoked, neither tills the soil nor waters the fields, perfect, without any flaw". They said, "Now you have told us exactly". Then they sacrificed her, although they had no intention to do so.

فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَآبَيْنِ يَدَّيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا
وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ
تَذْبَحُوا بَقْرَةً قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُ نَاهِرًا قَالَ أَعُودُ
بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

قَالُوا أَدْعُ لِنَارِكَ يَبْنَ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ
إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا فَارِضٌ وَلَا يَكْرُ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ
فَافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

قَالُوا أَدْعُ لِنَارِكَ يَبْنَ لَنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا قَالَ
إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ فَاقْعُ لَوْنُهَا
تَسْرُ النَّظِيرِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

قَالُوا أَدْعُ لِنَارِكَ يَبْنَ لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشْبَهُ
عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ
وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَا شِيبَةَ فِيهَا قَالُوا
إِنَّا نَفْعِلُ الْفَعْلَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبَحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا
يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Those who believe (in the Qur'ān) ... shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.

Being condemned to eternal humiliation is indeed a grave situation; but there is still hope because the source of mercy for the entire universe has arrived. The beneficence of Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW} is universal and for everyone, a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian or a non-believer. The only condition is to believe in **Allah**, the Last Day, and that which has been revealed to him as **Allah's** Messenger, and to follow his teachings and practise righteousness. Righteous are only those deeds, which are in accordance with Sunnah, and an action that stands in conflict with it loses its validity and merit. It is indeed a wrong notion that **Allah** will accept the good deeds of every sect, because without belief there is no virtue in any deed. However, anyone from any school of thought is welcome to embrace Islām. If the Muslims are being blessed, it is not because of their persons, but because of their belief and conduct.

Therefore, O Bani Isrā'īl and all the other sects of the world! If you follow the Holy Prophet^{SAW} in beliefs and in conduct, you can also receive these blessings. However, if (**Allah** forbid!) the Muslims abandon his ways of life, they too will be condemned like the Bani Isrā'īl. This is exactly the situation we are facing today. We no longer possess the qualities, which had won the Muslims global honour and eternal bliss. Muslim blood is being spilled the world over. Our roots are being torn apart through treachery but we do not even stir in our indifferent slumber. May **Allah** guide us to repent, and bless us with beliefs and actions to which the Holy Prophet^{SAW} has invited us! Only those who adopt his Sunnah will deserve Divine Favours, and shall have no fear for the future nor any grief over the past.

The Summary of Tasawwuf

This is the essence of Taṣawwuf; by a continuous repetition of **Allah's** Name, the heart attains that capability, by which a person accepts the Islamic beliefs from the depths of his heart, and then finds the courage in him to follow the Sunnah. If someone goes against the Sunnah and calls it Taṣawwuf, it is just like calling a crow, a falcon!

And when We took a pledge from you ...so that you may observe Taqwa"

The Bani Isrā'īl are being reminded of the time when **Allah** had suspended the Ṭūr over them in order to make them accept what had been sent unto them. They were warned that if they did not hold on to the Torah firmly, the mountain shall be lowered down upon them. Then they all prostrated before **Him** and began to beg and promise. And **Allah** terms this persuasion as a great favour, for had they not accepted the Commandment, who would have been at

loss? Thus **Allah**, by forcing them into accepting the Commandments, gave them a chance to attain righteousness. The principle: '*La ikrah fid Dīn*' (there is no compulsion in Dīn) is not applicable here, because these people had accepted **Allah**'s faith earlier and were practically turning their backs to the Torah, saying that it was too difficult to act upon. Therefore, **Allah** suspended the Mount Ṭūr over them, warning them that if they did not comply, they would be destroyed. Similarly in Islām, death is the punishment for an apostate, not for a non-believer.

Responsibility of the Rulers

To make a Muslim practise Islām is the responsibility of a ruler, and he should punish the defaulters. If he fails to do so, he will be deemed as an accomplice. This is why during the auspicious era of the Companions^{RAU}, Caliph 'Umar Fārūq's^{RAU} roamed around with a whip in his hand. If only **Allah** would grant this sense to the rulers of today!

And even after that you turned away. ...the losers for sure.

The Bani Isrāīl once again broke their promise and the latest example of this breach of faith was their animosity towards the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. **Allah** reiterates that it is because of **His** Grace and general Mercy that they have been granted respite until they live, otherwise they were at a great loss and on the verge of being doomed. They had been wrongdoers from the very beginning; it was only **His** Mercy, which held them time and again. And then the raising of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} was a special blessing; because of which even the non-believers were relieved of a general doom. But for how long can they escape **Allah**'s wrath? One day they have to present themselves in **His** Court. If after deserting Prophet Mūsā^{AS} they still continue to survive, it does not mean that they will also be able to escape the eternal doom. So this too is **Allah**'s Blessing that **He** did not seize them immediately for their follies and granted them respite, so that they may atone. And they very well know this fact.

And you very well knew those of you, "Be you apes, despised and rejected".

And those people who transgressed on Saturdays were also from amongst them. This incident took place during the period of Prophet Dāwūd^{AS}. They lived along the coastline and fishing was their means of earning a livelihood. **Allah** had ordered them to abstain from fishing on Saturdays, as this day was sacred for them, and was dedicated for worship. Plenty of fish, more than usual, would muster up the shore on Saturdays and they could not resist the temptation to catch it. They invented an excuse for violating the ban. They dug out several ditches along the shore and connected them to the sea with ducts. When the ditches would fill up with fish, they would seal off the ducts, and

would not take any fish on that day. The next day they would catch the trapped fish. Some would lower a fishing rod in the water and the fish so hooked would be taken out the following day. Some of them who obeyed Allah strongly opposed this crime and tried their best to stop the violators. The dispute became so grave that the wrongdoers drove the noble men out of their settlement, and constructed a wall in between to keep them confined to their homes, out of sight.

One morning, the expelled heard no human voice from the evildoers' settlement. All that could be heard was the cries of apes and the shrieks of pigs. When they checked it out they saw that all had transformed into apes and pigs. The young ones were turned into apes and the old ones changed into pigs. They recognised their relatives, and would toss around restlessly at their feet, but nothing could be done for them. After a few days all of them died. According to Hadīth the nations subjected to such punishment had left no pedigree behind. The monkeys we see today are a separate species, which existed even before this incident, and have nothing to do with these condemned folk.

The Forms of Justification

It has been clearly indicated that any justification, which negates or violates a law of Shari'ah, is not only wrong, but also a serious crime. However, the justifications of Islamic jurists, which aim at obeying the Shari'ah and not negating it do not fall in this category. Secondly, living with pious people is also a source of protection against a general Divine punishment. As long as the two Sabbath groups lived together, they were safe, but when the fundamentalists were separated, the so-called civilized were seized by Divine punishment. May Allah bless us with the company of nobles!

And We made this an example for their ... and a lesson for the Muttaqin.

The Bani Isrā'īl did catch the fish but were turned into apes and pigs, a sorry sight, a lesson and a source of repentance for their contemporaries and those to follow in time. Whereas, for the pious, it is a source of greater guidance. The punishment of distortion was generally discontinued with the advent of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. It is one of his Barakah. But it is not surprising to see individual cases of distortion. In our village, a woman habitually used abusive language, especially against Hadhrat Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq^{-RAU}, and generally for the Holy Prophet's^{-SAW} wives and other Companions^{-RAU}. Before she died, her face got terribly disfigured and her tongue hung out four inches just like a dog's, which simply would not retract. She could neither keep quiet, nor articulate any words and her voice resembled a dog's grumble. She was taken to Lahore for medical aid, but nothing seemed to help and after four months of torture she died. There are many such incidents; to list these here would

amount to undue prolonging, but such exceptional cases of physical distortion do take place.

State of Spiritual Distortion

In case of the Spirit, it cannot retain its human appearance without Islāmic faith and practice. It would resemble the beast or animal whose traits are predominant in a person. The Spirits of only those Muslims who have enlightened hearts retain their human appearance. Even the Spirits of the practising Muslims take the appearance of permissible animals, whereas those of the non-believers and the wrongdoers take the shape of beasts. They live cloaked in human form, but it would not last forever. If **Allah** bestows the power of spiritual observation, it can be seen that whole towns and cities are infested with beasts. This is the reason why people look human but behave worse than beasts. May **Allah** forgive us!

And when Mūsa said to his people ... being an ignorant”.

The Bani Isrāīl are being reminded of **Allah**'s Favour at the time when a person from amongst them was murdered and the murderer could not be traced. They approached Prophet Mūsā^{AS} and requested for help. The Prophet^{AS}, in accordance with **Allah**'s orders, told them to slaughter a cow. They asked him if it was a joke. He said that he could not possibly indulge in such ignorance as to joke about Divine Orders. Only someone who is unaware of **Allah**'s Greatness could do such a foolish act and such a person, no matter how educated he may be, is indeed an ignorant. Given the Divine Cognition one can never dare to joke about the Divine Commands, and the exalted Prophets^{AS} enjoy an exemplary level of cognition. To make fun of someone or tell lies even while joking is also prohibited in Shari'ah. However, there is no harm in joking within close friends if the facts are correct and the aim is not to insult anyone. But no liberty can be taken with Divine Laws.

Now, why did the Bani Isrāīl take it as a joke? Probably it looked irrelevant to them that sacrificing a cow could be helpful in the investigation of a murder. What possibly could be achieved by doing so? This is a world of 'cause and effect'. It is **Allah**'s Wisdom that **He** has connected every single event with a cause, and **He** Alone knows the logic behind it. These events which we witness in our daily lives do not surprise us as we have become accustomed to them and treat them as routine. Otherwise, what sense does it make to bury in the soil whatever grains one is left with, for more yield? But our experience tells us that by doing so the land yields a crop and grains are multiplied manifold, and does not allow us to be surprised. In fact, everything in this universe is a definite proof of **Allah**'s Omnipotence. **He** intended to show these people yet another proof, being well aware of the wisdom behind every command.

Therefore, it is imperative to execute the commands of the Prophets^{AS} and the promised results are bound to manifest, whether we can discern the link or not. Just as the ignorant critics of today have opined that the amount of money spent on Eid ul Adhḥā, on slaughtering animals is a waste which could be put into welfare projects. They suggest that instead of spending millions of Rupees every year on Ḥajj, the money could be invested in establishing universities. These opinions stem out of the same Jewish mentality. Otherwise, the aim is only to follow the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. By sacrificing a paltry goat or a cow, one receives his share of the same Barakah, which were attained by Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} when he put the knife on his son's throat. How great an act and what a great Divine Favour it is! It is a marvellous achievement to arouse a gleam of Prophet Ibrāhīm's^{AS} noble character in oneself. And to absorb the Divine Refulgence peculiar to Ḥajj is indeed an extremely glorified state, impossible to acquire without performing Ḥajj. Can anyone else claim to build the human character in a better way than the one who conveyed these Divine commands to humanity? Is there anyone in the history of mankind, equal to the Holy Prophet^{SAW} of Islām? Not at all! And today these animals in human guise, who claim to be civilized, inculcate beastly qualities in the children of Ādam in their universities and colleges, and pass sarcastic remarks on Divine Commands!

*They said, "Pray to your **Rabb**, ... pleasing the onlookers".*

If we compare that truly Islāmic society with our own and see which one offers salvation to humanity, the glory of following the Holy Prophet^{SAW} will surely dawn upon us. We may realize that only that university or college is worthwhile, which educates its students to follow the Sunnah. Otherwise, such educational institutions are just slaughterhouses, where humanity is skinned! Adherence to the Prophet^{AS} is synonymous to a complete trust in him. But the Bani Isrā'īl, after being ordered to slaughter a cow, engaged in endless arguments with Prophet Mūsā^{AS} about its appearance. He replied that it was neither too young, nor old, and that they must not indulge in pointless arguments and just do as **Allah** had ordered. But they again requested Prophet Mūsā^{AS} to ask his **Rabb** what must be the colour of that cow? He replied that **Allah** said, it must be of a bright yellow colour, which pleased the beholders. They were still not satisfied and told Prophet Mūsā^{AS} that there were too many cows of that description, so he should ask his **Rabb** to clarify further. Each time they said, "Mūsā^{AS}! Ask your **Rabb**"; never for once did they say 'our **Rabb**'. They asked for more indications, and said that if **Allah** was willing, they would comply with **His** Command.

*They said, "Pray to your **Rabb** ...we shall then be rightly guided"*

According to the Holy Prophet^{SAW} had they not added "**Insha Allah**", they would never have been able to execute the Divine Command. Prophet Mūsā^{AS} told them that **Allah** said that it was a cow that had never been yoked, nor had ploughed or watered the tilth, nor was there any scar or mark on its body from being yoked or beating. Now everything was clear, they said. They finally bought a cow and willy-nilly slaughtered it. **Allah** is reminding the Jews of **His** great favour unto their ancestors. They were awfully slack in obeying their Prophet^{AS}; but in spite of that **He** accepted their sacrifice and allowed the desired result to be obtained. Their sacrifice could have gone in vain without bearing any result because of their wrong conduct. The trouble they went through was only because of their useless probing which led to more and more restrictions. Had they just slaughtered any cow after receiving the order, it would have served the desired purpose.

No Argument with the Shaikh

Similarly, if a Shaikh wants the seeker to do something, the latter should not ask further questions to create hardship for himself. For example, if a seeker is told to recite a certain number of Darūd Sharīf then whichever Darūd Sharīf he may recite, will serve the purpose. But if he asks the Shaikh, which Darūd Sharīf should he recite, then he will be bound to recite whichever the Shaikh tells him. The prescribed time of its recital must also be observed; if fixed otherwise the desired benefit would not be achieved.

*He said, "**He** says: a cow unyoked, ...they had no intention to do so.*

The commentators have recorded another strange incident regarding the slaughtering of the cow by the Bani Isrāīl. They explain that a righteous man, who owned a calf, drove it to the woods before his death, supplicating to **Allah** to make it a source of livelihood for his son. The calf is said to have grown up as a beautiful cow, and the more the Bani Isrāīl probed, **Allah** continued to reveal its features. Now no other cow could fulfil the specification revealed by **Allah**. On the other hand, the owner of the cow got an intuition to charge the Bani Isrāīl a handsome amount of money. Thus the price of the cow was finally fixed to be gold coins stuffed in its hide. The Bani Isrāīl had tried to play smart by cross-questioning the Prophet^{AS}, while **Allah** desired to benefit the one who had totally relied on **Him**.

Therefore, neither should any objection be raised against the laws of Shari'ah, nor any excuses be made to evade the instructions of a Shaikh. This certainly invokes worldly hardships besides the additional risk of losing one's faith. On

the path of love, sincerity carries real value; deep devotion is wisdom, while logic and calculation carry no weight!

Section 9

72. And when you killed a man and disputed about it. But Allah was to bring forth what you were concealing.

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادَّارَءُكُمْ فِيهَا وَاللَّهُ مُخْرِجٌ
مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

73. So We said, "Strike him with a piece (of the cow)". Thus Allah brings the dead to life and shows you His signs, so that you may understand.

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُخَيِّ اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى
وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

74. Thereafter, your hearts hardened like a rock or even harder. For among rocks there are some, from which streams gush forth. Others split apart and water flows out of them, yet others, which fall down for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do.

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ
أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنْ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ
مِنْهُ الْآنْهَارُ وَإِنْ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَقُّ فَيَخْرُجُ
مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنْ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ
وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

75. Do you (O believers) hope that, they will believe in you, when a group of them used to hear the Word of Allah and having understood it, used to change it intentionally?

﴿٧٥﴾ أَفَتُظْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ
مِنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ
مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقِلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

76. And when they meet the believers, they say, "We believe", but when they meet each other in private, they say, "would you tell them what Allah has disclosed to you, so that they could use it to argue with you before your Rabb? Have you no sense?"

وَإِذَا الْقَوَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَا
بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ قَالُوا أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُمْ بِمَا
فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَاجُّوكُمْ بِهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ
أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

77. Don't they know that Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal?

78. And among them are the illiterates, who have no knowledge of the Book but their own fantasies, and they only guess.

79. So woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, "This is from Allah", in order that they could trade it for a petty price. So woe to them for what their hands write and woe to them for what they earn with it.

80. And they say, "the Fire will not touch us but for a few numbered days". Say, "Have you taken a promise from Allah? For Allah never breaks His promise. Or do you say about Allah what you know not?

81. But whosoever does evil and his sins surround him, they are the dwellers of the Fire. They will abide therein for ever.

82. And those who believe and do righteous acts they are the dwellers of the Paradise. Therein will they abide forever.

أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ
وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ
إِلَّا أَمَانِي وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ
يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ
ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ
أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا
مَقْدُودَةً قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ
يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ
مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

بِكُلِّ مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ
خَطِيئَتُهُ قُلْ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ
فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَئِكَ
أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

*And when you killed... shows you **His Signs**, so that you may understand.*

The Bani Isrāil are being reminded of the murder their ancestors had committed, and how they started to blame one another. But what they wished to conceal **Allah** decided to reveal. The incidents stated here are not in chronological order. The Qurān explains the episode of the slaughtering of the cow, before it mentions the reason for this Divine Command. It is because the purpose is not to narrate history, but to highlight the favours bestowed upon the Bani Isrāil. The incident of the cow has been mentioned first in order to make the Bani Isrāil realise how half-heartedly and unwillingly they had sacrificed the cow, yet **He** accepted it and favoured them with the desired results, and they found out who the real culprit was. **Allah** ordered them to take any portion of the cow's meat and touch it to the corpse. As soon as it was done, the victim came to life, gave the entire account of his murder and died again. Thus, not only was the murderer identified, but also another miracle of Divine Power was manifested in their presence and hearing. **Allah** is all-Powerful and shall similarly resurrect the dead on Yaum al-Qiyamah.

It is a point to ponder over seriously. **Allah** is all-Powerful; had **He** willed **He** would have quickened the dead directly to tell the story. But **His** Law for running this world is the law of cause and effect. The slaughtering of the cow became a cause. Similarly **He** created Prophet 'Īsā^{AS} without a father, yet did not abandon the means. **He** did order Angel Jibrīl^{AS} to blow unto Maryam^{RAU} or, when the eyes of the non-believers were to be blinded by **Him**, **He** ordered the Holy Prophet^{SAW} to throw a handful of sand towards them. The aim here is to reiterate the fact that for every task all possible means have to be employed in this world.

The Reality of Trust

Leaving the results to **Allah** after adopting all possible means is called trust. If the results are according to expectations, one should thank **Allah**; this is gratitude. If otherwise, one should accept them without complaining or feeling bad at heart; this is patience. Giving up the means and effort is neither patience nor trust.

*Thereafter, your hearts hardened ... And **Allah** is not unaware of what you do.*

Even after beholding so many miracles and availing so many blessings the hearts of the Bani Isrāil hardened like rocks, even harder than that. This 'hardening' or 'softening' is not a physical phenomenon or characteristic but a spiritual state or condition, for the physical heart of a believer and a non-believer are similar if examined clinically. This 'hardening' is not sensory, but

is the state in which the capacity conferred upon the Qalb from the Realm of Command is lost. It is by virtue of this particular capacity that the Qalb qualifies for Divine Address, absorbs His Refulgence and delivers it to mankind. The fortunate ones are guided because of this capacity, while the rest enjoy the worldly comforts only because of those with living hearts. When these living hearts cease to exist, this world will also perish and that will be the Day of Judgement. So, a heart that has lost the realisation of Allah's Greatness and is devoid of His Zikr is indeed worse than a rock, because from some rocks springs do gush forth, bringing satiation and fertility to the land. Some others yield little water, but do benefit the creation in some other way. And in a lesser degree are rocks that roll down merely in awe of Allah's Greatness. Even rocks offer some material, if not spiritual, benefits to people. Whereas you, (O Bani Isrā'īl) are worse than these rocks as your hardened hearts have given people nothing but trouble and hardship. This condition of the hearts, of course, becomes a source of mischief on earth.

Do you (O believers) hope ... used to change it intentionally?

O Muslims! Do you expect these people with dead hearts to embrace Islām? They are the slaves of their vain desires. Amongst them are those who listened to the Divine Scriptures, understood the Message and deliberately altered it to suit their own ends. A sin committed without knowledge is a sin too, but to deliberately alter the Divine Scriptures or to invent false interpretations indicates such depravity of the inner self that these people can never be blessed with faith.

The aim is not to merely narrate stories here, but to warn the Jews against adopting the attitudes of their ancestors. The Bani Isrā'īl were so deeply disgraced because of their impudent treatment of Prophet Mūsā^{AS} and his Shari'ah, so the Muslims are also being cautioned to be very careful about Holy Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW} and his Shari'ah. May Allah bless us with the capability to fulfil our duties!

And when they meet the believers, ... and what they reveal?

These Jews are so unscrupulous, that they not only deceive themselves, their religion and their fellowmen but also cheat the Muslims by proclaiming to be believers. Amongst themselves, they admonish each other against disclosing the contents of Torah, pertaining to the revelation of the Qurān, the raising of the Final Prophet^{SAW}, the instructions to obey him and the praise of his Companions^{RAU}. They were afraid that this would give the Muslims a solid evidence against them leading to their defeat both in this world and in the Ākhirah. They are so foolish to forget that the Divine Knowledge is perfect and comprehensive, encompassing all things, apparent or concealed.

These are the effects of the callousness of the heart. When the heart turns dark and hard, the entire body and mind take the wrong course. Intellect is blinded and such people strive not only to deceive their fellow beings, but even **Allah**, Who knows everything and it is impossible to conceal anything from **Him**.

And among them are the illiterates, ... woe to them for what they earn with it.

In fact people become divided into two groups, like the two groups of the Jews about to be discussed, of which one group is of the unlettered and the ignorant totally unacquainted with the greatness, glory and Barakah of the Divine Message. They invent various pretexts and excuses for their religion and are self-styled righteous. They would have no place or respect in **Allah's** Court because they had failed to respect **His** Message.

The second group amongst the Jews comprises those literate people who modify the verses of **Allah's** Book and add concoctions, claiming these to be revelation from **Allah**. The aim behind this is to gain affluence and establish their own importance. For instance, they do not tell their people the description of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, revealed in their Book. They declare the illegitimate as legitimate, and vice versa, on whims. Their curse is twofold; firstly for tampering with the Divine Book, and secondly for usurping the wealth of others. This has always been the trait of the vicious savants, who read books but their hearts remain blind and thus their aim in life changes. They strive for temporal gains rather than for pleasing **Allah**. Their knowledge is for sale, they fabricate falsehoods and fear **Allah** the least.

And they say, ... They will abide therein for ever.

Nevertheless, they claim, that they will be saved from the Fire, and if at all they do have to go to Hell for sins, it will be only for a few days, as by virtue of being believers, they will not be condemned forever. Whereas in reality, they have altered the entire religion, inter mingling the permissible and the forbidden. The ignorant have given rituals the status of worship and the literate have created their own issues in the name of religion in total violation of the Book. For instance, the Torah carried the Divine command to believe in the Prophet^{SAW} of Islām and described not only his traits, but also those of his Companions^{RAU}. After all the deviation, they still believe that they stand acquitted from the Fire. They must be asked if **Allah** has given them **His** word. If **He** has, **He** will certainly honour it. But if the criterion for judgement is virtue and not the person himself, then the virtues of a believer are non-existent in the characters of Bani Isrāil. It is an enormity to assume that **He** will forgive them with such false beliefs. What a true picture of today's misguided society, which, despite being laden with misdeeds, is a claimant of being Islāmic!

It is a settled issue that be it an ignorant or a scholar, man or a woman, king or a pauper, whosoever indulges in sin to an extent that it becomes his life style, leaving no trace of virtue, will reside in Hell forever, because perennial sin vitiates the faith. Once the faith is gone all the past good deeds are nullified, and no good act would qualify for Divine Acceptance in future. In other words, such a person is deprived of even the minutest traces of virtue, which makes him an eternal resident of Hell.

And those who believe and do righteous acts ... will they abide forever.

Allah now addresses the ones believe in the teachings of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. From where do we learn to believe in the Unity, the mode of **His** worship; be it obligatory or voluntary? From the sayings of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}! Be it about this world, or about the *Ākhirah*, about the Day of Reckoning, the Scales or the Paradise or Hell; the fountainhead of knowledge are the sayings of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. So those who act righteously in accordance with his *Sunnah* will be granted entry into the Paradise and will dwell therein forever.

Section 10

83. And when **We** took the Covenant from the Children of *Isrāil*: worship none but **Allah**, be good to parents, the kindred, the orphans and the needy, and speak kindly to people and establish *Ṣalāt* and give *Zakāt*. Then you turned back, except a few among you and you were averse.
- وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾
84. And when **We** took your Covenant: Do not shed each other's blood, nor drive your own people out of your habitations. Then you ratified and (to this) you were witness.
- وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾
85. Yet you are the ones who kill each other and drive some of your own people out of their home, you help (the enemy) with sin and transgression against your own people; and if they come to you as cap-
- ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِّنْكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِن يَأْتُواكُمْ أُسْرَىٰ تَعْدُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ

tives you ransom them, whereas their expulsion, in itself, was unlawful for you. Is it that you believe some part of the Book and disbelieve the other? And what should be the reward of those of you who do so, except disgrace in this life? And on the Day of Qi-yamah they will be consigned to the severest punishment. And Allah is not unmindful of what you do.

86. They are the people who have traded the life of this world at the price of Ākhirah. Neither their punishment would be lightened nor will they be helped.

عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفْتُوْمُنُونَ بِبَعْضِ
الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ
مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ
فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى
أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ
فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

And when We took the Covenant ...and you were averse.

Speaking of Bani Isrāil, Allah draws the attention of the reader to the scenario, when He took a pledge from them that: (1) They will worship no one except Him (2) They will treat their parents kindly, (3) They will be kind towards the orphans and the needy, (4) They will speak nicely to mankind and (5) They will offer Ṣalāt and pay Zakāt. Barring a few, all the rest turned their backs on the pledge. The Jews claimed to worship Allah Alone, but practically adhered to the teachings of their priests and rabbis, even when these contravened Divine obedience. This conduct has been described in another Section of the Qurān in these words: "They have forsaken Allah and have taken their wayward scholars as Rabb."

These two institutions i.e. the scholars and the saints are the sources of guidance towards Allah, and the people need their guidance in their practical lives. But when these institutions get perverted, they pervert the nations. The scholars and saints of the Jews were insensate to the extent that they mutated His Book and killed His Messengers sent for reformation. They altered the sections of the Torah pertaining to the Prophet ^{SAW} of Islām, and did not even re-

frain from waging war against him. And their followers blindly obeyed them in these offences. This is why **Allah** blames the Banī Israīl of worshipping their peerage. Had these scholars and saints invited the people to **Allah's** Path, they should have been obeyed, but when they themselves went astray, at least the followers should have abandoned them. Similarly a person, who violates the laws of **Allah** in order to fulfil the vain desires of his soul, indeed worships other gods, and for all practical purposes, takes his desires as his Rabb.

The Vicious Scholars and the Rabbis

In fact the task of a scholar is not to invent a religion, but to explain it in order to convey the Message of **Allah** and **His** Prophet^{AS} to mankind. If he begins to fabricate things, he goes astray. Saints also emerge from scholars. Every scholar is not necessarily a saint but every saint is a scholar, for it is forbidden to pledge allegiance to an ignorant. A scholar delivers the Prophetic knowledge to people, whereas a saint, besides possessing knowledge, is also a bearer of the Prophetic Barakah. This will only be possible if he himself obeys **Allah** and **His** Prophet^{AS}. If his own life is against Sunnah, he will be devoid of any Barakah and all those who follow him will be led astray.

Then the second most important thing is to extend kind treatment to parents. They are the cause of one's coming to this world. They enjoy rights over their off spring and their wealth. Even if they are non-believers, they must be respected, though in matters of faith, they are not to be obeyed. They should neither be insulted nor looked down upon; rather, one must pray for their reformation. This is why the wise people advise that before making a friend see whether he is obedient to **Allah**, or is he at least obedient to his parents who have been so good to him? If not, do not expect any sincerity from him.

After the parents, are the rights of the relatives. They should be treated kindly and a close relationship must be maintained, avoiding desertion. Then the deserving people of the society, the orphans and the needy, should not be neglected. So much so that one must be a well-wisher for the entire mankind, exchanging kind words with one another. Slander and abusive language must be avoided. Indeed one must try to convey the truth with love and affection. The beauty of speech is that whatever is spoken must be the truth, and delivered in an appropriate manner. To engage in flattery or tell lies, just to please someone, cannot be termed as beauty of speech.

Fair mutual dealings are the foundations of excellence in worships. If the dealings are not fair, the worship will be devoid of pleasures. If the situation deteriorates further, one may forsake the worships altogether, as is the case with Muslims today.

The Bani Isrāil could not maintain fair dealings. Consequently, their worships were swept away and finally they lost their faith. There were only a few people who were blessed with steadfastness, survived to see the age of Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW} and embraced Islām. By and large they were a treacherous people. This, they are being reminded by **Allah**.

And when We took your Covenant: ... you were witness.

And when **Allah** took oath from you, that you will neither shed blood nor will you resort to expel one another from the native land.

This indeed is the spirit of Islamic brotherhood that all Muslims are like components of a single body. If a Muslim slays another Muslim, it is like chopping off his own body. This is a pledge, which you had not only formally accepted but also continue to acknowledge it to date.

Yet you are the ones who ... And Allah is not unmindful of what you do.

But did you (the Children of Isrāil) honour your word? Not at all. In fact it is you who cut the throats of one another and pester your countrymen so much that they are forced to flee their motherland. And when you find someone in captivity, you spend money to free him, on the pretext that he is a fellow believer, whereas you yourself were responsible for his sorry state. To begin with, you were forbidden to torture or expel anyone from his native land; but you never bothered to obey. Do you believe in some parts of the Divine Book and deny some, by ignoring them completely. If you persist in denial, you will be disgraced in this world and will never be able to live honourably. Your motive to usurp the wealth of those you slew and to become supreme will never be achieved. This law also applies to all nations who commit this crime. They are deprived of an honourable existence. A civil war can never lead a nation to heights in this world.

They are the people ... nor will they be helped.

In the Ākhirah if this conduct is coupled with the denial of even a single Divine Command, which is disbelief; not to practise is Fisq but when someone begins to criticise the Divine Commandments as useless or impracticable, it is pure denial, which will invoke a tormenting doom. It must always be remembered that **Allah** is fully aware of all your actions: **He** is vigilant over everything, significant or trivial, and is also well aware of the beliefs you have in hearts.

87. We gave Mūsā the Book and sent a chain of Messengers after him. And we gave 'Isā, son of Maryam manifest signs and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit. Is it that whenever a Messenger comes to you with something that you do not desire, you become arrogant? Some of them you refute, while others you kill.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ
بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ وَءَاتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ
الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ
رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تُهْوَىٰ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَنْتُمْ تَكْبِرُونَ فَفَرَّقْنَا
كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرَّقْنَا تَقْلُوبُكُمْ ﴿٨٧﴾

88. And they say, "Our hearts are wrapped". Infact Allah has cursed them for their disbelief. So, it is very little that they believe.

وَقَالُوا أَأَقْلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ
فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

89. And when a Book from Allah comes to them, confirming that which is with them, although, before this, they used to pray for victory over the non-believers. But when there comes to them, that which they recognize (to be true), they refuse to believe it. So the curse of Allah is on the non-believers.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا
مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا أَفَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ
فَلَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

90. Miserable is the price for which they have sold their souls that they disbelieve what Allah has revealed, grudging that Allah, in His Grace, has revealed to any of His servants He liked. They have drawn wrath upon wrath. And for the non-believers is a humiliating punishment.

بِئْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا
بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بَغْيًا أَنْ يَنْزِلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ
عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ قَبَاءٌ وَغَضَبٌ
عَلَىٰ غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ﴿٩٠﴾

91. And when it is said to them, "Believe in what Allah has revealed",

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا
نُؤْمِنُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا

they say, "We believe what has been revealed to us". And they deny everything else, even though it be the truth, confirming what they already have. Say, "Then why did you kill the Prophets of Allah, in times gone by, if you indeed were the believers?"

وَرَأَوْهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيََاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١﴾

92. And Musa came to you with clear signs, yet you worshipped the calf in his absence and you were the wrongdoers.

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ. وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

93. And when We made a pact with you and raised the Tūr over you, (Saying): "Hold fast that which We have given you and listen". They said, "We listen and we disobey". (The love of) the calf permeated their hearts because of their disbelief. Say, "Evil indeed are the dictates of your faith, if you have any".

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاسْمَعُوا قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَأُشْرِبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ قُلْ يَنْسَبُ مَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

94. Say, "If the home in Ākhirah with Allah is exclusively for you and no one else, then ask for death in case you are truthful".

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

95. But they will never ask for it, because of what their hands have sent before them. And Allah is well aware of the wrongdoers.

وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوْهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

96. You shall indeed find them, out of all people, most greedy for life, even greedier than the polytheist. Each one of them longs to live for a thousand years. Even such a long life will not save him from

وَلَنَجْذِثَهُمْ أَخْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَىٰ حَيَوتِهِمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحَّزَجٍ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ

the punishment. For Allah sees all that they do.

وَاللَّهُ بِصِرَاطٍ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

We gave Mūsā the Book ... while others you kill.

The truth is that **We** gave Prophet Mūsā^{AS} a Book, a code of life, a comprehensive programme that would guarantee success both here and in the Ākhirah. All human endeavour, thought and aspirations, and the resulting political systems aimed at searching for the best way to live. But **We** sent down a Scripture from the Heaven unto Banī Isrāīl giving them a code of life, and also sent a Prophet^{AS} of great determination, because the Book alone cannot benefit unless the Qulub are purified to accept its teachings. This purification is effected in the company of the Prophets^{AS}. Even after the purification, the interpretation of this abridged Book can only be done by a Prophet^{AS} or a Messenger^{AS} of **Allah** who receives guidance directly from **Him**.

In case of Muslims, **Allah** sent the greatest of all Books, the Qurān along with the greatest of all Prophets, Muḥammad^{SAW}. He imparted guidance in every aspect of life, from buying shoelaces to running a State. But nothing can be gained from the Book when the hearts are devoid of the Prophetic Barakah.

The matter, however, did not end with Prophet Mūsā^{AS}. **Allah** sent Messengers after Messengers unto the Banī Isrāīl. All of them were gifted with the power to rekindle the hearts, and each one was a fountain of Divine Beneficence. Finally, Prophet 'Īsā^{AS} arrived with clear signs and miracles; the Archangel Jibrīl^{AS} always in his attendance. All Prophets are basically innocent, but Prophet 'Īsā^{AS} had the additional distinction that he was conceived because of Angel Jibrīl's^{AS} blowing at her mother and he attended him at birth, protected him all his life and finally lifted him to the heavens. Thus the temperament and nature of Prophet 'Īsā^{AS} was thoroughly angelic as he was neither conceived through copulation, nor ever indulged in it himself.

Copulation, although rewarding when legitimate, is an act that absorbs total attention, disconnecting for a few moments the spiritual states which can only be regained after spending some time and effort. Prophet 'Īsā^{AS} did not even go through this temporary phase of disconnection, although according to the Ḥadīth, he will get married on his return to this world. Similar Divine Protection is guaranteed to the Book brought by Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW}. Its Barakah

enlightened all ages ever since he was raised, through the medium of the Aulia of the Muslim Ummah.

According to the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}: "the scholars of my Ummah are like the Prophets^{-AS} of Banī Isrāīl". This saying refers to those enlightened souls who in addition to the knowledge of the Book also possess powerful hearts capable of spreading light to others. It is not about those who only specialize in the Arabic grammar and use their knowledge as the means of earning livelihood. The problem with Banī Isrāīl was that they appraised their Prophets by the standard of their own souls. Soul is the end product of various forms of matter put together, and its entire attention is towards acquiring material pleasures. It is the Spirit and its Qalb that are illuminated by transcendental truths, and in turn enlighten the soul to a degree that it desires change. On the contrary, the Banī Isrāīl allowed their souls to dominate their Spirits. Instead of benefiting from the Prophets^{-AS}, they stood in wilful defiance before them. They crossed all limits, and as a nation slew many of them and prevaricated others. Arrogance of the soul not only drove them to quibble but also turned their hearts so dark that they did not hesitate in killing the Prophets^{-AS}. A similar treatment is extended to most of the Aulia and instead of benefiting from them; people often resort to pestering and labelling them. The basic reason behind this attitude is nothing but arrogance.

And they say, "Our hearts are wrapped" ... it is very little that they believe.

And they claim that their hearts are draped in fine coverings and always remain pure and receptive to the truth; had there been any weight in the invitation to Islām they would have certainly accepted it. The fact is that the Holy Prophet's^{-SAW} words carry much weight, but the hearts of the repudiators have always been under Allah's curse. Now they are denying the Prophet^{-SAW} of Islām, which indeed is a punishment for their disbelief and waywardness. It is obvious that continuous malefaction eventually leads to faithlessness, and the hearts turn so hard as to remain unaffected by the truth. The Banī Isrāīl knew and recognized very well the truth of Qurān and the Prophet^{-SAW} of Islām as true, yet they were deprived of the capability to believe.

And when a Book from Allah ... So the curse of Allah is on the non-believers.

When the Final Book arrived, it not only endorsed their own Books, but also re-emphasized the Unity of Allah, the Prophethood, the Ākhirah and the Worships etc, the common factors in all the Divine Books. Indeed, arrival of the Qurān and the raising of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} confirmed the preceding Books, which had given glad tidings of these twin events. And the Banī Isrāīl were so sure that they would often invoke Allah's help in their wars against the non-believers in the name of the Last Prophet^{-SAW}. And often, in their arguments

with the infidels, they would boast that they were the People of the Book. They would say that although the era of the Prophets^{AS} had gone by, yet the emergence of the last Prophet^{SAW} was at hand, and together with him they would teach the non-believers a lesson.

But what did actually happen? When the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and the Qurān arrived, they refused to believe in both. They were accursed and will continue to be under **His** Reprobation until the end of the Day.

Miserable is the price ... for the non-believers is a humiliating punishment.

Their souls have certainly struck the worst deal. Merely out of malice, chagrin and false pride, they denied the blessings of **Allah** bestowed in the form of the Qurān and the Prophethood. They wanted to keep the Institution of Prophethood under their control; had the Holy Prophet^{SAW} been from the Banī Isrāīl, they would have accepted him. They thought that the Prophethood could never be conferred outside Banī Isrāīl. But **Allah** is not bound by anyone; **He** may bless humanity at **His** Free Will with whatever **He** chooses. And all **His** chosen servants are not of the same status; some are more blessed than the others. This Jewish tendency also prevails in us today. A person from a known religious family is accepted as a saint or a religious leader even if a sinner, whereas someone from a common lineage, no matter how pious and righteous, is not benefited from. The Jews had presumed Prophethood to be a matter of inheritance, while the Muslims today treat Wilayah as the same. Thus the Banī Isrāīl were caught in a twofold doom. They not only denied the Prophet^{SAW} of Islām, but also objected to **His** Providence. They will soon see the results of their audacity; for them awaits an agonizing retribution and disgrace. In other words, they will be subjected to humiliation besides the torture whereas, if a believer is punished, it will be only to cleanse him. His self-respect will be maintained and the matter will be settled between him and **Allah**, without open humiliation.

And when it is said to them, if you have any".

The Banī Isrāīl make tall claims, whereas the truth is that **Allah** had to suspend Mount Tūr over them to obtain their allegiance to **His** obedience and devotion. To obtain involuntary obedience is a Divine Favour by itself, though it is not the general rule, because it would make things easy for everyone. They heard **His** Commands very well and promised to obey but their behaviour continued to be defiant even afterwards. They were the folk who, because of their ingratitude and apostasy even after their miraculous rescue from the Pharaoh, could not repent sincerely and the love of the calf was imbibed in their hearts as a result. Here the intention is not to recall the event of Mount Tūr, but to highlight the level and the state of their ingratitude. They had seen idolaters

indulging in idol worship and pleaded with Prophet Mūsā^{AS} to provide them with a deity too. Although Prophet Mūsā^{AS} scolded them into repentance, yet they did not repent sincerely until the Mount was actually suspended over them. They promised obedience but practically adopted the wrong path. Nothing good could, therefore, be expected from the Bani Isrā'īl as a nation and their claim of believing was nothing but a lie!

So O Prophet^{SAW}! Let them know that if they call their indulgence in disbelief and polytheism, their violation of the laws of the permissible and the forbidden and their slaying of Allah's Prophets^{AS}, as faith, they are sadly mistaken. This can be a heap of disbelief but not faith. Today also, some of the Muslims claim to be believers while they give rituals the status of worship and prefer them over Sunnah. Such people ascribe partners to Allah in His Being and in His Attributes. And to crown it all, they claim to be the custodians of Islām! The fact is that no one can attain eternal bliss without the beliefs handed down by the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and without the endorsement of Sunnah on his actions, no matter how tall the claims might be.

Say, "If the home ... And Allah is well Aware of the wrongdoers.

Now let us assess the claim of Jews from another angle. They maintained that the Fire will not touch them and if at all it does, it will only be for a few days. They also claimed that the salvation would only be for the Jews and the Christians and that they were the children of Allah and His chosen ones. These claims were based on the false notion that they were on the right path while the reality was just the opposite. They were just beguiling people, knowing very well that the Holy Prophet^{SAW} was Allah's Messenger. If they are adamant, then instead of arguing, let the matter be decided in a totally different and unusual manner. Let them wish for death if they are sincere. Wishing for death, or the conditions under which it is permissible, is a separate issue. Here, it is intended to prove that even the worst antagonists of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} are convinced in their hearts that he is indeed the Prophet of Allah. They are fully aware that if they accept the challenge and wish for death, they will definitely perish. Allah declares that they will never wish for death, as they know themselves to be wrongdoers and transgressors. These are the people who try to prove the truth as falsehood, and vice versa. Allah is well aware of such malefactors.

This highlights the fact that the fear of the unknown haunting a sinner is basically the fear of death, whereas the peace and composure in the hearts of the righteous flow out of the hope of eternal bliss. This challenge was in a way similar to Mubāhalah to prove the truth, and the Jews could not even wish for

death. According to Ḥadīth, had the Jews uttered this wish, every one of them would have been choked to death by their own saliva.

You shall indeed find them, ... for Allah sees all that they do.

Allah informs the Holy Prophet^{SAW} that he will find these Jews desirous of living longer than anyone else. They are even more covetous than the idolaters or non-believers who do not believe in the Ākhirah at all. The worldly life means everything to them, so it is natural for them to wish for longevity. But the Jews, who claim to be believers and are convinced of the eternal life, surpass the rest in the lust of this worldly life. Each one of them desires to live a thousand years. Thus their claim that they qualify for eternal bliss is a hoax. Even if one lives a very long life, it cannot save him from Divine punishment. In fact, a long life of disbelief will rather add to the distress, as salvation is based on faith. Allah is well aware of their precepts and practices, and of the fact that inwardly they know the truth but neither acknowledge nor accept it.

The Difference Between Knowing And Accepting

It must not be presumed that knowledge need not be acknowledged. Satan knows but does not acknowledge. Faith demands not only knowledge but also the acknowledgement. The acceptance, of course, should not be of the category: "We hear and we rebel!" whereby the claim is followed by practical negation. The real acceptance is the one followed by practice.

Many a leading scholars, including the illustrious Imām Bukhārī^{RA}, declare that actions are synonymous to faith. But according to the Hanafī School of Thought, if someone takes Shahādah and endorses it with his Qalb, failure to practise will render him a sinner but not a non-believer. It is because verbal acceptance and endorsement of the Qalb are actions too, and indeed meritorious ones. But the exquisiteness and the real merit lie in practice backed by certification of the Qalb; else it will be a neglectful and heedless pretence. May Allah guide us all!

Section 12

97. Say, "Who is an enemy to Jibrīl! For he brings down (revelation) to your Qalb by Allah's leave, a confirmation of what was (revealed) before, a guidance and good news for the believers".

قُلْ مَنْ كَاَنَ عَدُوًّا لِّجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ
عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ
وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾

98. Who is an enemy of Allah and His Angels and His Messengers and Jibrīl and Mikāil, so Allah is an enemy of the non-believers.

مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ
وَرُسُلِهِ، وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ

99. We have sent to you clear Āyāt and none but the Fāsiqīn reject them.

فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾
وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ
وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

100. Is it not that every time they make a promise, a party of them set it aside? In fact, most of them do not believe.

أَوْ كَلَّمَا عَاهَدُوا عَهْدًا ابْتَدَءَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ
بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

101. And whenever came to them a Messenger from Allah, confirming what they already had, a party of People of the Book flung the Book of Allah behind their backs, as if they did not know.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ
مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ بَدَّ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَأَوْا
ظُهُورَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

102. And they followed what the devils recited in Sulaimān's kingdom. It is not that Sulaimān did disbelief but the devils indulged in disbelief teaching people magic and that, which was revealed to the two Angels Hārūt and Mārūt at Babul. But the two (angels) did not teach anyone without warning, "We are only a test, so do not indulge in disbelief." And from them, people learnt that which caused separation between husband and wife. But they could thus harm none except by Allah's leave. And they learnt that which harmed them and not what benefited them. And they knew for sure that such traders shall have no share in the Ākhirah. And evil

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ
وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَٰكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ
كَفَرُوا يَعْلَمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ
عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِلَّا بِالْإِذْنِ وَالْمَرْءُ
وَمَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ وَمَا هُمْ
بِضَارِينَ بِهِ مِنَ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ
وَيَعْلَمُونَ مَا يُضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ
وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ

was the price for which they sold their souls, if they only knew!

103. And if they had believed and guarded themselves from evil, they would have got a far better reward from Allah, if they only knew!

مِنْ خَلْقٍ وَلَيْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ
أَنْفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾
وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِّنْ
عِندِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Say, "Who is ... a guidance and good news for believers".

When the scholars of Banī Isrāīl failed on the front of logic and tradition, the situation evolved into a *Mubahalāh*. Failing at that too, they had no option but to accept the truth, yet they were not willing to do so. Now they came up with another excuse that they would have certainly believed in the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, being sure that he was incontrovertible, but there was a hurdle! He claims that the revelations are brought to him by Archangel Jibrīl^{AS}, who used to bring destruction to their nation and hardships for their ancestors. Had it been some other angel, for instance Mikāīl^{AS}, they would have certainly accepted the Message. Since they did not get along well with Angel Jibrīl^{AS}, they could not follow the teachings of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}.

All this was fabricated by the scholars of Banī Isrāīl to satisfy the common ignorant Jew, but Allah exposed their lie by revealing these Āyāt. Addressing the scholars, Allah says that these enemies of Jibrīl^{AS} must be asked whether they have to develop a relationship with him or have to simply accept the Message he brings unto the Qalb of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} by Allah's command. Here the term "Bi izn-Allah" (by Allah's leave) makes it clear that it is Allah's Message and the angel is deputed only to convey, while the destination of its descent is the most Sacred Qalb of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}.

Mind and Qalb

The question may be asked that when the centre of knowledge is the human mind, why is this revelation sent unto the Qalb? Be informed that knowledge is of two kinds: physical and spiritual. The function of the mind is to learn, store and apply the knowledge of material or physical sciences. The physical body is made of matter, so its requirements are material. The brain is also material. It determines the needs of the body and finds ways of fulfilling them.

This is the reason why faith is not the prerequisite for learning physical skills; a non-believer can also become a doctor, a scientist or an engineer.

The second category is knowledge of normative or spiritual sciences. The Spirit belongs to the Realm of Command; the mind does not have the capability to attain the knowledge related to that Realm. It is the function of Qalb located inside the physical heart, a vital organ of the Spirit. The knowledge about **Allah's** Greatness, **His** Attributes, the Transcendental Truths, Spirit, Barzakh, Ākhirah, Life after Life, the Reckoning, the concept of Reward and Punishment, Paradise and Hell, can only be acquired through the spiritual sciences and the centre of this knowledge is the Qalb. If the brain could perceive this knowledge, the most superior brain in the world was that of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, and the Message would have been revealed unto his noble mind. But the point of descent of Divine Revelation is his Qalb, which is the purest of all. Thus to acquire the knowledge of these sciences, doors of the Qalb have to be opened. The sublimity of Divine Revelation is evident by the fact that it is addressed to the purest Qalb of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, as it is beyond the access of the mind. In fact, it reforms the human mind; and it is beyond any mind to reform **Allah's** Message.

The Quran as a Verifier

The Qurān corroborates and confirms all the preceding Divine Scriptures in two ways. Firstly, it re-emphasises the topics discussed by the previous Scriptures, such as the Supreme Being and **His** Attributes, the Day of Judgement, the Reckoning or the Paradise and Hell etc. The second verification is circumstantial. All preceding Books had augured the raising of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and the revelation of the Final Book. Thus his raising and the revelation of the Qurān have actually proved the prophecy as true. Another fact clearly highlighted here is that no Book will be revealed after the one revealed to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. Had it been so, the Qurān, in addition to confirming the previous Books, would also have given information on the ones to come, in advance. But it only mentions the past and dismisses the possibility of any later Divine Revelation. Any future claimant would, therefore, be an impostor.

The Qurān guides the mankind to the correct path in the most accurate manner. If the entire social structure and the systems of life adopted by people throughout history are studied in comparison to it, it will be seen that the best code of life is the one offered by the Qurān. This is the only code, or guidance, which provides instructions from birth till the Ākhirah, whereas all the rest are silent on events beyond death. The Qurān gives out to its believers spiritual ecstasy and glad tidings that unfold to them pleasures of the Ākhirah, providing them a degree of satisfaction and peace undiminished by worldly upheavals.

And whoever is an enemy ...so Allah is an enemy of the non-believers.

These were the miracles of this great Revelation, which the Bani Isrā'īl could never accept because they were suffering from infidelity and animosity with **Allah**. He declares that whosoever turns against **Him** and becomes a foe of the angels, **His Messengers**^{AS}, Angels Jibrīl^{AS} and Mikā'il^{AS}, **He Himself** is the enemy of such non-believers. In other words this hostility towards Jibrīl^{AS} cannot become friendship with Mikā'il^{AS}. The real cause is enmity with **Allah** and this indeed is the reason of hostility towards **His** angels and Prophets^{AS}.

Similarly, whosoever is an enemy of the Auliā, or of a few of them, in fact is the enemy of every one of them rather of **Allah Himself**. According to the Ḥadīth: "I have two ministers in the heavens and two on the earth; the former are Jibrīl^{AS} and Mikā'il^{AS} and the latter are Abū Bakr and 'Umar^{RAU}". Therefore, anyone who is hostile to any of these two great Companions^{RAU} will antagonize **Allah**. **He Himself** is the enemy of those who indulge in disbelief, and as a result of **His** wrath, they develop a hatred for the Auliā, **His Messengers** and **His** Angels. On the contrary, when **Allah** is pleased with someone, **He** instils in him the love of the Auliā and takes him to their audience, i.e. **He** blesses him with pious friends.

We have sent to you ... most of them do not believe.

And **He** revealed not one but many clear signs; the Qurān by itself is a great miracle. Apart from it there are countless miracles of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. The non-believers do not deny these out of any logical reasoning, but their hearts have lost the capacity to accept the truth because of their wickedness. These Jews have been breaking their covenants generation after generation. Whenever **Allah** took a promise, most of them broke it and very few practically remained on the right path. They are in the same state now, and despite the covenant in the Torah, very few believe in the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. The majority of them is rebellious.

And whenever came to them ...as if they did not know.

Now the greatest of all Messengers^{AS} of **Allah** has arrived, who corroborates their Book. If they deny him, what will they do with the prediction made about him in the Torah, which they claim to be true? They do know the reality and recognize the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. His qualities and character traits, even his physical features, have been described in their Book. But see how they ignore its teachings and pretend as if they do not know anything. Instead of following the Holy Prophet^{SAW} they are after learning the skills once practised by the devils during the era of Prophet Sulaimān^{AS}.

And they followed ...if they only knew!

With every genuine thing there is always a counterfeit, so much so that there are liars who claim to be God, impostors claiming to be Prophets and imitators claiming to be saints. Similarly, during the auspicious reign of Prophet Sulaimān^{AS}, who ruled not only over the people and the Jinn, but also subjected the beasts, the birds and the winds, many zealots came up with the idea of controlling the Jinn. Satan, taking advantage of the situation, taught them incantations. Whosoever recited these would receive all possible assistance from Satan, so that this demonology could flourish.

The Basis of Magic and its Effects

This is what became the basis of magic, which is practised even today. It stems from disbelief and atheism. The words used are usually blasphemous. Even when Qurānic Āyāt are used, they are scribed in a forbidden manner, for example, with menstrual blood. Moreover the sorcerers always prefer to remain unclean, an act liked by Satan. Just as there are two methods used in magic, so are there two types of effects it produces. Firstly, it affects the vision or the power of imagination and causes various hallucinations. In reality there is nothing, just like the magicians of the Pharaoh, who had cast a spell over the eyes of the spectators. Because of its effect Prophet Mūsā^{AS} took those ropes as snakes crawling on the ground. In fact there was nothing, the ropes were merely ropes, but the faculty of imagination had been influenced to observe these as snakes. The second possible effect of magic is metamorphosis, i.e. changing the victim entirely in nature such as to transform a person into a statue, or an animal. It is a long discussion whether metamorphosis is possible or not; most scholars agree that it is not. **Allah** knows the best.

In short, the Banī Isrāīl ignored the Divine Books and took to Satanic guidance until **Allah** deputed two angels to Babylonia, who informed people of the difference between magic and the Divine Words, and also of the evil influences of magic. The teachings of the Prophets^{AS} had briefly highlighted that magic, as a whole, was a malpractice. But to elaborate on its forms and other details was not commensurate with their high office. From the angels who manage the affair of the universe, **Allah** appointed two for this purpose. The Prophets^{AS} mission pertains to Shari'ah and guidance. For example, the Holy Prophet^{SAW} proclaimed gambling to be forbidden and explained that in all games of chance, loss was sure while gain was only a probability. But how the gambling would be actually arranged, with cards or with something else, was not discussed. It would have amounted to making people aware of the techniques, and any vicious mind could actually utilize them to gamble. Similarly, elaborating on the techniques or methods of magic does not befit the status of any

Prophet^{AS}. Therefore, Allah assigned this job to Hārūt and Mārūt, the angels in human form, and evidence was provided that they were the angels, just as the Prophethood is substantiated by miracles. They warned the people against practicing witchcraft. They informed them that this knowledge neither originates from Prophet Sulaimān^{AS} nor does it befit any Prophet^{AS}. It is but totally Satanic. They also explained the details of the black art; the effects of various techniques applied, and also clarified the prevailing misconceptions about miracle and sorcery. The latter was the practice and creation of the Jinn and the devils.

The Difference between Witchcraft and Miracle

The difference is that in witchcraft the cause is there, but is concealed from the spectators, while a miracle is above all the causes, and is directly a Divine Act. This is a subtle matter, and beyond perception of the common man. A simpler explanation is that a miracle is manifested to support the Divine Code of Life, to confirm the Prophethood, and to establish Allah's Rule, whereas a sorcerer or an enchanter always strives to establish his own superiority. Likewise the action manifested for the revival of faith will be a Karāmah, whereas an extraordinary act aimed at establishing personal authority would be nothing but witchcraft. The former would be based on a pure and chaste precept while the latter on roguish propensity and morbid actions.

See Allah's Mercy! He assigned two angels for educating people on right and wrong, who stayed amongst them for as long as He wished. See also the demonology and perversion of Bani Isrā'īl. Those angels, before telling the detail of what constituted magic, always warned them that it was plain disbelief and that they were sent as a trial, lest they should turn non-believers by indulging in the nefarious formula of magic.

But the Bani Isrā'īl would specially learn the love charms by which to create differences between man and wife, to promote illicit amour. And this the Jews continued till the noble period of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. It is ironical that this business is flourishing amongst the Muslims today, rendering many of them faithless. It must, however, be remembered that a sorcerer cannot do everything that he wants, nor should anyone fear his magic. They can do no harm unless Allah permits. In other words, if Allah withdraws His protection from a person, he becomes vulnerable to the evil tricks of the sorcerers. But if a person has faith and follows the tenets of Islām, Allah will surely protect him and no harm can come to him. When Asim bin Labīd, the Jew, cast a spell on the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, Allah informed him about the whole plot. Soon, all the witchcraft used i.e. the comb, his hair and dates etc were recovered from the well and the well was cleaned off.

Effects of Magic

This proves that magic does have an effect even on the Prophets^{AS}. Everyone is subjected to its effects in the same way as one's appetite or thirst is subjected to natural laws. But magic cannot harm the Prophets^{AS} and falls flat. Likewise, a single Tawajjuh of an accomplished Shaikh can wash away the effects of spells of the sorcerers, knitted in a lifetime. But the unfortunate people who ignore Allah are always ruled by sorcerers like the Hindus trapped in the cobwebs of their Pundits, or the fallacious sects who are always the captives of witchcraft. These innovators spend a lifetime in learning such skills, which may result in some temporal gain, but always end up in harm and eternal disgrace. No real benefit can ever be had from them under any circumstances.

The Banī Isrāīl also know very well that whosoever spends his time in acquiring the knowledge of the demonology instead of learning the Divine Book, has no share in the eternal bliss and is condemned to perpetual humiliation. What a horrifying fate they choose for themselves! Indeed all their endeavours shall be of no consequence and will lead them nowhere save Hell. Had they opted for righteousness; had they believed in and followed the teachings of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, they would have certainly found a generous reward awaiting them in the Ākhirah. This discussion brings out another lesson. Anyone who lives against the Holy Prophet's^{SAW} Sunnah is not only ignorant but also stupid, regardless of the fact that he is known as an intellectual in the society. The essence of all wisdom and acumen is in adherence to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}.

Section 13

104. O you who believe! Do not say, (to the Prophet) Rā'ina (Listen to us) but say, Unzurna (Look upon us), and listen carefully; and for the non-believers is a painful punishment.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنَا
وَقُولُوا انْظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوا وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٤﴾

105. Neither the non-believers among the People of the Book, nor the polytheists want that anything good may come to you from your Rabb. But Allah favours with His Mercy whom He pleases and Allah's Grace is Infinite.

مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ
وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يُنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ
مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ
مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١٠٥﴾

106. Such of **Our** Revelations that We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We substitute with better or similar ones. Do you not know that **Allah** has power over everything?

﴿ مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾ (١١٦)

107. Do you not know that, to **Allah** belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth? And for you there is no friend or helper besides **Allah**.

﴿ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴾ (١١٧)

108. Do you want to question your Messenger, as Mūsa was questioned aforetime? And whosoever trades disbelief for faith, has indeed strayed from the right path.

﴿ أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْأَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الْكُفْرَ بَآلِ يَمُنْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴾ (١١٨)

109. Many of the People of the Book wish, that they turn you back to disbelief after your faith, even after the truth has become manifest to them. So forgive and overlook, till **Allah** brings about His Command. Indeed **Allah** has power over all things.

﴿ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِن بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾ (١١٩)

110. And establish Ṣalāt and give Zakāt. And whatever good you send forth for your souls, you will find it with **Allah**. For **Allah** observes all that you do.

﴿ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِن خَيْرٍ نَّحْدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴾ (١٢٠)

111. And they say, "None except the Jews and the Christians shall enter Paradise", this is their wishful thinking, Say, "Produce your proof if you are truthful".

﴿ وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَن كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصْرَىٰ يَٰلَيْكَ أَمَانِيهِمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴾ (١٢١)

112. Yes, any one who surrenders his will and purpose to **Allah** and

﴿ بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴾ (١٢٢)

does good, his reward is with his Rabb. Such shall neither fear, nor grieve.

أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ، وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

O you who believe! ... and for the non-believers is a painful punishment.

How can the Banī Isrāīl be expected to believe when they are so vicious as to display impudence before the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} on purpose? Rā'ina was considered to be a word pertaining to reverence and respect in Arabic. When the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} addressed the audience and if any one missed out something, he would say Ra'ina, meaning, "please be kind or considerate to us." But the Jews would twist their tongue sarcastically to utter it as Rā'ina meaning "shepherd"; as if they were the intellectuals and the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} was a shepherd. The believers also spoke the same word, certainly not with the same intention. But because of the Jews' malevolence Allah omitted it from the dictionary of the believers altogether.

Probably, this is why Syed Anwar Shah Kashmiri^{-RAU} writes in his Akfār al-Mulhidīn that any word uttered about Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, which the listener understands as blasphemous, will render the speaker a non-believer. Allah protected the Companions^{-RAU} from such a situation, by forbidding the use of the said word and replaced it with Unzurna meaning, "look upon us". It meant the same but could not be twisted for ulterior motives. Allah directs Wasma'u (listen to him very carefully) because it was one of the miracles of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} that whenever he addressed a gathering, he could be heard equally well by everyone without him having to raise his voice. Now if anything was missed out, it was a failure on the part of the listener. Therefore, Allah directed them to listen very carefully. As for the non-believers, a painful doom surely awaits them in the eternal life. Even in this world everyone has witnessed the misery of the Jews.

Neither the non-believers ... and Allah's Grace is Infinite.

The non-believers, whether from the People of the Book or from the idolaters, do not like in their hearts the fact that Allah has blessed the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} with so many favours. They are well aware of the truth of his Prophethood and are convinced of the fact that Allah is the Creator and rest everything a creation. Of the grace, the knowledge and the honour bestowed upon the entire creation, the major share went to the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. There is no room for

argument over this; may **Allah** bless everyone with the sense to understand!

These non-believers plan to deprive the believers of **Allah's** Blessings but **Allah** chooses whosoever **He** pleases for **His** Favours, and **He** had chosen the Companions^{-RAU} for it. They are the very first addressees of the Qurān and are the first to be informed of the etiquettes of the Holy Prophet's^{-SAW} court. This Āyah also provides evidence on the righteousness of the Companions^{-RAU}. **Allah**, out of **His** Generosity, also informs them of the tricks of the Jews and the idolaters.

Such of Our revelations ... Allah has power over everything?

Similarly they object to the change in the direction of the Qiblah. They argue that the claimants of the true religion have suddenly turned to K'abah from the direction of Bait al Maqdas, in which they used to pray earlier; now which one of the two was correct? **Allah** declares that these are the tactics to mislead the Muslims; otherwise the objection could only have been valid if any news or information provided by the Qurān had ever proved to be wrong. There had been no abrogation in the Commandments - beliefs, articles of faith, principles of law, moral precepts etc - but as far as the Divine Laws are concerned, these may be changed by the Lawgiver. It is man who has to obey **Him**; **He** is not bound to seek advice from anyone. For some, **He** had enjoined two obligatory Ṣalāt, while for others five. For some the Qiblah was Bait al-Maqdas, for others it was K'abah. **He** honoured the Muslims with both, one after the other. The non-believers try to entangle the believers in twisted words, knowing that even an unwitting disrespect towards the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} not only results in cessation of Divine Blessings, but also vitiates faith itself.

This is a very delicate affair, but today the people are so daring that they make the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} the topic of every discussion. May it be the Knowledge of the Unseen, or the Omnipresence, Hearing by the Dead or the concept of Punishments and Rewards in Barzakh, they commence their discussions and arguments with reference to him, little realising that even an iota of implied disrespect invalidates the faith. Is it not enough to believe that, "After **Allah**, the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} is the most exalted"?

When a Divine Law is superseded, it is washed away from the memories, and a similar or an improved version takes its place. The methods of abrogation were two. Sometimes it would be directed that a certain Āyah would not be acted upon any longer, but its recitation would continue. In other situations both will cease. Sometimes the recital would be abolished, leaving the law intact just as the Āyah pertaining to Rajam (stoning of adulterers to death). In the other method the Āyah would be simply washed away from the memory of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} as well as of the Companions^{-RAU}. Whatever be the mode,

the amendment was always better suited to the people and brought more blessings for the believers.

Do you not know that ... there is no friend or helper besides Allah.

O you, the addressed! Don't you know that **Allah** is the Arbiter and the Law-giver? **He** is to be obeyed rather than being advised by the mortals. **He** Alone is the Sovereign in the heavens and in the earth. **He** can enact or revoke at will. None of **His** subjects can hamper or obstruct **His** prerogative. Beware! A time is surely approaching, when the facts will be laid bare and you will find no help and assistance from anywhere save **Him**.

Do you want to question ... has indeed strayed from the right path.

And those who say that the Divine Book was revealed to Prophet Mūsā^{AS} at one time indeed want the believers to demand the same from the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. But did they believe in it at once, or did they invoke upon themselves **Allah's** Wrath by putting forth frivolous questions to Prophet Mūsā^{AS}? They are trying to persuade the believers to adopt the same attitude to vex the Holy Prophet^{SAW} like they had done to their Prophet^{AS}. Such an attitude amounts to disbelief, and whosoever deviates from faith to follow disbelief, has indeed gone astray.

Many of the People of the Book ... Allah observes all that you do.

All this effort by the People of the Book is out of sheer jealousy, as they cannot tolerate the Divine Blessings being showered upon the believers. Although they know very well that the truth is what the believers are practising, yet they are sparing no pains to beguile them from the right path. Just as in today's world the Jews have established such an interest-based economy that no one can escape the trap; the faith of those who devour interest cannot be saved. And the products from the Western countries are deliberately adulterated with some by-product of swine to vitiate the faith of the Muslim consumers. It is heartbreaking to see the Muslims import from the West, products ranging from baby food to cloth for the coffin.

All these deceits of the People of the Book are to misguide the believers; but **Allah**, in **His** Infinite Mercy, has forewarned them. So the Holy Prophet^{SAW} is informed to ignore, to forbear and to wait for **Allah's** Command. **He** may command Jihād, as **He** is All-Powerful, and may reduce to dust their pride in their military might and manpower. And this is exactly what happened. Or **Allah** may choose to disgrace them at the time of death, and on the Day of Judgement before the entire mankind. The Muslims are advised to hold fast onto Ṣalāt and pay Zakāt; and instead of engaging in useless altercations with the non-believers, concentrate on obedience of **Allah**.

The Disputation

It is generally prohibited. However, it is fair if a person asks questions to seek knowledge. To hold a dialogue with a person who is misleading the people in beliefs is permissible only for a competent scholar who can counter the disputant effectively and thus safeguard peoples' faith. It is not something to be done merely as a pastime. Time can be better utilised in remembering and obeying Allah as every good deed done today will go to safe deposit in the bank of the Ākhirah. And the foremost point to remember is that He is Personally overlooking each and every activity, as it is being carried out in His Presence.

And they say, ... Such shall neither fear, nor grieve.

And the People of the Book say that no one shall enter Paradise except them; in other words they have based admission to it on nationality whereby a mere listing on the roll of People of the Book would make them heirs to Paradise. Same is the condition of today's Muslims. They think that they would enter Paradise just by taking up Muslim names and becoming part of the Muslim nation, without sound beliefs and practice. It is wishful thinking and is of no consequence whatsoever.

The People of the Book may be asked to produce the evidence in support of their tall claim, which they certainly cannot. The fact is that entry into Paradise will not be subject to any nationality or race, but whosoever holds the correct beliefs and acts upon them with sincerity at heart, shall qualify for it. Iḥsān, according to Ḥadīth is a spiritual state, whereby a person worships Allah as if he is beholding Him and experiences tranquillity and a deep-hearted connection with Him. Or at least he should feel that Allah is seeing him and there is no room for any level below this. Such a connection of the heart has been termed as Nisbat in Ṣūfī terminology.

Whosoever strives with a determined heart for sound beliefs and practices shall be rewarded and blessed by Allah. He will neither be afraid of the future, nor aggrieved over the past, because he has opted for the safest code of conduct. It is, however imperative that his heart should accompany him in his actions, which are not merely a formality. Only sincerity is valued in the Divine Court and not a mere claim of being a member of the Muslims community or nation. This basic requirement impels a person to acquire Ṣikr-e-Qalbī, because unless the heart itself is not alive and aware, it can neither accept guidance nor is with him in his actions. These are the Barakah of the Prophethood. The teachings of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} highlighted the tenets and the practices while his blessed company warmed up the hearts and elevated the fortunate ones to the enviable status of Companionship.

Even today, the company of an accomplished person can magnetise the hearts, while the routine propagation of religion has a very fleeting impact. As soon as the sermon is over, its effects fizzle out, leaving no impression on one's practical life. In fact we experience a dilemma. People stand divided in two groups. One group comprises Muslims who adhere to the religious teachings and worship without paying any attention to their hearts, and simply ignore the need for inner purification. The results are obvious; the tongue recites Qurān and Ḥadīth, the body performs the Ṣalāt rituals but the heart is completely absorbed in the world. At the slightest fear or temptation they quickly opt for hypocrisy. The second group takes for granted that their hearts are brimming with **Allah's** love and take up innovations and activities against the Sunnah, giving these rituals the status of Dīn. Both of these attitudes are incorrect; they should have adopted the beliefs and practices and the ways of obeying **Allah**, revealed by **Him** to the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}.

How is Ihsan Attained?

Along with the obedience to **Allah**, a believer must seek the Barakah, available only in a sacred company. The Companions^{-RAU} acquired knowledge from the teachings of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, and the inner purification from his august company. It was this inner purification, and not the teachings alone, that elevated them to the status of Companionship. The teachings, thanks to **Allah**, have reached us too and because of them we are Muslims. But it was the noble company that blessed the Companions^{-RAU} with Iḥsān, enlivened their hearts, drove out all fears and entitled them to great Divine Rewards. The mere claim to Islām should not beguile anyone to believe that no worldly harm shall come to him. Our real problem is that we blame Islām for all our ills whereas the sole reason for our plight is our failure to own Islām. We have nothing but the hollow claims of being Muslims.

It is an historical fact that Muslims, despite scant material resources and fewer numbers, compelled the great powers of the world to bow before **Allah**. They were the real Muslims, not mere claimants. When the Muslims ceased to practise Islām, they lost the Divine Patronage. Now that only the material resources have become the deciding factor, the non-believer will certainly be a nuisance if he is more resourceful. The same applies to world trade and commerce. The non-believers worked hard in this field and captured the world markets. Had they settled on precepts and given up effort, they would have met the same fate as ours. If the Muslims re-exert themselves according to Islamic principles, there is no reason why they should fail. Our problem is that we abandoned Islām to follow the West, but did not even learn from them to work hard, and imported nothing but obscenity, neglect to Ākhirah and disbelief. In nutshell, only name and nationality are of no avail unless backed by

sincere devotion of the heart and accompanied by practices bearing the seal of the Holy Prophet ^{SAW}.

Section 14

113. The Jews assert, "The Christians have no valid grounds for their beliefs," and the Christians say, "The Jews have no valid grounds for their beliefs," and both quote the Book. Even those devoid of knowledge speak like this. But **Allah** will judge between them, in their differences, on the Day of Judgement.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتْ النَّصْرَى عَلَى شَيْءٍ
وَقَالَتِ النَّصْرَى لَيْسَتْ الْيَهُودُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ
يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ
مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ
فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

114. And who is more wicked than the one, who forbids celebration of **Allah's** Name, in the places of **His** worship and strives for their ruination? Although such have no right to enter there except in fear. For them is disgrace in this world and a grave punishment in the Hereafter.

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا
اسْمُهُ وَسَعَى فِي خَرَابِهَا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ
أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا
خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾

115. To **Allah** belong the East and the West. Wherever you turn, there is **Allah's** Countenance, for **Allah** is Infinite, All-Knowing.

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُولَٰؤْا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾

116. And they say, "**Allah** has begotten a son." Be **He** glorified! No, but all that is in the heavens and the earth is **His**. Everything is subservient to **Him**.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَنَهُ بَلْ لَهُ
مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلُّ لَّهُ قَانُونٌ ﴿١١٦﴾

117. The Originator of the heavens and the earth! When **He** decrees a thing, **He** says, "Be." And it is.

بَلَدِيعُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿١١٧﴾

118. And those who are without knowledge say, "Why does Allah not speak to us or why does a sign not come to us?" People aforetime also spoke like this. Their hearts are all alike. We have indeed made **Our** revelations clear, for those who (firmly) believe.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ
أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَبَّهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ
قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾

119. Indeed We have sent you with the Truth, a bearer of good news and a warner. And you will not be asked about the dwellers of the Fire.

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا
وَلَا تُنْشَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١١٩﴾

120. The Jews and the Christians will never be pleased with you, until you follow their creed. Say, "Allah's guidance is the only true guidance". And if you follow their desires after the knowledge has come to you, you will have none to protect you from Allah or help you.

وَلَنْ تَرْضَى عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَى حَتَّى تَتَّبِعَ
مِلَّتَهُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَى اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَى وَلَئِنْ
اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ
مَا لَكَ مِنْ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٢٠﴾

121. Those to whom We have given the Book, read it in right earnest. They are the ones who believe in it, and those who reject it, they are the losers.

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ
أُولَئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ
هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

The Jews assert, ... in their differences, on the Day of Judgement.

The Jews claim that the religion of the Christians is baseless and deny the Prophethood of Prophet 'Isā^{AS} and do not believe in Bible as a Divine Book. The Christians, in retaliation, deny the religion of Prophet Mūsā^{AS} and the Torah. They say that the Jews believe in a baseless ideology; whereas both are

the People of the Book, and all Divine Scriptures hold the same basic precepts. These Books corroborate one another and explain the same beliefs about Unity of **Allah**, the Prophethood, the Ākhirah and the Day of Judgment. So both the groups, in fact, deny their own Book. Thus the idolaters and the infidels got an opportunity to deny the Divine Scriptures, rejected both of them and bragged that idolatry was the real religion.

The Final Prophet^{-SAW} has provided enough logical and historical evidence to separate the truth from falsehood. Neither a new Prophet^{-AS} nor a new Divine Book will be sent. So the only course of action left is that on the Day of Judgment, **Allah** will practically arbitrate between these groups, and their differences will be resolved. These pretenders of righteousness in this world do not even care that they have caused **Allah**'s sanctuaries to be deserted.

And who is more wicked ... and a grave punishment in the Hereafter.

Who would do greater wrong than the idolaters who resisted the entry of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} into K'abah until it was no longer possible for them. Just recall the history of the forefathers of these Jews and Christians. Whosoever got an opportunity attacked the other, destroying the sanctuaries. They did not spare even Bait al-Maqdas. After the advent of Islām, not only that the mosques miss their Sujūd (because of non-conversion) but also they are raising all sorts of doubts to misguide those on the right path; who are a source of activity in the mosques. The sanctity of a mosque demands that whosoever enters therein must feel that he is standing before **Allah**, humble and overawed.

All mosques deserve equal amount of respect. Disrespecting any mosque would tantamount to insulting Inviolable Bait-**Allah** or the Masjid-e-Nabwī or the Bait al-Maqdas, although the special status and exalted level of these shrines is unique in its own way. One Ṣalāt offered in Makkah earns the rewards of one hundred thousand Ṣalāt, while those offered in the Masjid-e-Nabwī at Madinah and in Bait al-Maqdas earn the reward of fifty thousand Ṣalāt. On the other hand, all actions leading to the desolation of mosques or causing hindrance in worship and **Allah**'s Ṣikr therein are unlawful and prohibited. To stop someone from going to the mosque is an obvious offence, though making noise in the mosque, or playing music loudly in the neighbourhood or even reciting Qurān and practising **Allah**'s Ṣikr loudly enough to distract those busy in worship are also forbidden. However, if there is none other offering his Ṣalāt, loud Ṣikr and recitation are permitted.

Similarly, all aspects pertaining to the desolation of a mosque are prohibited. Not only the demolition but also any dispute, which would bar the worshippers from going there, would fall in this category. Besides, there is a serious warning for those who have stopped going to the mosques, which though not

overt but is certainly a covert act to the desolation of the mosques. The fact that **Allah** does not allow the non-believers even to step into **His** mosques repudiates their claim to Paradise, in no uncertain terms.

Today the situation is that if you counsel someone to offer Ṣalāt, he says that **Allah** is Merciful and will forgive by **His** Grace and that he has seen enough of those who do so. Well! There is at least one difference between a person who offers Ṣalāt, and the one who does not. The former performs Sajdah before **Allah** five times a day, while the latter is not allowed to attend to **His** Court. This is the Divine Mercy; when **He** is Kind to someone **He** grants him the opportunity to obey **Him**, and the disobedient not only wrongs himself, but also contributes in a way, to a certain degree, to the desolation of the mosques. Such people are disgraced in this world, no matter what wealth or children they have, who will only add to their miseries; for them awaits a big punishment in the Ākhirah.

To Allah belong the East and the West. ...for Allah is Infinite, All-Knowing

The People of the Book tried their best to exploit the change of Qiblah from Bait al-Maqdas to Makkah to create doubts over the Prophethood. They argued that if the Prophet^{SAW} of Islām were genuine, he would have fixed the correct Qiblah from the very beginning, and also what would be the fate of their Ṣalāt offered for sixteen months facing Bait al-Maqdas? **Allah** revealed the answer that Muslims neither worship Bait al-Maqdas, nor K'abah, but they obey **Him**. When ordered they turned their faces towards the former, and immediately switched over to the latter when so directed. **Allah** is not confined to any direction or place, but **He** is present everywhere! **He** is the Knower of everything, and has fixed a particular direction for many good reasons. For example, this fixation has imbued a certain level of discipline in the entire Islamic world. In the absence of a Qiblah, Muslims gathering for Ṣalāt would have turned to different directions leading to chaos and disunity. There may be many more reasons like this in **His** Infinite Knowledge. However, if a Muslim is placed in a situation that he does not know the direction of Qiblah, he may offer his Ṣalāt facing in the direction of his choosing and even if it is subsequently discovered that his guess was wrong, his Ṣalāt is considered valid. There is no need for repetition. For any further details about Qiblah, celebrated works on Islamic Jurisprudence may be consulted.

And they say, ... Everything is subservient to Him.

Just see how dishonest they are! The Books they claim to believe in have been interpolated with their own fabricated beliefs. Every Divine Book reveals the purity of **Allah** but Jews and Christians claim that **Allah** has children. They nominate Prophet 'Uzair^{AS} and Prophet 'Isā^{AS} as the sons of **Allah** respec-

tively, whereas **He** is above every need, and has no equal in any way. A father is dependent upon many things, his offspring entangles him in many a worry and he ought to have a wife, relatives and a household. **Allah** is above all such needs.

And then, the children inherit the character traits of the father; a human being will give birth to a human child, and an animal to an animal. A buffalo will not bear a cow and vice versa, so much so that a tiny plant will have leaves, colour and the peculiar taste of its adult tree. If **Allah** had children, they too would have Divine Attributes; **He** would neither be **One** without any partners, nor pure. And there will be many gods, may be smaller or less powerful but they would be gods alright. The Divine Books of the Banī Isrāīl clearly reveal the sanctity of **Allah**. In fact all the Divine Scriptures have declared, in no uncertain terms, that **He** is the only **One** and everything belongs to **Him**. Everyone and everything presents itself humbly before **Him**; **He** can remove or sustain anyone or anything; no one can dare speak before **Him**. **He** created everything from the scratch when it was **He Alone**, and nothing else existed. **He** created the heavens and the earth. **His Powers** are unlimited and **He** is Omnipotent. Everyone is under **His** direct Command. **He** is Eternal and so are **His Attributes**. **His Knowledge** is Absolute, free from the bounds of time, past or future; everything is present before **Him**. Indeed **He** is so Powerful that when **He** wishes to do something, **He** commands 'Be' and it is. The problem of unseen is only for **His** creation, not for **Him**.

Belief of Bida' Contradicted

The belief of Bida' means that **Allah's** knowledge is not Absolute; when something has happened and its results are visible, only then **Allah** comes to know about it. All those who ascribe this enormity towards **Allah** are as ignorant as those groups of infidels mentioned above. Can such a being, who knows a thing only after it has occurred be accepted as free of any want? Someone who is dependent in knowing the things that happen can never be expected to be independent in executing anything himself. The misguided sects coined this nonsense because without such a belief there was no way out but to accept the superiority of the Companions^{-RAU}. They were praised in Torah and Bible. And the revelation of the Qurān over a period of twenty-three years testified them as exemplary people who won **Allah's** Pleasure and who must be followed by the coming Muslim generations. The saboteurs of Islām coined the belief of Bida' and said that the Holy Prophet's^{-SAW} Companions^{-RAU} were, no doubt, very good but they changed soon after his passing away as there was no more communication in the form of revelation as if **Allah** was

unaware of this situation. Then why believe in such a helpless and powerless **Allah**? (May **He** forgive us!)

This indeed is the denial of the Qurān under the cover of acceptance, because all the preceding Divine Books testify that **Allah** is not dependent on anyone or anything that **He** is Absolute and this is the basis of the faith. The People of the Book, leave alone the ignorant, have indeed gone astray..

*And those who ... **Our** revelations clear, for those who (firmly) believe.*

They complain that **Allah** neither speaks to them nor sends a sign, nor any evidence. These ignorant do not understand that if everyone could speak to **Allah** directly, there would be no test or trial and no one would defy **Him** or leave **His** Presence.

The singular honour of directly speaking to **Allah** is gifted only to the Prophets^{AS} and no one else can attain it by way of worship and striving in **His** cause. And the best amongst the rewards promised in the Ākhirah are the conversation with, and the observation of **Allah**! It is a characteristic of Paradise promised to the believers. Nevertheless, every non-believer too, upon witnessing **Allah**'s Majesty on the Day of Resurrection, will beg: "O **Allah**! Give me another chance to return to the world and see how I obey **You**."

If all the unseen is disclosed to every one in this worldly life there is no trial or test. The ignorant expect the status of the Prophets^{AS} for themselves! Infact the infidels preceding them too made such wild statements. And it is a strange phenomenon that the basic themes of the critics today are the same as those of the non-believers centuries ago. The reason is that their hearts are identical in terms of disbelief and wrongdoing. That is why they hold similar opinions. Whenever anyone opts for the wrong path a connection between him and the Satan is immediately established.

The Wonders of Connection

As this connection with Satan strengthens, it ends up into faithlessness, which has its own levels. The type of disbelief one harbours, he starts repeating the words of a preceding non-believer of that level. Just as every sacred word invokes a particular Divine Blessing, the words of eminent non-believers also invoke a certain level of Divine Wrath. The Satan strives hard to make every non-believer repeat such words as were once uttered by the world-class non-believers, so that he may also qualify for the same Divine Wrath as they did. Similarly a person heading in the direction of piety attains a special connection of some level, with noble spirits. "Fana fi Shaikh", "Fana fi Rasūl", and "Fana fi **Allah** are the stations of the Şūfi Path. Those blessed with Fana fi Rasūl cultivate a deep-hearted link with the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and begin to

spread the light of his teachings, working like instruments. This is because of the connection developed by their Qulūb termed as Nisbat.

The objections raised by the non-believers are not due to any shortcomings in expounding the truth but because of their inner connection with the non-believers of the past. **Allah**'s Revelations are clearly substantiated, with manifest evidence in favour of the Prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad^{-SAW} and the Qurān. But these can only benefit those who seek truth and peace of mind. The mere critic does not benefit at all. One has to be at least a seeker of something in order to attain it; criticism is of no avail.

Indeed We have sent you will not be asked about the dwellers of the Fire.

Allah raised the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} with truth and revealed clear signs for its demonstration. For the People of the Book, clear signs are available in their Books. For those infidels who wish to believe, the conduct of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, his appearance, his miracles, his teachings and his prophecies are all beacon-lights. The duty of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} is to convey glad tiding to all those who believe, and to warn the non-believers and the antagonists against the consequences ultimately leading to Hell. If after all the counselling they still prefer to choose the path of denial, it should not grieve him. Praise be to **Allah**! What grace and kindness, that **His** Prophet^{-SAW}, instead of feeling hatred towards a non-believer, grieves over his indulgence in disbelief. He feels sorry that a human being has gone astray and will burn in Hell forever. Just imagine how kind and affectionate would he be towards the believers. **Allah** comforts the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} that someone who opts for the wrong path is himself responsible and no one else is to blame.

Relationship with non-Believers

As for unity with the Jews and Christians, they will never be happy unless the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} submits to their beliefs and rituals, which is impossible. This highlights the fact that all those who have deep-rooted friendship with misguided sects, also have the element of misguidance in themselves. Otherwise the combination of truth and falsehood is impossible. Although in matters like service or trade etc. there can be an interaction, yet a cordial relationship is only possible when there is something mutually common in the character. So whenever these Jews or Christians approach the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} with this intention, they should be clearly told that the right path is the one shown by **Allah**. And O Prophet^{-SAW}! If you after having definite knowledge about Divine Revelations adopt the rituals and beliefs of non-believers, you will find no friend or helper against **Allah**. Therefore, no importance is to be given to any one against Divine Commands. A violation on the part of Holy Prophet^{-SAW} was inconceivable. The object of addressing him is to emphasise

the point that whosoever, no matter how highly placed, adopts the rituals of the non-believers in order to prove his friendship and to please them, cannot escape Divine Punishment even if he calls all of them to his rescue. This applies to personal relationship and not to the duties of the Government. A Muslim ruler has to protect the rights of the non-believers too because they are his subjects.

Those, to whom We have given the Book... who reject it, they are the losers.

However, those from amongst the People of the Book, who study the Divine Book revealed to them with sincerity and without altering it, to seek guidance from it, looking keenly for do's and don'ts, are guided to the Prophet ^{SAW} of Islām and the final Divine Book. The correct method of reciting a Divine Book is to ponder over its meaning in order to attain the Barakah and enlighten the heart, so that one can accept its Commandments and follow them wholeheartedly. If the attitude is one of picking up objections, such a person will never be guided to the faith. Rather, he will resort to denial and thus deprive himself of both the faith and the promised rewards.

Section 15

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|---|---|
| 122. O Children of Isrā'īl! Remember My favour I bestowed upon you and how I exalted you above all. | يٰٓبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ |
| 123. And be mindful of the Day, when no soul shall, in any way, avail another, neither shall any compensation be accepted from it, nor shall any intercession benefit it. And they shall not be helped. | وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفْعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ |
| 124. And when Ibrāhīm was put to test by his Rabb with certain commands, he fulfilled them. He said, "I shall appoint you the leader of mankind." He inquired, "And also from my offspring?" He answered, "My promise does not extend to the evil-doers." | وَإِذْ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ |
| 125. And We made the House a place of assembly for people and a | وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا وَاتَّخِذُوا |

place of peace. Take the station of Ibrāhīm as a place of worship. And We commanded Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il, to purify Our House for those who go around it and those who meditate and those who bow and do Sajdah.

مِنْ مَقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ
وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ﴿١٢٥﴾

126. And when Ibrāhīm said, "O my Rabb! Make it a City of Peace and provide its dwellers who believe in Allah and the Ākhirah with fruits." He answered, "I shall let those who indulge in disbelief, enjoy for a while. But in the end shall drive them to the torment of Fire. And an awful destination!"

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ
أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الشُّعْرَاتِ مَنْ أَمِنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ
إِلَى عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٢٦﴾

127. And when Ibrāhīm was raising the foundations of the House, with Ismā'il they prayed, "O our Rabb! Accept (this service) from us. You Alone are All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ
وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ
مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٢٧﴾

128. "O our Rabb! Make us Muslims, and make a community out of our offspring who are Muslims. And show us our ways of worship and accept our repentance. Indeed You are the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful."

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً
مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَكَ وَخُذْ عَلَيْنَا
إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٨﴾

129. "O our Rabb! Raise among them a Messenger of their own, who shall convey to them Your Messages, and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed You Alone are the Mighty, the Wise."

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ
آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٢٩﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

O Children of Isrāil! ... And they shall not be helped.

After providing conclusive, logical and miraculous evidence on the authenticity of Prophet Muḥammad^{-SAW} Allah directly addresses the Banī Isrāil. He reminds them of His Favours of giving them superiority over the then known world. This superiority they enjoyed for such a long time that even after the raising of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} these people were the leaders and held sway over the other religions of the world. The infidels of Arabia too reverted to them for guidance when in difficulty. The former would go to the Jewish scholars in Madinah to elicit questions they must put forth to the Prophet^{-SAW} of Islām and then travel to Makkah to ask those questions. Indeed their religious superiority was well established over other great empires of the world at the time. When the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} migrated to Madinah, the Arabs watched with great interest how the Jewish scholars would treat him. They must have stupidly thought that these scholars were very competent and would subdue the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}.

But the Qurān established its authenticity there, and subsequently in the entire world. Even an ordinary person with the lowest level of intellect can get to the truth, when he strives sincerely with his heart and soul. When People of the Book have known beyond any doubt that believing in the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} is indeed the true faith then the other religions can have no excuse. The crux of the matter is that Allah deserves to be worshipped, as He Alone is worthy of it!

The Levels of Worship

If someone cannot conceive this fact, he should, as second level of worship, recount His Favours conferred upon each and every individual. He showered His Bounties upon the Banī Isrāil individually and collectively as a nation by making them the leaders of the world. He blessed them generation after generation with power and Prophethood, thus granting them both physical and spiritual superiority. The third level of worship, for the one who fails to appreciate any Divine Favour also, would be at least to fear the Day of Judgement, which will be a Day of accountability and requital, and from which no one can escape.

Three levels of worship have been stated here. The first level is the lot of the chosen few who worship Him acknowledging His Greatness and the fact that

He Alone is worthy of it. The second level is of those Aulia, who worship **Him** seeking the eternal rewards of the **Ākhirah**, because these, after all, are the manifestation of **Allah's** Pleasure. The third level is for the ordinary people who obey **Him** fearing the eternal punishment and doom.

The disbelief of Banī Isrāīl is indeed a curse, which will render every one of them hopeless and helpless. No one will intercede for them nor will the intercession benefit anyone. And then there will be no one to rescue them by force. In short all possible routes to salvation and escape would close down totally. The one and the only way open today is to accept Islām which they are not willing to choose. Along with such disbelief they also claim to be heirs to Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} and followers of his teachings. Now the idolaters of Arabia, as well as the Christians also shared this claim. The former went to the extent of erecting statues of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} and his son Prophet Ismā'il in the K'abah. In this context was revealed the following **Āyah**: -

And when Ibrāhīm was put to test...does not extend to the evil-doers."

O Children of Isrāīl! Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} was not like you. Your lust for power stands in your way to accept Islām. Some of you are barred by avarice while others are slaves of rituals and kinship. But Allah put Prophet Ibrahim^{AS} to numerous trials and he came out triumphant every time.

The hardships faced in the cause of **Allah** are termed as trials, because the things liked by a person have to be sacrificed in **His** way. This sacrifice becomes a trial. It does not mean that **Allah** is not aware of a person's capabilities and wants to know through trial. But these trials are necessary for the training and spiritual elevation. For example, Shahadah is a stage of the Divine nearness but one has to sacrifice his life in **His** Cause in order to attain it.

The Stages of Divine Nearness

Although Prophethood is bestowed, yet Prophets^{AS} continue to progress in **Allah's** nearness. Just as **He** is Limitless, so are the stages of **His** nearness. To attain this progress, endless struggle whether involuntary or voluntary is required. The Holy Prophet's^{SAW} most difficult phase of life in Makkah, the journeys undertaken to propagate Islām, migration, Jihād, the establishment of Islamic State, the loss of his teeth in battle, are all milestones of the path of this Divine nearness. On the other hand, the Wilayah though sometimes also gifted, is earned through hard work and cannot possibly be free from hardships. And when the stages of nearness are endless it is very difficult to claim that so and so had covered the entire Sulūk. The fact is that the Prophets^{AS} and the Aulia continue to progress in **Allah's** nearness in this world, in Barzakh and ultimately in Paradise. Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} himself went through all these

stages. He was born and brought up amidst idolatry and had to bid farewell to the society and his brotherhood. He confronted the ruler against idolatry; was plunged into fire by him; had to leave his native land; was ordered to abandon his son and wife in the wilderness; ultimately, was commanded to sacrifice that son and he, without a second thought, whole-heartedly applied the knife. In short, he obeyed all Divine commands.

This explanation is to refute the false assumption of Banī Isrāīl, who though claim to be the followers of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} yet neither take Shahadah nor have the courage to accept the truth. **Allah** promised the leadership of mankind to Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}, which means all the excellence possibly attainable by a human being. All the accomplished personages who tread the paths of Divine nearness will find his footprints already there. Imām literally means a guide or a leader in the modern sense.

The Meaning of Imam

Imāmat is not an office. The logic put forth by the Imāmiah Sect, that an Imām is innocent and since Imāmat is conferred after the Prophethood, it is superior to it, simply cannot be proved. The Qurān has used the term Imām in the sense of a guide, a leader. Ḥadhrat Ibrāhīm^{AS} was a Prophet and a leader amongst them. On the other hand, those who excelled in infidelity, and became leaders of the infidels are also termed as Imām by the Qurān e.g. *Wa Qatelū Āi'ma-tul Kufr* (and kill the leaders of disbelief). Prophethood is an office, and no matter how great a leader has never been called a Prophet^{AS} save those appointed by **Allah**. Whosoever leads the congregational Ṣalāt is termed as Imām; whosoever excels in the faculty of Ḥadīth, or Fiqh is also called Imām of his respective field and so on.

When Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} was blessed with this honour, he requested the same to be conferred upon his children so that they too may attain leadership in piety, and in Divine nearness. **Allah** said, certainly it will be conferred upon the righteous, and not the transgressors. In other words, they would not qualify for the Divine Blessings on the basis of being Prophet Ibrāhīm's^{AS} children, but justice would prevail. That is to say that the system of inheritance in Wilayah, passing it down as a legacy from father to son no matter what character the son has, will not work. The basis of Imāmat will be true beliefs, which were not held by those who confronted Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW} at that time. The claim of Banī Isrāīl is, therefore, absurd. Now the assumption of the idolaters that they are the caretakers of K'abah and need not believe in Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW} is equally absurd. The honour of reconstructing the K'abah was conferred upon Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} for reasons to follow.

And We made the House ... who meditate and those who bow and do Sajdah.

We declared K'abah as the centre for people to assemble for blessings, and a place of peace. And We also commanded the Muslim Ummah to offer their Ṣalāt at the place of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} and included it in the ceremonies of Ḥajj. At the very time of its construction We took promise from Prophets Ibrāhīm^{AS} and Ismā'il^{AS} that they would keep this House free from any impurity, hidden or manifest. To go into the details of how Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}, his wife Hajirah and their son Prophet Ismā'il^{AS} moved from Syria to Makkah and how Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} returned back leaving his wife and child there, would only lengthen the discourse. This event is extensively discussed in various Ta-fāsīr, and may be referred to if desired. I would like to explain that Allah has made K'abah the focal point of His Splendour, which attracts the heart of every believer, and frequent visits for Ḥajj only add to the zeal for beholding its grace. And it has been declared a place wherein even the non-believers found peace, safety and immense worldly benefit, while a believer reaching there would attain both including the eternal bliss. The place where Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} stood for his Ṣalāt has by itself a distinctive status.

Therefore, this House must be kept clean and purified exclusively for Allah's worship, and must not be polluted by misdeeds or foul beliefs. It should be dedicated exclusively to those who do Ṭawāf and who retire therein for worship. There will neither be any hindrance for them, nor must there be any action in contravention of the Shari'ah. This applies not only to all the mosques, built for Allah's worship but also to the heart of every believer, which must be free from all forms of polytheism, innovations and vices like arrogance and jealousy. It must only be inhabited by Allah's name, His Ṣikr, and the will to obey Him, and certainly not like the polytheists of Makkah who claimed to be religious while cramming Bait Allah with idols. The seekers of Sulūk must know that the slightest innovation in Dīn is intolerable. There must be a complete adherence to the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} in its pristine purity.

And when Ibrahīm said, ...to the torment of Fire. An awful destination!"

Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} prayed to Allah, the Bestower of all hidden and manifest qualities and the Sustainer of everyone, to make this city a city of peace and provide its dwellers with 'fruits', that is, all sorts of provisions required for human life. And the effects of this prayer could be seen on the Makkans who enjoyed complete security and no tyrant could ever conquer it, including the People of the Elephant as mentioned in the Qurān. According to Wafā al-Wafā, a ruler, who conquered Makkah, was inflicted by a disease of an obnoxious oral discharge. He called his scholars who advised him to abandon his conquest and entertain the residents of Makkah. So he honoured them and

tried his best to comfort them for a long time. His scholars also predicted the advent of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} in this city and his migration to Madinah. Impressed by the sanctity of Makkah, the king became a believer, and also visited Madinah. He wrote a letter to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, settled some of his scholars in the city and told them to deliver his letter to him on his arrival. The eminent Companion Ḥadhrat Abū Ayūb Anṣārī^{RAU} was the descendant of one of those scholars and is said to have presented that letter to the Holy Prophet^{SAW} on his migration to Madinah.

In short, Makkah is a city of security in every sense of the word. Anything grown in any part of the world, regardless of the season, is available in Makkah throughout the year. Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} added the condition that the recipients of those provisions ought to be the believers in **Allah** and the Day of Judgement, probably in the light of **Allah**'s answer to his earlier prayer in Āyah 124 above. However, those blessings pertained to spiritual elevation and **Allah**'s nearness, whereas this prayer referred to worldly benefits and he did not deny those even to the disobedient in Makkah. Nevertheless, a non-believer may enjoy all the worldly benefits but will ultimately be condemned to Hell, which indeed is a terrible place.

Another concept clarified here is that temporal affluence is no indication of Divine pleasure, rather the faith adorned with correct precepts and practices, even without affluence, is the real criterion. The wealth together with faith is an additional reward, but a cause of punishment without it.

The argument by the non-believers that had they not been on the right path they would not have been enjoying the comforts of life in the city of Makkah amidst the barren desert stands refuted. They must know that this is because of Prophet Ibrāhīm's^{AS} prayer that worldly blessings are extended to the believers and non-believers alike. But the latter must not consider this temporal affluence an evidence of eternal bliss, rather must cultivate the virtues of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}.

And when Ibrahīm was raising ...Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful."

Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} had lived his entire life in **Allah**'s obedience, sacrificing everything he had in **His** Way. Nevertheless he and his son, while reconstructing K'abah, have no feelings of pride over their obedience. Instead their hearts are full of humility and awe. They beseech their **Rabb**, to accept their humble efforts, **He** being the Sustainer and they the needy, and to bless them with steadfastness. This is the essence of **Allah**'s cognition, the more it is attained, the greater one becomes aware of **Allah**'s Greatness and one's own humbleness. Even the Holy Prophet^{SAW} proclaimed "O **Allah**! We could not worship **You** as **You** rightfully deserve". This is real cognition. Whereas people having

offered a few Ṣalāt complain that we have worked so hard but have not achieved any elevation. This is nothing but sheer ignorance of **Allah's** Greatness.

Praise be to **Allah**! How dear is the posterity to Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} who had not hesitated even to sacrifice his son in **His** Cause that he never fails to think of the welfare of his coming generations. While a worldly-wise father only plans for a better and secure future for his children, the real destiny remains out of his sight. But **Allah's** true bondsmen have their eyes on both the worlds; and they pray for their welfare and success in both.

Prophethood and Offices of Wilayah conferred on Noble Families

Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} and his son prayed to **Allah** for a nation completely submissive to **Him** from their lineage, because the people of higher status wield influence in a society. If their children act righteously, it will have salutary effect on the common people and may lead to the reformation of the masses. This is why all the Prophets^{AS} belonged to the noble families, and a Wali holding an office too, is always from a noble background. His lineage can often be traced back to any one of the four Caliphs^{RALI}. At least the offices of Aqṭāb and above are held by the Aulia from such noble families. Thus, this prayer is not only for the sake of children but also a source of reformation of the mankind. 'Show us a proper way of worship, which is acceptable to **You**,' they continue. These may include the rites of pilgrimage, and it is possible that after the construction of K'abah, Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} and Ismā'īl^{AS} asked **Allah** to show them by the physical or the spiritual eye, how to perform these rites of Ḥajj. Because no individual, no matter how exalted and pious, can dare invent any form of worship. Only that method will be acceptable which **Allah** teaches to **His** Prophets^{AS} and through them to mankind. Therefore, it is inevitable for any worship that its basis are found in the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, other wise it will be an innovation.

Some devout forget everything in their devotion to Aulia. If a Wali is doing something apparently against the Sunnah, he may have a pretext. For example, if a Shaikh for some problem cannot stand up for offering the Ṣalāt, and offers it while sitting, the disciples have no reason to do so without any genuine excuse. This is just an example; whereas today anyone asked about the basis of any anti-Shari'ah action simply says that it is practised by the Aulia. When there is no greater Wali than Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW}, why not follow him? So, Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} requested **Allah** to teach them the proper way and also to accept their worship. In spite of so much piety, he still feels that their efforts can only be accepted by **Allah's** Grace as **He** is the Most Exalted, and the human endeavour ever so lacking. Praise be to **Allah**; **Who** is Merciful and ac-

cepts the repentance of **His** servants. This is the way of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}. O Children of Isrāīl, You are neck-deep in pride and arrogance. Take a look at your conduct!

"O our Rabb! Raise among them ... You Alone are the Mighty, the Wise."

Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} prayed, O my **Rabb!** Raise amongst my descendants a Prophet^{AS}, the one most exalted in status, who would read out **Your** Āyāt to them, teach them the Book, the wisdom and also purify them. O **Allah!** You are the Mightiest and the Wisest, capable of doing things in the most excellent manner!

The most exalted Prophet^{SAW} along with a group of righteous people, was the Divine response to Prophet Ibrāhīm's^{AS} prayer. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} is reported to have said that he was an answer to the prayer of his forefather Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}, the glad tidings given by Prophet 'Isā^{AS} and the dream of his noble mother.

Companions, a Manifestation of Same Prayer

Many scholars list the above Ḥadīth, but for some unknown reasons, overlook the words of Prophet Ibrāhīm's^{AS} prayer: Umma tum Muslimatalak (a nation submissive unto **You**), which means that the Companions^{RAU} too, were very much the manifestation of the said prayer. The prayer for the raising of an exalted Prophet is accepted by **Allah** like all his preceding prayers, and can be seen in the form of the Final Prophet^{SAW} and his duties namely (1) The recitation of Āyāt of the Qurān (2) The teaching of the Book (3) The teaching of the wisdom and (4) The purification of souls.

Recitation of the Quran; a Permanent Injunction

It is clarified that, recitation of the Qurān itself is an objective, and its knowledge and understanding a separate task. **Allah's** Book is not like any other book that if the meanings are not understood its reading is ignored. Had the aim been only to understand the meaning and act upon it, the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and the Companions^{RAU} would not have read it over and over again. Some of them recited the whole of it in a day, while others in three days and the majority would do so in seven days. The word Āyātika (**Your** verses) proves that only those words constitute Qurān, which are revealed by **Allah**. Its translation into any other language, published without the Arabic text, cannot be termed as Qurān. Since teaching of the Qurān was also a duty of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}: only those meanings given by him will be deemed authentic. All efforts by other people, no matter how well versed in Arabic, will not be acceptable unless derived from the Holy Prophet's^{SAW} teachings. For example, Abū Jahal too, was well versed in Arabic. Some of the Companions^{RAU} were highly ac-

claimed for their literary excellence, but they were all dependent on the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} for learning the Book as he held the office of the 'Teacher of the Book'.

This refutes the vain assumption of those who argue that the Qurān is sufficient, and Ḥadīth being interpolated cannot be depended upon. But they forget the promise made by Allah; " Verily it is **We Who** have revealed the (Qurān) and it is **We Who** will protect it". If this Divine Protection is confined only to the text, who will vouch the correct meanings and sense of Divine Revelation? When the exalted scholars like Ḥadhrat Abū Bakr and 'Umar^{-RAU} are dependent upon the explanations given by the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, where do the scholars of today stand without the guidance from Ḥadīth? It is true that the words of Qurān are in their pristine form. Efforts have been made by the enemies of Islām to interpolate Ḥadīth just to create confusion in the teachings of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. But see the sublimity of Divine protection! **He** created masters who devoted their entire lives to sieve the truth from the falsehood and exposed every such effort.

This Divine Protection includes the fact that there will always remain in this world, people who will be on the straight path. The Divine Book is in the Guarded Tablet, where there is no danger. The need for protection is in this world, inhabited by human beings. Thus the promise of protection can stay valid only if the Qurān and its meanings given by the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} remain in their original form. Given the Divine Protection to the Text and the Teachings of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, we now revert to the last part of the Holy Prophet's^{-SAW} duty i.e. Tazkiyah. It means that no part of the character of those embracing Islām should remain unacceptable to Allah, and their hearts are enlightened as a result of the blessed company of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. It is a glaring fact that whosoever met the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, saw him, or was seen by him after accepting Islām, was elevated to the status of Companionship, which has no parallel in Muslim Ummah.

After the passing away of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, one could attain Wilayah but not Companionship. In other words the level of Tazkiyah attainable directly from the beneficence of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} was no longer possible. Although this blessing did not cease yet it became indirect. The company of the Companions^{-RAU} produced the Taba'in and they in turn produced Taba' Taba'in, and so one heart enlightened another until the Ṣūfī Orders came into existence, which will always be a direct source of Divine Protection to the Book and its meanings. It was Tazkiyah which converted the polytheists to Unitarians, idolaters to idol-smashers, bandits to brave warriors, transgressors to selfless patrons, gun-runners to guides and the ignorant to accomplished scholars. It created such people the like of whom the heaven had neither witnessed before,

nor would it ever see again. To sum up this discussion (1) To learn the Qurān, the knowledge of Ḥadīth is imperative (2) To act according to the teachings of the Qurān and Ḥadīth, Tazkiyah is a must and (3) In every era, for the reformation of mankind, Divine knowledge was never sent without a Prophet^{AS} and vice versa. And wherever these two became available, Tazkiyah was the natural outcome.

Book and Mentor, both must for Tazkiyah

Tazkiyah opens up avenues to practise piety. Some people merely took learning and teaching as Dīn, and did not appreciate the importance of going to accomplished saints; to them Dīn was only a source of earning livelihood. Yet others did not bother about the Divine Book and blindly followed only saints and savants, once a practice of the Jews. Both attitudes were incorrect. Only those attained the real goal, who acquired the knowledge of the Book from the scholars and availed the company of accomplished saints, giving due importance to both. It is an established fact that Tazkiyah stands for that inner purity which induces in a person the spirit to obey the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. If a gathering only teaches tricks and jugglery, ignoring religious obligations, such a saint can be a plunderer not a guide. The latter shall lead a believer to the affectionate audience of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} by preaching precepts and practices in the light of Sunnah, which cleanses the heart from arrogance to an extent, that it realises Allah's Greatness. This gives the seekers a vision broad enough to visualise both the worlds, living in this world and at the same time ameliorating the Ākhirah.

Lineage not a Pre-requisite to Attain Wilayah

There is no specified race or gender for the attainment of Wilayah. Every believer must endeavour to acquire it. To be a Companion^{RAU}, to whom a Wali is no match no matter how accomplished, there were no conditions of gender, class and education. How can there be any such conditions for Wilayah? The conditions of deep devotion and practical obedience is, however, common to both. To seek inner purification from an accomplished saint is imperative for every Muslim. The concept that only a selected lot can attain Wilayah, is absurd. Every human being has a natural capacity. Even a non-believer who embraces Islām may benefit from the company of an accomplished Shaikh and become a Walī. The life histories of the great scholars of the yore have one thing in common; invariably every one of them, after completing his education, went to an accomplished Shaikh and acquired Tazkiyah from him. The times have changed. Today the quasi scholars with sketchy knowledge venture to refute Taṣawwuf and Sulūk altogether.

On the other hand, a class declares it unnecessary to practise Islām altogether

and all they do is to adhere to a turban, occupy the seat of a departed saint, spend time in futile sport and doom the fate of millions of seekers.

The foregoing discourse clearly highlights the true Dīn of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} and his model. It describes how he prayed to Allah for sincere and rightful successors, and how his prayers were answered in the form of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and the Companions^{RAU}. The Banī Isrāīl should ponder over their own conduct and see the validity of their claim of being the true followers of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}, and see who was raised for the fulfilment of the aims and objectives for which he had prayed. And which is that righteous group who emerged from the desert and carried these blessings to the entire world?

Section 16

130. And who turns away from the religion of Ibrāhīm, save the one who befools himself? Certainly We chose him in this world, and he will be among the righteous in the Ākhirah.

وَمَنْ يَرْغَبْ عَنْ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ
نَفْسَهُ، وَلَقَدْ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾

131. When his Rabb said to him "Surrender," he said, "I surrender myself to the Rabb of the Universe."

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ
قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾

132. And Ibrāhīm enjoined this upon his sons and so did Y'aqūb: "O my sons! Allah has chosen the Dīn for you, so do not die except as Muslims."

وَوَصَّي بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يَبْنِي إِنْ أَلَّهَ
أَصْطَفَى لَكُمْ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا
وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

133. Did you witness Y'aqūb's hour of death? When he said to his sons, "Whom will you worship after I am gone?" They answered, "We shall worship your Ilāha, the Ilāha of your fathers Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il and Ishaq, the Only Ilāha! And to Him do we surrender."

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ
قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ
إِلَٰهَكَ وَإِلَٰهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ
وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَٰهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

134. These are the people who have gone by. For them is what they

تِلْكَ أُمَمٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ

earned and for you is what you have earned. And you will not be asked about what they used to do.

135. And they say, "Become Jews or Christians, you will be guided". Say, "No! (We follow) the religion of Ibrāhīm the upright. And he was not among the polytheists."

136. Say, "We believe in Allah and the revelation given to us and to Ibrāhīm, Ismā'il, Ishāq, Y'aqūb and their tribes and that given to Mūsā and 'Isa, and given to the other Prophets from their Rabb. We make no distinction between any of them. And to Him do we surrender."

137. So if they believe, as you have believed, then they are rightly guided. But if they turn away, then it is they who are in the wrong, Allah will suffice you against them and He Alone is the All-Hearing and the All-Knowing.

138. (Say) The colour of Allah, and whose colour is better than Allah's? And Him Alone do we worship.

139. "Do you dispute with us about Allah, when He is our Rabb and your Rabb? For us are our works and for you are yours. And to Him alone do we devote ourselves."

مَا كُنتُمْ وَلَا تُنْشَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا
قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا
وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَى
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ
وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَمَا
أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ
مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

فَإِنْ ءَامَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا ءَامَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ اهْتَدَوْا
وَإِنْ نَوَلُّوْا فِئْتَامَهُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمْ
اللَّهُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣٨﴾

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً
وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

قُلْ أَتُحَاجُّونَنَا فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ وَلَنَا
أَعْمَلُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَلُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

The Apex of Cognition

The apex of cognition is that one accepts his own goodness as a favour from **Allah**. If someone takes any of his virtues as his personal achievements, he is a stranger to this path and unacquainted with the pleasures of Divine cognition. It is the ignorant that they aspire for high spiritual stations after doing a couple of Sujūd, considering it a great effort on their part. They claim that they burnt the midnight oil in struggling for **Allah** little realizing that the capacity to do Sajdah is after all given by **Him**.

The standard of excellence is not judged by ones powers of Kashf or Karamah, but by the extent of devotion and submission to **Allah**. And the more one progresses in this, the more he should thank **Him**, and pray for steadfastness. However, if this fervour is missing, a few dreams or other such phenomena are no standard for excellence.

Believer and non-Believer

Kashf itself is a Karamah if accompanied by obedience to **Allah**. A non-believer has no access to the heavens or realms beyond or the unseen realms such as Barzakh, Ākhirah etc. The doors of the heavens do not open to non-believers (7:70). However, to tell about something located in another part of the world, or to tell a visitor his past, or to foretell about future by speculation, are skills that can be acquired even by a non-believer. Such things are popular among the ignorant and they take them as Kashf.

The real excellence is the inculcation of a spirit of submission, a deep-rooted total surrender to the will and purpose of **Allah**. This was the virtue of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} and all other Prophets^{AS} of **Allah**, as well as of the righteous. And this is the most precious quality, which must be acquired from them.

And Ibrāhīm enjoined...so do not die except as Muslims."

Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} himself, and in turn, his grand son Prophet Y'aqūb^{AS} personally advised their children, at the time of passing away. This is the time when a dying parent tells the offspring about the most precious possession he or she might have. For them the most valuable wealth was the faith and the spirit of total surrender to **Allah**. They instructed their sons that **Allah** had chosen for them the true religion; so they should not die save as Muslims. The earth may shift, the heavens may fall, the times may change; but they must hold fast to the true Dīn, and never even think of disobeying **Allah**.

The Banī Isrāīl claim to be the followers of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} while sticking to their own vain desires instead of submitting to **Allah**. Here is what Prophet Y'aqūb^{AS}, from whom they derive the title Bani Isrāīl, said: -

Did you witness Yaqūb's hour of death? ...And to Him do we surrender."

Were you present at that time? No, you were not there to witness that, but We will tell you, that when Prophet Y'aqūb^{AS} was breathing his last, he sent for his sons. Whereas Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} had directed his successors to remain steadfast on Islām; Prophet Y'aqūb^{AS} adopted an interrogative style and asked his sons, "Whom will you worship after me?" While the successors of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}, namely Ismā'il^{AS} and Ishāq^{AS} were themselves Prophets^{AS}, here only Prophet Yūsuf^{AS} was a Prophet^{AS} amongst all the sons. So Prophet Y'aqūb^{AS} adopted a more emphatic method, by putting them the question as to whom would they worship once he is gone? They replied: We will worship your God; the God of your forefathers Ibrāhīm^{AS}, Ishāq^{AS} and Ismā'il^{AS}, as He is the Only God, worthy of worship and praise. He is worthy of worship from the very beginning till the very end; we surrender unto Him and shall always remain as His obedient subjects.

In reality, Islām is the true faith, and has always been so since the advent of mankind on earth; though undoubtedly it assumed different names through different ages. Judaism, propagated by Prophet Mūsā^{AS} or Christianity propagated by Prophet 'Īsā^{AS}, are two names of the same reality, because the beliefs about Unity of Allah, the Ākhirah, the Day of Reckoning, the Paradise and the Hell, the angels, and all other basic teachings are common. The difference is only in the timings and methods of worship, but the object of worship is the same. And then this difference itself indicates excellence of obedience, that whenever and whatever was commanded, was obeyed. And now that the Last Prophet^{SAW} is inviting the Banī Isrā'īl to rightfully submit to Islām, it is hard for them to swallow due to the false notion that a mere claim of being an Isrā'īli or an Ibrāhīmī will entitle them to a share in their noble deeds. Well, it will not happen to be so.

These are the people who ... you will not be asked about what they used to do.

This was a group, a class of noble people, who honoured this world for a while, and then shifted to the eternal abode. So whatever they did - their acts of piety and their endeavours - will earn Divine Rewards and Pleasure only for themselves. You will get what you earn, and for sure, you are not accountable for their actions. No one will be accountable for the actions of his ancestors, because he was not even born at that time. The best course is to follow the ancestors who were righteous in their beliefs and conduct. One should not only follow them personally, but also guide the progeny on their line of obedience to Allah.

And they say, "Become Jews or Christians... was not among the polytheists."

The Banī Isrā'īl claim that the true religion is Judaism or Christianity, and both claim to be rightly guided. The former renounce Prophet 'Īsā^{AS} and the latter repudiate Prophet Mūsā^{AS}, yet in their own way, they claim to be the followers of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}. This is what even the idolaters claim. It is the greatness of Prophet Ibrāhīm's^{AS} leadership, that even the polytheists respect him, and the Jews and the Christians take pride in claiming to be his followers. O Prophet^{SAW}! Let them know that the figure that is at the centre of their claims is Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}, who was certainly not a polytheist, but was indeed the most righteous. He can be the model of unity between us.

Certain people claim to be the lovers of their pious precursor, but they devise their own beliefs and practices. Obviously, they have nothing to do with them unless they follow them in beliefs and conduct. If **Allah** gives Muslims the comprehension of this point, many differences can be abridged. The followers of the truth should not lean towards falsehood; rather they should invite others to follow the truth.

*Say, "We believe in **Allah** ...and to **Him** do we surrender".*

The Muslim should tell the non-believers, that the Holy Prophet^{SAW} himself and all his Companions^{RAU}, who were the principal addressees of the revelation, believe in **Allah** and accept **Him** as the only One worthy of worship and the Absolute Ruler. None can dare deviate from **His** Revelations. And all Muslims believe in all the Messengers^{AS} of **Allah** and the revealed Books, may it be Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} or Ismā'īl^{AS} or Ishāq^{AS} or Y'aqūb^{AS} or other Prophets^{AS} from their lineage such as Prophets Mūsā^{AS} or 'Īsā^{AS}, without any discrimination. This is because they have surrendered themselves to **Allah**, and dare not deny any of **His** Prophets or **His** Commands. And if the non-believers embrace Islām and believe like the Companions^{RAU} did, they are the rightly guided otherwise they are in schism. No matter even if such people exceed in number or power, they are worthless, and **Allah** Alone is sufficient to take them to task, as **He** is all-Hearing, all-Knowing.

So if they believe, as you have believed... All-Hearing and the All-Knowing.

Exemplary Faith of Companions

Here the faith of the Companions^{RAU} has been declared as a standard; a criterion for righteousness. Although at the time of this revelation, the addressees were the natives, yet the Qurān and its teachings are for all times to come. The criterion for righteousness will, therefore, always be the Companions^{RAU}. And anyone who would act contrary to their model would do so out of sheer contumacy. **Allah**'s Knowledge is all Encompassing and **He** is the Creator; **Who**

instilled in them such a high standard of virtue that they are the yardsticks of truth forever and chosen to be Companions^{RAU} of the leader of all Prophets^{AS}. Now if someone is so callous that he considers himself a Muslim and then a non-believer and maligns them on various counts, it indeed would boomerang and he would become a non-believer himself, because **Allah** pronounced them as the criterion of truth. We have just discussed that the People of the Book claimed to be believers in truth, whereas their conduct did not endorse it. Here **Allah** declared the Companions^{RAU} as the standard of righteousness; had they not excelled in their conduct, they would never have been proclaimed as such. Just ponder over the Divine words: "*and if they believe in the like of that which you believe.*" Can faith, without practice be deemed as exemplary? Not at all! Also take note of the warning to the opponents of the Companions^{RAU}: "*Allah will suffice you (for defence) against them*". **Allah** will directly deal with the opponents of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, i.e. those who fail to believe in him like the Companions^{RAU} did.

When Caliph 'Uthmān^{RAU} was attacked by his assassins, he was reciting the Qurān, and his blood fell on these Divine Words: "*So Allah will suffice you against them...*" There indeed was bloodshed and a great turmoil for years to follow. According to a cautious estimate, almost seventy thousand people were killed. Obviously, the more one is against the Companions^{RAU} the greater is he within the sphere of **Allah's** Wrath.

(Say) The colour of Allah, ... and Him Alone do we worship.

Religion does not constitute mere colourfulness. The Christians dip the infant into coloured water and it is assumed to have turned a Christian. This is absurd. The real colour is that of **Allah**, which should be reflected in one's beliefs, ideology, actions and character and which should dominate the life of a person, as it did in case of the Companions^{RAU}. They are being commanded to tell the non-believers to take a look at the pattern of their lives; how they spend their days and nights, how they conduct the affairs in peace and war, in their business and politics. Everywhere the non-believers will find the colour of **Allah** predominant in the Companions^{RAU}. And most certainly there is no colour better than **Allah's**. The Companions^{RAU} are the real devotees of **Allah**; **His** worship and **His** obedience is the sole aim of their lives.

These few inviolable words repudiate all the false sects. Anyone who adds or deletes anything in **His** Being and Attributes, or in the status of the Prophets^{AS}, or the existence of angels would be considered a reprobate. This was not conceivable during the times of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. Neither the Prophets^{AS} can be made partners in Divine Attributes nor their status be compromised under any circumstances. There was no concept of any new or shadow Prophet in the

Companions^{-RAU} era. Any such belief is reprobation. Or any false interpretations in the matters of Reckoning, such as twisting the concept of Resurrection of bodies and confining the reckoning to Spirits or distorting the belief about Scales and Accountability, is no service to Islām. In fact, to believe in the facts revealed about the Ākhirah in Qurān and the Sunnah, without making any false interpretation, is the right conduct. This was the practice of the Companions^{-RAU} and a proof of their conformity and acceptability.

"Do you dispute with us about Allah...And Allah is not unaware of what you do."

So tell the non-believers: You indulge in arguments over **Allah**, **Who** is our Sustainer and in **Whose** Providence, we believe and **Whose** disobedience is beyond our way. Whereas you too, benefit from **His** Blessings; **He** is your Provider too. We shall be accountable for our conduct and you shall be responsible for your actions. We act with utmost sincerity and devotion only to seek **His** Pleasure, while you argue and try to find faults just to maintain a face before the society. You say that Prophets Ibrāhīm^{-AS}, Ismā'īl^{-AS}, Ishāq^{-AS} and Y'aqūb^{-AS}, and their descendants were either Jews or Christians. Is your knowledge more authentic than **Allah's**, **Who** has endorsed these Prophets^{-AS} to be Muslims, through **His** Revelations? You are the transgressors who deliberately concealed the Divine evidence about the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, his noble era, his disposition, his teachings and his faithful Companions^{-RAU}, revealed in your Books. These facts you not only hesitate to accept out of sheer greed for temporal benefits, but also conceal them from others. And when you can maltreat such a great Prophet^{-SAW} who is amidst you, how can you then deter from speaking ill of those gone by? You must remember that **Allah** is well aware of your activities.

These are the people who have gone by...about what they used to do.

This was the group of those noble souls who departed after successfully completing their mission. Their reward awaits them, and you (the Banī Isrāīl) shall only get what you strive for. Surely you will not be held accountable for them, nor your claim of being their heirs is acceptable. The best course of action for you is to follow them in their beliefs and actions with steadfastness. You just cannot trick **Allah** by false claims of loving them, while pursuing your own vain desires.

142. Presently the foolish among the people will say, "What has turned them from their previous Qiblah?" Say, "To Allah belong the East and the West. He guides whom He will to the straight path."

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَّاهُمْ عَنْ قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا قُلْ لِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٤٢﴾

143. Thus We have made you a balanced Ummah, so that you be witnesses over mankind, and the Messenger be a witness over you. And We did not appoint the Qiblah, which you had, but only to differentiate the one who follows the Messenger, from the one who turns back on his heels. Indeed it was hard except for those whom Allah guided. And Allah would never lay waste your faith. For Allah is Kind, Most Merciful to mankind.

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ عِبْعَتَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرُءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾

144. We see the turning of your face towards the Heaven (for guidance). Now We shall turn you towards the Qiblah that you desire. Then turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque. And wherever you be, turn your faces in its direction. Those who have been given the Book, surely know this to be the truth from their Rabb. And Allah is not unaware of what they do.

قَدْ رَأَى ثَقَلُوبُ وَجْهَكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

145. Even if you place all evidence before the People of the Book, they will not follow your Qiblah, nor can you follow their Qiblah. Nor

وَلَيْنَ اتَّبَعَتِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَا تَبِعُوا قِبْلَتَكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتِهِمْ وَمَا

indeed will they follow each other's Qiblah. And if you follow their vain desires, after the knowledge has come to you, then you shall surely be among the unjust.

بَعْضُهُمْ يَتَّبِعُ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ وَلَئِنْ أَتَيْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّكَ إِذًا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾

146. Those, to whom We have given the Book, recognise this as they recognise their own sons. But some of them knowingly conceal the Truth.

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

147. The Truth is from your Rabb! So do not be among the doubters.

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Presently the foolish ...He guides whom He will to the straight path."

The House of Allah

The Jews and the Christians, totally beaten in their arguments, now resorted to objections on the change of Qiblah. They asked why would a true Prophet^{SAW} alter the Qiblah, and what would be the fate of the Ṣalāt offered facing in the direction of the previous one, particularly of those who died before the change had taken place?

These questions clung to their perverted minds; perverted because had there been any degree of goodness in their nature and thinking, they would have felt repulsion in useless talk and meaningless arguments. The essence of goodness is that the mind accepts only what is right.

Allah rejects this perverted thinking by calling these people as foolish. Only fools will give great importance to this changing of the Qiblah, and take it as something extraordinary. It would, be appropriate here to focus on the Qiblah itself.

When Prophet Ādam^{AS} was sent to the earth, he built the K'abah on Allah's Command, which was the first Qiblah, i.e. the centre facing which Ṣalāt is offered. Because of its being the Qiblah, it was sanctified by the descent of Divine Lights, and intrinsically became the centre of the universe, though in the geographical sense too, it is the central point of the earth. Until the era of

Prophet Nūḥ^{AS}, it remained in its original shape. But when the Deluge engulfed the world, it also demolished the building of the K'abah. Since the Divine Lights and the spiritual centralisation associated with it could not be affected by the Deluge, so Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} reconstructed it. Later on when Bait al-Maqdas was constructed, it was honoured to be made the Qiblah, as most of the Prophets^{AS} had been raised in that region. Besides, their Prophethood was localised and not for the entire mankind. To invite their followers to a far off, remote land amidst gigantic mountains in a formidable desert would have put them in trouble. Allah made things easier for them and appointed Bait al-Maqdas as their Qiblah; with which they were well acquainted, and which was easily accessible to them for worship. This remained the Qiblah for the Prophets^{AS} of Banī Israīl. In the early days of Islām, the Muslims offered their Ṣalāt facing the direction of Bait al-Maqdas, until the revelation changing the Qiblah to K'abah, once again.

Holy Prophet's^{SAW} Fondness for K'abah

The Holy Prophet^{SAW} was inclined towards the K'abah, to the extent of a yearning. This fond love is often attributed to the reconstruction of K'abah by Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}, but I feel the real reason is the special honour enjoyed by the K'abah. In the entire world only two nations have the honour of being commanded to a central point, not only for the purpose of unity, but also because the appointed places have been blessed by specific Divine Splendour. The K'abah, however, excels Bait al-Maqdas in magnanimity, as explained in Ḥadith, that the reward for one Ṣalāt offered in the latter is equal to fifty thousand Ṣalāt while in the former it equals to one hundred thousand Ṣalāt.

Until here, it is a matter of common understanding, but for the accomplished there is more to it. If the Bait al-Maqdas is spiritually viewed, it is seen that from the farthest end of the ninth 'Arsh begins a stream of Divine Lights, which passing through the Bait al-Maqdas joins the said 'Arsh on the other end. In other words, the earth, the human abode, always looks upward to the heavens located at the travelling distance of 14,000 years. All the planets and stars are located in this space, encompassed by the heavens, which are seven in number. Beyond the heavens the 'Arsh-e-Ilahi begins, and the place called Aḥadiyyat in Ṣūfī terminology, is thirty six thousand years away from the first heaven and fifty thousand years from the earth. This travelling time is in relevance to the speed of Spirit, which is millions of times faster than the speed of light. But once given the Tawajjuh by an accomplished Shaikh, thousands of years can be squeezed into seconds.

Just as the heaven encompasses the earth, the 'Arsh surrounds the heavens; and all that lies between the 'Arsh and the earth is like a small ring dropped in

the desert, when compared to the 'Arsh itself. This is the span of the first 'Arsh; whereas the second one is vaster than the first and the entire universe in the same proportion. And this goes on until the ninth 'Arsh, which seems to hold the eight 'Urūsh below including all the creation, in its lap, as the desert holds a ring.

It is beyond man to comprehend these distances, unless **Allah** the all Powerful **Himself** blesses someone with such a broad vision. Otherwise not everyone, even with life long endeavours, could step in to the stations of 'Arsh, save a few accomplished ones, let alone covering the nine 'Urūsh, which is a very long journey. The roof of the ninth 'Arsh is the farthest limit of the 'Ālam-e Khalq. Beyond this is the 'Ālam-e Amr, where no creation can enter except the one which is related to it. It is only the Spirit which belongs to the 'Ālam-e-Amr, and which finds peace only when it gets there.

The Stations of Aulia

When seen in this context, a Wali reaching the 'Ālam-e-Amr has just come home. The real progress in **His** nearness lies beyond. However, very few could get to it. In the Indo-Pak subcontinent, hardly a dozen could make it to the 'Ālam-e-Amr; such as Shahbaz Qalandar^{RLA} Bu Ali Qalandar^{RLA}, Khawajah Moeen ud-Dīn Ajmeri^{RLA}, Ali Hajveri^{RLA} popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh and another Ali Hajveri^{RLA}, buried under the Lahore Fort. Probably, his grave came under the Fort wall at the time of its construction, and has now fallen into oblivion. In Bhera, District Sargodha, is buried a saint since ancient times, who was killed by the non-believers and dumped into a well. The tomb now has a settlement over it. Yet another noble personality, Syed Nazir 'Ali Shah^{RLA}, one of the caliphs of Shaikh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani^{RLA} is buried in Azad Kashmir. He is the one enjoying the highest stations in this subcontinent, or there maybe someone beyond the access of my humble insight. Anyway, very few could get to the 'Ālam-e-Amr, and the rest continued on their journey towards it.

Here, **Allah** forbid, the aim is not to belittle anyone but only to highlight the stupendous height of the 'Ālam-e-Amr, and I deem myself much inferior to the dust beneath the feet of all saints. Anyway, from where the 'Ālam-e-Amr begins, the Divine Lights and flashes of **Allah's** Personal Splendour head towards Bait al-Maqdas and passing through it, join at its other end of the spherical 'Ālam-e-Amr. If we move onwards there are the Circles of the 'Ālam-e-Amr, named as Taqarrub (**His** nearness), Tawakkal (complete trust in **Him**), Ṣabr (patience), Tasleem (total submission), Khullah (friendship), Muḥabbat (love), Muḥibbiyat (loving) and Maḥbūbiyyat (being a beloved) etc.

Amongst these Circles, the first i.e., Taqarrub is so vast that the entire creation including the nine 'Urūsh can be compared to it as a ring against a desert. The second Circle is similarly bigger than the first one and it goes on like that with the same ratio. The nineteenth Circle is of Ḥaqīqat-e K'abah, wherefore the flashes of **His** Personal Splendour in the form of a beam descend upon the K'abah, and crossing through it, the nine 'Urūsh and the eighteen Circle of the 'Alam-e-Amr, reunite with the Circle of Ḥaqīqat-e-K'abah on the other end. This is why K'abah always remained as the most revered place of the Prophets^{AS}. Even those, for whom Bait al-Maqdas was the Qiblah, loved K'abah, while respecting their own. This explains why most of the Prophets^{AS} migrated to it after the destruction of their nations by Divine punishment. They kept going around the barren desert hillock holding the foundations of K'abah, died there, and the sands of time buried these illuminated souls under the dust.

As many as ninety-nine Prophets^{AS} can be spiritually seen buried in the Muṭaf. They had, over a period of time, migrated to K'abah. Quietly they passed away and the winds covered their bodies with dust, in a natural phenomenon. In my humble opinion, this was the most powerful reason for the Holy Prophet's^{SAW} profound love for K'abah.

It must be remembered that a place having pictures and idols, is the sure seat of Satan, and is thus deprived of Divine Mercy, rather accursed in a way. Now what would be the state of a House with three hundred and sixty idols that were worshipped as sustainers and adorned as deities, with offerings made to them? Nevertheless, the Holy Prophet^{SAW} lived in Makkah for forty years before his raising and thirteen years after it, and used to worship in K'abah, often resting under its shade during the day. Why did he not feel disgusted? The answer is crystal clear that Divine Refulgence is present over the K'abah like a sea, thus nothing else was of any consequence. The same situation prevails today. Although there are no idols in K'abah, but the place is infested by wrongdoers. Even Ḥajj is taken as a picnic, but nothing can diminish the splendour of the K'abah. The necessity of eradicating evil from there is a separate issue, but no act of disobedience can diminish the glory of **Allah's** House.

The discussion so far is for the chosen few, but at least this much everyone can know that any Muslim entering the K'abah is blessed with a feeling of being present before **Allah**; becoming oblivious of everything else. Everyone converses with **Him** from a commoner to a king; all weep and wail before **Him**, begging forgiveness and **His** Mercy. No one cares what the other might think, because all are in the same state.

Now coming back to the subject; the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and his devoted Companions^{RAU} used to offer Ṣalāt facing Bait al-Maqdas; but deep down in his

heart, the Holy Prophet^{SAW} prayed to **Allah** for making K'abah as Qiblah for Muslims. So **Allah** honoured the Muslims, but it was sixteen months after their migration to Madīnah. The ignorant resorted to sarcasm, as they had no idea of the realities. In reply to this criticism **Allah** commands the Holy Prophet^{SAW} to let them know that facing Qiblah does not mean doing Sajdah to the Qiblah itself, but it is only a centre and a direction. The one to be worshipped is **Allah**, and **He** Alone we have to obey. Whatever directions **He** commands, we turn to it, as all directions belong to **Him** and **He** is Omnipresent. It is only by **His** Grace that **He** fixed a centre for Muslims, and averted the possible schism and disunity between **His** bondsmen. As a result Muslim brotherhood emerged, unanimity and accord also developed and from this centre the spiritual and inner beneficence was derived, which is the essence of all endeavours. So it is not the innate superiority of any premises, **He** may honour any place **He** chooses, and may bless a nation with a Qiblah **He** likes, as **He** is not limited by the directions. **He** is above any such conformity. It is very simple to understand, and a guidance to the right path. But a candid word is understood only by those guided by **Him**. If **He** withholds proper perception, even the right things look crooked. Now, let there not be a pretext that guidance is blessed by **Allah**, so one is helpless.

Divine Guidance is only for the Aspirant

Allah has decided that **He** would guide only those who desire to be guided from the core of their heart. But if one does not feel the urge, it is not becoming of **Him** as **Rabb** to impose it on him; as guidance is also a part of **His** Providence. Thus wherever will be a desire for guidance, it surely will be provided by **His** Grace. And for the heart devoid of desire there is no guidance.

Thus We have made you a balanced Ummah...For Allah is full of Kindness, Most Merciful towards mankind.

O nation of believers! **We** have raised you as a balanced nation. The Banī Isrā'īl objected over the change of Qiblah, taunting that the Prophet^{SAW} of Islām has become confused over his religion. The idolaters said that the Muslims, who have turned to their Qiblah, would soon adopt their religion too. The Jews accused that the Muslims have changed their Qiblah out of sheer jealousy! But their short-sightedness could not perceive the other realities, whereas the Muslim community has been given a perfect balance in all matters. The basic tenets of faith had always been the same and will always remain so, such as Unity, Life after Death, the Reckoning, Paradise and Hell or Angels and Jinn.

Faith in all these facts along with the belief in the Prophethood of **Allah's** Messengers^{AS} remained the same in all the Ummah though the ways of attain-

ing Divine Pleasure differed with every one. The non-believers violated even the basic tenets of faith and suggested children for **Allah**; some subjected **Him** to their idols, while others searched for **Him** in their idols, yet others believed in **His** transmigration. But the Muslim Ummah highlighted the path of Truth, doing away with all confusion. It acknowledges the Unity of **Allah** in **His** Personnel Attributes and **His** Greatness. It recognises the status of Prophets^{AS}, the Companions^{RAU} and the saints, in an appropriate manner. It does not exaggerate their status by declaring them partners in Divinity, as was the practice with many a misguided group, who were such extremists that on one extreme they would even kill the Prophets^{AS}, while on the other, would give the mortals the Divine status.

The Balanced Ummah

The Muslim Ummah adopted the middle course and gave mankind a pure set of beliefs. The worships of non-believers were heinously absurd. They would worship one human being and kill the children of another in sacrifice. Or take the example of Hindūs of India. On one hand they consider burning a widow alive on her husband's pyre as worship and on the other, believe the slaughter of a cow to be brutal calling it a murder. Some even tie cushions under their feet to avoid trampling the insects. Similarly, in other religions of the world, to live as recluse or in a monastery or simply to stay with such persons was taken as worship. But Islām opted for the middle path in **Allah's** worship. The Muslims rise early in the morning to bow down before **Allah** and then get busy in daily routine. In the afternoon they get some time off from business, and offer *Ṣalāt-e Zuhr*. Towards the end of the day they offer *Ṣalāt-e 'Asr*; and as soon as the sun sets, they again avail the honour of doing *Sajdah* before **Allah**. And before going to bed they offer the *'Isha Ṣalāt*. In short, all the temporal affairs are managed along with a continuous attendance in **Allah's** Mighty Court.

Similarly, for the attainment of the highest levels of **His** nearness, one does not have to be a recluse. The Companions^{RAU}, who are the most superior in the Muslim Ummah, fully participated in all worldly affairs. And the most exalted amongst the Aulia also lived the life of common people. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah^{RUA} was a trader, whereas Imām Aḥmed^{RUA} cultivated his lands. The crown of Aulia, Shaikh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani^{RUA} ran a business of imports and exports. 'Ubaid Ullah Aḥrar^{RUA} was an agriculturist, whose lands were tilled by at least a hundred ploughs. Although he was one of the prominent Shaikhs of the Owaisiah Order, yet he lived a prosperous life and was known for bringing affluence to the dervish way of life.

When sainthood attired the royal robes;

It was because of 'Ubaid's prudence and probes

And unlike the Jews and the Christians or Hindūs, or the idolaters of Arabia, in Muslims no specific group qualifies for higher ranks or any particular worship. Every man or woman, regardless of colour, caste or creed can attain any excellence. Similarly on the economic front, neither it is recommended to starve to death by simply living on wild fruits nor should one go crazy for attaining worldly pleasures. It is allowed to earn wealth, but without encroaching on the rights of others. The Companions^{RAU}, in spite of becoming extremely rich due to the conquered treasures of Caesar and Chosroes, remained unaffected by the glitter, and the spirit to die for **Allah** and **His Prophet**^{SAW} remained fervent in their hearts. The wealthy is not permitted to plunder others nor is he allowed to hide his wealth. Rather a certain share in his wealth is kept for the poor and the needy, without unduly burdening him or leaving the needy impoverished. The perfect blend of piety and nobility, along with the State power is a peculiarity of the Muslim Ummah.

Likewise in marital affairs, either celibacy was considered a noble act or a person took ten to hundred wives. Islām balanced this out, it neither confined a man to a single marriage like the Hindūs, nor did it allow an unlimited number of wives, but permitted only four, subject to equity. This concession is not only gratifying for a healthy male, but also binds him to safeguard the rights of women. If a man cannot be contented with one wife, instead of debauchery, he may take another, but must fulfil his obligations towards them forever.

Affairs of the State and the politics are also managed in perfect harmony with piety and worship. Even on the battlefield the rights of the enemy must be looked after. In short, whether it is the beliefs or the worships, social behaviour or mutual dealings, Government and politics or saintliness; Islām provides the most beautiful garland to be adorned by mankind.

These foolish critics who are raising objections on the change of Qiblah ought to be ignored. All these matters pertaining to Islām, which seem different to them, are indeed Divine Blessings upon the Muslims. **Allah** moulded the Ummah on balance and equity. From here the research scholars derive the validity of the consensus since this Ummah, as a whole, can never agree on injustice. It is this fairness that will make the Muslim Ummah a witness on all other nations. On the Day of Reckoning, when Hell will be brought nigh, the non-believers will cry out that they had not been informed about such doom. **Allah** will ask them: Did I not send **My Messengers**^{AS} unto you? They will acknowledge the fact, but would submit that they were never told anything about the doom otherwise they would have not behaved so foolishly!

Effects of Material Dominance on Human Life

It is a strange phenomenon, that whatever a person might be during his lifetime; he never tells a lie once in Barzakh. But the non-believers will deliberately lie on the Day of Reckoning. This is probably because, in Barzakh, the retribution commences immediately after the questioning and there is no point in lying; whereas on the Day of Reckoning, the admission to Hell is yet to take place, but since it is unveiled they will try to evade it by all means.

In this world, the physical body bears the responsibility while Spirit is subordinated to it, so a person can tell lies here. In Barzakh, it is the opposite so the Spirit does not make a false statement, as it is by nature pure. But on the Day of Reckoning both body and spirit will be equally in charge, so under the influence of the material pollution of the physical body, a person will lie when questioned. Although **Allah** is well aware of all the facts, yet as a final proof **He** will question the Prophets^{AS}. They will submit: "O **Allah**! They are lying; we did convey the Message to them. You may ask the Muslim Ummah, which is raised on equity." Note that for the validity of a witness, fairness is a prerequisite; the evidence of an unfair person is not reliable. The Muslim Ummah will come forward to depose on behalf of the Prophets^{AS} that the Book handed over to them by the Holy Prophet^{SAW} contained an account of all these events. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} will then testify that his Ummah undoubtedly obeyed him and the Book. It is then that the Prophets^{AS} will be vindicated.

It is important to remember that anyone who fails to qualify for the intercession of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} shall be doomed. All those living against the Sunnah will be deprived of it. The beliefs and actions of a person must bear the seal of his approval, just as the seal of the Government is required on genuine currency. Those who had turned away from Islām, divorced it from their practical lives, and had adulterated their beliefs, the Holy Prophet^{SAW} himself would be weary of them and would say: "O **Rabb**! These are a people who had thrown the Qurān behind their backs." Only then will the greatness of the Prophethood and the importance of obedience to him be driven home.

The question arises as to why was Bait al-Maqdas declared as Qiblah first? It was done to expose those who did not in reality follow the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, but only in those acts of Sunnah, which conformed, to their own traditions. As soon as there was a clash between their customs and the Sunnah, they abandoned the latter. **Allah** knew them well, but this was to denounce their false claims to obedience. Customs have always been held dearly by every nation.

Customs and Sunnah

Those customs, to which religious sanctity is also added, become very strong. One such custom was that Bait al-Maqdas was the Qiblah. It was a Divine

command and a tenet of the true religion. The Holy Prophet^{-SAW} himself did Sajdah in this direction. But when he turned towards the K'abah, this act of his was the decisive evidence in favour of K'abah as the Qiblah. Those who had a strong faith turned to the new Qiblah at once; but those who would not leave their customs could no longer follow the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} and became apostates. And the fact was also highlighted that customs are, after all just customs. Even the Divine religions prior to Islām paid homage to the ways of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. But these accursed customs become so deeply embedded in the hearts, that it becomes very difficult to leave them. Rather those who refute these customs and traditions face slanderous campaigns. It is a common practice in our own country to declare someone who persuades others to practise Sunnah, a Wahabī, which is taken as a serious offence by the general public. The irony is that a dacoit, a drunkard, an adulterer and a gambler may be spared from this title and accepted as Ahl-e-Sunnah, but the one inviting others towards the Sunnah is usually labelled as Wahabi.

The reason is that people do not have that level of love for the Sunnah, which can compel them to abandon the customs. For instance in our part of the country, it is a custom that those accompanying a funeral procession recite Punjabi poetry loudly, which also includes Kalimah-e Tayyebah; whereas the Sunnah is to recite something within the heart. Now obviously, Punjabi was not the language of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} nor does Sunnah back loud recital. It is only a custom, which, if deemed compulsory, becomes Bid'ah. But whoever tries to stop this practice will again be termed as Wahabī, and the custom will carry on! So a nation who fails to bury their dead according to Sunnah, how far would it go on its festivities and weddings? Such unfortunate people only pretend to be the lovers of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} while their actions are totally devoid of his obedience and expose them outrightly.

It is not easy to get rid of such Bid'ah, except with the guidance from **Allah**. When **He** opens up the avenues for some, no one can stop **Him**. Besides, as mentioned earlier, the Divine Guidance is for those who revert to **Him**. Had this been the attitude, how could people leave the Sunnah in the first place? And **Allah** would not deprive people practising Sunnah of **His** rewards and let their faith go in vain.

Here the actions are being held synonymous to faith; but only those actions, which are testified by the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. If a person died before the fixation of K'abah as the Qiblah, it does not matter, as he had obeyed the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, the rewards for which lie secure with **Allah** without any fear of loss.

As **Allah** is the Most Compassionate and Merciful to people, **He** will reward them manifold. The real thing is the obedience of **Allah** and **His** Prophet^{SAW}, upon which the Companions^{RAD} remained steadfast. This is the genuine currency of the **Ākhirah**, which never goes waste.

We see the turning of your ... And Allah is not unaware of what they do.

Allah is well aware of intensity of the wish of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, and how he expectantly looks towards the heavens over and over again, hoping that the angel would bring the orders of turning to K'abah. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} was very fond of K'abah, as there is no other place like it on the face of earth. The Personal Refulgence manifested at K'abah is unique, not even enjoyed by the 'Arsh; rather is far more exalted as mentioned earlier. That is why even those Prophets^{AS}, whose Qiblah was Bait al-Maqdas, held K'abah in great esteem.

Importance of Supplication

Another point highlighted here is that K'abah was destined to be the Qiblah of the Muslims but **Allah** made the supplication of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} as the cause. Just as the advent of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} was pre-decided, as borne out by his declaration: "I was a Prophet while **Ādam** was yet between water and clay." Yet the prayer of Prophet **Ibrāhīm**^{AS} was added to its causes. It has been a Divine Law that behind every effect is a cause. Secondly, the greatness of the person who is supplicating becomes a proof of the greatness of what he supplicates for. Besides, it is also proved here that prayer is also a part of destiny, and a cause amongst other causes predetermined from the very beginning.

Allah was observing the Holy Prophet's^{SAW} repeated eager glances towards the sky. **He** decided to fulfil his heart's desire and declared the direction that pleased the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, as Qiblah. Thus it was brought home to people that the pleasure of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} is indeed synonymous to **Allah's** pleasure, which cannot be attained without his obedience. **Taṣawwuf** and **Sulūk** is also another name of the **Sunnah** of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, which cultivates sincerity in the heart in following **Sunnah**, and is certainly not based on practices against the **Sunnah**.

So O Prophet^{SAW}! Turn your face towards **Masjid al-Ḥarām** (the Sacred Mosque). And this is not only for you but also for your entire **Ummah**, wherever they might be. Even those in Bait al-Maqdas must turn towards K'abah in **Ṣalāt**. Here the mentioning of **Masjid al-Ḥarām** instead of **Bait-Allah** is intended to facilitate the Muslims, as the latter is only a House, which can be turned to only where it is in sight. It becomes impossible to determine its exact direction in far off lands. The former is a vast place, its perimeters extending from seven to sixteen miles outside the city. All this is within **Masjid al-Ḥarām**.

And then it is not binding to precisely face towards it, rather towards its direction. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} explains that Qiblah is between the two Wests, i.e. towards the South of Madīnah. Similarly in the Indo-Pak subcontinent the direction will be towards West, and this West also includes the 48 degrees difference between the place of sunset during winter and summer. In other words, a variation of 24 degrees towards left or right is acceptable for Qiblah. It is incorrect to demolish mosques for minor difference in the direction, which happens sometimes.

Allah, the Most Merciful, has provided great convenience in this matter. Whether one is in a jungle or a city, or in a country in the North, South, East or West; he has to simply turn in the direction of Masjid al-Ḥarām at the time of the Ṣalāt. As far as the People of the Book are concerned, they know very well that the Divine Command of the change in Qiblah is rightful and a demonstration of **Allah's** Providence; as it is a source for the vitality of the Spirit. Besides it had already been predicted in their Books that for the Last Prophet^{SAW} of **Allah**, K'abah will be declared as Qiblah. Out of sheer arrogance and hostility, they insist on denying this reality, whereas **Allah** is well aware of their actions and will surely take them to task.

Even if you place all evidence ... then you shall surely be among the unjust.

In spite of having knowledge, the Banī Israīl do not accept the truth. They deny it out of spite and it is unlikely that logic would ever convince them. No matter what evidence is provided by the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, they will never accept K'abah as the Qiblah. So let it be known to them that from now on, K'abah will always remain the Qiblah of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, and never again will he offer Ṣalāt in the direction of their Qiblah. This also refutes their objection that the Muslims are confused over the Qiblah, for the People of Book themselves do not accept the Qiblah of one another. The Jews declare one direction as Qiblah while the Christians point to another.

It is a strange phenomenon that the non-believers are never united on any belief, so much so that every individual thinks differently. Since the basis of disbelief is merely to provide a religious cover to the fulfilment of carnal desires, every individual has his own opinion. These people themselves are victims of schism and disunity. And if, O addressee! You too agree with their desires and their evil inclinations, especially when the unchallengeable Divine Revelations have totally exposed them, you will also be a great transgressor and extremely unjust for ignoring **Allah's** command for the fulfilment of your carnal desires. Then there would be no difference between you and those who altered their Books, but never converted themselves. Here, in my opinion, the addressee is the entire mankind. In case of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, it is an impossi-

bility and beyond imagination that all this could ever be done by him. By addressing the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} the importance of the matter is being highlighted, though the real aim is to convey the message to Muslim Ummah that those who ever indulge in such transgression, may it be the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} himself, would not be spared. It is indeed a point to ponder over by today's Muslims.

Those, to whom We have given the Book...So do not be among the doubters.

And these People of the Book recognise the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} very well, rather as well as they recognise their own children. His habits and traits have been revealed in a beautiful manner in their Books. There is no question of their failing to recognise him, because no one can ever get confused over recognizing his own children. They, for sure, have recognised the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} and that is why a few have embraced Islām, but the majority conceal the truth and refrain from accepting it, as it endangers their own authority.

An Obstacle in the Attainment of Barakah

These People of the Book thought that if they endorsed the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, their followers would become devoted to him. This would affect their income as well as influence. Thus they repudiated the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, and concealed his excellent character traits given in their Books, knowing very well that what they were doing was wrong.

It is the condition today, which prevents the majority of people from seeking spiritual blessings. Some people who become leaders, genuinely or by deceit, do not come forward to benefit from an accomplished Wali; even if they know him to be so, fearing that their own status and influence would be hurt. So they embark on a campaign to refute him in order to justify their own actions.

Therefore O Prophet! Do not worry, as this is the truth revealed unto you by your **Rabb**. Here the words *min Rabbika* (By your **Rabb**) are used to highlight a point. Just as **His** Providence has created the sun, the moon, the air, the crops, the greenery, the animals, and the birds for the nourishment of the human body; so is the revelation a source of life for the Spirit. The Revelation is not only its food, but also its medication, its very life, without which it will die.

So merely because of their baseless objections, it is not appropriate to harbour even the slightest doubt about **His** Revelation. If the non-believers are in majority it does not mean that they are right. The truth is only that which is revealed by **Allah**, **Who** is the **Rabb** and only **His** Words are true. Their Divine Books were valid for a fixed period. Now the Qurān has been revealed as a Code of Life forever. Even if those Divine Books exist in their original form

they stand suspended, let alone their interpolated forms which have no credibility.

Section 18

148. Every community faces a direction of its own. So compete with each other in virtue. Wherever you may be, **Allah** will bring you all together, for **Allah** has power over all things.
149. And from wherever you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque. No doubt it is the truth from your **Rabb**, and **Allah** is not unaware of what you do.
150. And from wherever you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you may be turn your face towards it, lest there should be with people an argument against you except those of them who transgress; so do not fear them, but fear **Me**, so that **I** may perfect **My** favour upon you and that you may remain rightly guided.
151. Even as **We** have sent unto you a Messenger, who recites **Our** Āyāt to you, purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you that which you did not know.
152. So remember **Me**, **I** shall remember you. Give thanks to **Me** and do not be ungrateful to **Me**.
- وَلِكُلِّ وُجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّيهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٤٨﴾
- وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِنَّهُ لِلْحَقِّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٩﴾
- وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلَا تَمْنَعُوا نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾
- كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِنْكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾
- فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿١٥٢﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Every community faces a direction ... Allah has power over all things.

For every nation and religion there is some unifying point, ideologically as well as in matters of worship and practices. Some nations displayed this by discriminating between colour and caste, whereas others began to worship power. Like in the Western world today, to be a white man is the point of prestige in the society. A black man cannot find room in their hearts even after embracing their religion. Or in the case of Hinduism, any thing more powerful or gigantic is worshipped; whether it is a mountain, a river, a tree or an animal. It has been rightfully said: *"Every nation has a goal, a religion and a Qiblah."*

For some geographical boundaries, while for others merely being born in a certain family, became a point of unity. All these factors, which are beyond one's control, instead of uniting the mankind on any single principle, became the cause of splitting it up into numerous groups. But the true Dīn always and through all ages, directed the opinion and thought to the common platform of Unity of **Allah** and Prophethood, while the outward point of unity became the Qiblah, where without any discrimination of colour, caste or nationality, all human beings can congregate. They may be in any part of the world, but when it is time for Ṣalāt, they can all turn to the same direction. Just as their hearts have been threaded into one cord, so will their faces be in one direction. This Dīn is a matter of choice and can be adopted by any male or female, educated or unlettered, white or black. It provides such a concrete central point of inward and outward unity of thought and action, for which every School of Thought has endeavoured. In the same way if Islām has given a direction, a Qiblah there is nothing new about it. To get into arguments over it is a sheer waste of time, which is passing on. It would be more sensible for people to compete in obeying **Allah** and seeking **His** Pleasure. If someone sincerely wishes to understand, he must be attended to, otherwise an argument for the sake of it should be avoided. However, if a person is likely to misguide others by his false claims and absurd reasoning it is imperative to challenge him and to expose him publicly. But for this task one has to be competent, otherwise an unqualified person shall bring a bad name to the religious community.

So merely to prove oneself as a great orator it is not advisable to get into heated arguments. Rather this energy should be spent in **Allah's** obedience and excel over one another in it. Eventually everyone has to gather before **Allah**; wherever and however he maybe, **Allah** will reassemble him. Whether a person is cremated after death, or devoured by beasts of prey, or the corpse is

scattered by any other means, it is not difficult for **Him** to put it together. And no matter how scattered its parts may be, these can never be as they were before birth. In every fruit and grain are the components of some human body all over the globe; which moving from one country to another become part of that particular body in the form of diet. This process of building up the human body continues right from the sperm till the day of demise. Therefore a person does not disintegrate so much after his death, as he was scattered before his birth! So **Allah** is All-Powerful and will reunite you all. Therefore, instead of seeking mundane power, one must seek the eternal bliss.

*And from wherever you come forth...and **Allah** is not unaware of what you do.*

Wherever the Muslims might be, even when in a journey they must turn their faces in the direction of Masjid Al Harām at the time of Ṣalāt, which is the Qiblah for them under all circumstances. The Dīn of Islām and all its tenets are based on truth enforced by the Almighty **Allah**. Here, worship is not merely a ritual as in all false religions, but a manifestation of **His** Blessings. Just as **He** blessed mankind with a variety of foods for nourishment of the physical body, **He** prescribed worships as food for the Spirit. Just as grain and water form the basis of all types of food, the obligatory worships constitute the basic spiritual food, without which the Spirit cannot survive, while the voluntary and Sunnah worships are a source of its beautification. People do not merely ingest grain but improvise delicious recipes. So does the obligatory worship complimented by voluntary and Sunnah form a delicious diet for the Spirit.

Obviously, even the poorest person does not eat plain grain, but cooks it into some kind of bread and complement it with sauce or pickles. If this end can receive so much attention, how can the other, which is the manifestation of Divine Blessings, be totally ignored? It must, however, be remembered that only those worships are a Divine Blessing that have been approved by **Him** and **His** Prophet^{-SAW}. Nothing can be invented and added, as this true Dīn is wholly from **Allah**.

Now there is no need to complain that other people sleep late in the morning while we, the Muslims have to rise early, or that others enjoy freely while there are strict moral codes for us. Or that others eat and drink while we have to fast. Remember, all this is not done for people, but for **Allah**, **Who** is always protecting you and is personally watching your performance. And those who disobey **Him**, are also well within **His** sight, and **He** is well aware of them. **He** blesses the obedient with a tenderness of the heart, and those who ignore their obligations are marching to a spiritual death. Invention of a new religion, every other day, is an evidence of this spiritual demise.

And from wherever you come forth... that you may remain rightly guided.

So wherever (O Prophet) you go, Masjid al-Harām is the point of unity for the physical body; whether individually or collectively. No matter in which country or condition the Muslims are, they must turn their faces towards it for Ṣalāt. And no matter in what condition a Muslim is, he must not neglect his obligatory worship nor should he indulge in Bid'ah but should completely adhere to **Allah's** Commands and the teachings of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. He should neither change his direction nor should there be any division in the thinking. The Muslims should not neglect their obligatory worships and give the non-believers a chance to be sarcastic and critical of Islām. They must not be given a chance to say that if it is a Divine Dīn and if the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} is **His** Prophet, why don't the Muslims follow themselves? Why are they ignoring their obligations, and does it not indicate that Islām too, is just another sect? If the basic tenets of Islām are ignored in matters of daily life to avoid being called a fundamentalist, and un-Islamic customs are adopted, it would mean losing direction, like a person whose destination is Makkah, but he takes the road leading to Turkey.

In the first place, Islamic values are the most superior over which even a non-believer cannot be sarcastic; for example, telling the truth, earning by lawful means, abstaining from lewdness and slander and worshipping **Allah**. All these matters are such that only the extremely malicious and unjust will be critical. Now, if a certain class violates the basic human values, and takes mendacity as worship, and slander as a means of attaining **Allah's** nearness, or perfidy and lewdness as Divine obedience and then raises objections over Islām, it should be completely ignored as they have totally opposite standards. And for worships there is only one standard, that the heart be full of Divine awe. The only consideration should be that negligence in worship would invoke **Allah's** Wrath. Therefore, one should worship with full awareness of **Allah's** Greatness and a sincere devotion of the heart.

The term, Wakhshauni means fear **Me** and **My** Annoyance; why then be afraid of anyone else? If you acquire this understanding the gateway to **Allah's** bounties shall open unto you. And inculcate this Divine awe, so that **He** may bestow upon you **His** optimum blessings, and you may be amongst the guided, who recognize as well as speak the truth and enjoy blissful life in both the worlds. And see what a great blessing **He** has sent unto you.

Even as We have ... and teaches you that which you did not know.

Firstly, raising of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} is itself a blessing, and secondly his being from the mankind is yet another Divine Favour. Had Prophethood been conferred upon any other creation than mankind, then that would have been

termed as 'the most superior creation', because Prophethood is the most exalted status and all other forms of superiority fall below it. Thus for the mankind it is a great honour and a matter of pride that the Messengers^{AS} of **Allah** were human beings.

Some fools altogether deny the human aspect of the Prophets^{AS}, which is one form of denying the Institution of Prophethood. However, it must be clearly remembered that Prophets^{AS} too are human beings, but not like any ordinary human being. They are at the apex of humanity and a model for the mankind. Especially their leader Prophet Muhammad^{SAW}, holds the highest station of **Allah's** nearness, only meant for him. His obedience is obligatory for the entire universe, so much so, that even if a Messenger^{AS} with a revealed Book is re-deputed to this world, he will follow the teachings of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, through whom, mankind has received so many blessings. He recites **Allah's** **Āyāt** to the believers, which are **His** own words.

How fortunate are the believers that they ask a question from the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and the answer is given by **Allah**! The entire code of life is revealed by **Allah** to **His** Prophet^{SAW} and whoever accepts his teachings, is purified by him. His thoughts and imagination; beliefs and practices; inner and outer self, are sanctified in such a way that this purification is pronounced as a great blessing by Almighty **Allah**. This phenomenon is so remarkable that even an onlooker of average intelligence can understand it and notice the effects of this Companionship on those who received it. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} teaches the Divine Book and wisdom. In other words, the attainment of the knowledge of the Book and wisdom depends on Tazkiyah without which the real or the beneficial knowledge cannot be acquired.

Attainment of Tazkiyah

This Tazkiyah was acquired in the company of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, even if it was only for a very short while. It led to a special status of Wilayah, and all the Aulia of the world put together cannot match a Companion^{RAU}, not even the dust under his feet. The excellence of the company of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} was such that it instantaneously elevated a Muslim to the status of a Companion^{RAU}.

The beneficence received from the Holy Prophet^{SAW} is twofold; firstly the outward knowledge, comprising his sayings and his practices; Qurān, Ḥadīth and Fiqh are in this category. Secondly, the beneficence of his company was reflected unto those attending his court. It turned raw copper into gold. It enlightened the hearts and illuminated the bosoms, generating a capacity to be steadfast on truth. The beneficence of his company also provides the basis for the attainment of the outwardly knowledge, otherwise the knowledge attained

would be nothing more than the memorisation of phrases and an exercise of grammar, without real benefit.

Don't we witness today how the religious scholars are busy quarrelling among themselves, and the worst part is that the followers of one School of Thought accuse the other of disbelief from the loudspeakers of the mosques. In the past scholars used to invite the non-believers to Islām, whereas today they are busy labelling the Muslims as non-believers. The basic reason is that they have not attained the purification of the hearts and are thus deprived of Dīn. They are at war merely to maintain their own supremacy over others, exceptions apart.

Only those, also striving for Tazkiyah of inner self, are protected against this evil of self-projection, because inner purification is the foundation of faith. The argument that Tazkiyah is difficult to attain today is incorrect, as the spiritual beneficence of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} is for the entire mankind till the end of time. The teachings of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, the Qurān and Ḥadīth have been available in every country and age. Although there was a possibility that those could have been tampered with, yet **Allah** made such an arrangement for their protection that **He** secured the Qurān in the hearts of Muslims. **He** chose men to protect Ḥadīth, and they diligently sifted the truth from falsehood. Despite all efforts by the non-believers, the teachings of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} remained intact; so how can Tazkiyah, which comprises spiritual states that can neither be interpolated nor adulterated be lost? And if **Allah** forbid, it is so then the very Dīn will be lost. It is, however, true that the bearer of these inner lights are rare. It has always been so, and according to the Qurān such noble people can be few in number, but do exist, because they are under Divine Protection, and are the reason of sustaining this world. When they are gone, the world would crumble to an end.

The process of Tazkiyah involves emission, absorption and inspiration. The Companions^{-RAU} received this cleansing directly from the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. From them it was reflected unto the Taba'īn, and in turn unto Taba' Taba'īn, from whom it was acquired by the Aulia of the Ummah. It is a heritage, a trust for all the Muslims, and every male or female must try to attain this highly valuable blessing, because in the Qurānic order of priority, it has been placed before the teachings of the Book and the wisdom. And since teaching of the Book is a duty of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, only that interpretation of the Qurān will be deemed authentic which has been given by him and practically adopted in his presence.

When any Āyah was revealed, the Companions^{-RAU}, who were Arabs and experts in Arabic language got the interpretation from the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, practised in his presence and thus obtained a certificate of approval from him. To-

day any interpretation against it will not be acceptable. Wisdom is also another name for the sayings of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. Anything conflicting or outside their pale can be ignorance, but certainly not wisdom. He unveiled those facts to mankind, an access to which was impossible without his teachings. All the physical sciences discuss human life only from birth to death and dare not go beyond. It was the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} who conveyed to mankind the knowledge of the realities pertaining to the 'Alam-e-Amr, the conditions in Barzakh, the details about Paradise and Hell, and the Day of Reckoning. He acquainted dwellers of the soil with realities of the 'Arsh, and the mankind must constantly remember their Real Benefactor.

Barakah of Zikr

Zikr means remembrance and it is a function of Qalb. Oral remembrance is termed as Zikr merely because the tongue is an interpreter of the heart. But at times it betrays and utters what is not in the heart, which is hypocrisy. Similarly, all those activities carried on within the limits of Shari'ah will be deemed as Zikr, because there was Allah's Zikr in the heart that led to obedience. However, if this too is marred by pretence, and the heart does not corroborate, the curse of hypocrisy will set in. If the heart does participate, it can be termed as a practical Zikr. But the real Zikr is the one enjoyed by the Qalb, and can be attained in the company of an accomplished Shaikh through the process of reflection and inspiration.

Zikr is a need of every Muslim male or female without exception. It is a source of elevating levels of the righteous and a means of atonement for the malefactors. It is neither inherited nor brooks any considerations of colour or caste, but is a right of every Muslim. It is in fact incumbent on all Muslims to strive for it and to illuminate their hearts with Allah's Glorious Name. They must search for such accomplished saints, who are custodians of this treasure being the rightful descendants of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, and cherish their company.

Until recently, the Muslim scholars, after completing their education sought the company of accomplished saints and strived hard to attain this blessing. But the tragedy of the present era is that, in the first place even the scholars of Qur'an and Sunnah are becoming a rare commodity, the substitute of the one passing away is difficult to find. The pseudo scholars memorise a few lines and set out to deliver sermons, and denounce Zikr Qalbi and its attainment out of sheer ignorance.

So remember Me, I shall remember you. Give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful to Me.

Remember **Me** because you are all dependant upon **Me** and **I** am above any need, and the Greatest Bestower. **I** shall remember you by **My** blessing and shower upon you eternal and everlasting rewards. It must be remembered that the entire creation is totally dependent upon **Allah**, and the reason of its sustenance is **His** *Zikr*. That is why all Prophets^{AS} have been instructed to practise **Allah's** *Zikr*. Even the Holy Prophet^{SAW} was commanded: "*And remember the Name of your Rabb* (73:8), which means to let the Name of **Allah** get embedded in the heart, so that every heart beat hymns **Allah Allah!** It also expresses the Divine Attribute of Providence, by indicating to the Holy Prophet^{SAW} that for his perpetual progress a constant remembrance of his **Rabb's** Name is a must. It is amazing how some people are oblivious of this need. May **Allah** grant everyone a clear understanding!

Remembrance by the heart is in fact the real gratitude. Placing the Benefactor in ones heart is the true display of thankfulness for **His** Blessings. The dependants must not be thankless to the One free of any want. Since disbelief has been mentioned here in contrast with gratitude, it has thus been translated as 'thanklessness'. But when carefully examined, ingratitude, does lead to faithlessness. *Zikr* is another name of remembrance by the heart. Where an oral expression of Shahadah is necessary for being a Muslim, an endorsement by the heart is also a must, which by itself is a *Zikr* of some level. If *Zikr* is totally lost, the endorsement of the heart is also blown away, leaving behind disbelief. Thus **Allah** bids Muslims not to let **His** Name be erased from their hearts, lest they are caught by disbelief.

Section 19

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| <p>153. O you who believe! Seek help through patience and <i>Ṣalāt</i>. Indeed Allah is with the steadfast.</p> | <p>يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾</p> |
| <p>154. And do not speak of those killed in the way of Allah as dead. No, they are alive but you do not perceive.</p> | <p>وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَن يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمُوتَ بَلْ
أَحْيَاءٌ وَلَكِن لَّا تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾</p> |
| <p>155. And We shall surely test you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of goods, lives and fruits, and give glad tidings to those who bear with patience.</p> | <p>وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ
مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ
الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾</p> |

156. Who say, when a calamity befalls them, "Surely we are **Allah's** and surely to **Him** shall we return".

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾

157. They are those on whom are the blessings of their **Rabb** and **His** Mercy, and they are the ones rightly guided.

أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ
وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

158. Indeed **Şafa** and **Marwa** are among the symbols of **Allah**. So there is no sin on the one who performs **Hajj** or 'Umrah to go in-between them. If any one does good of his own accord, then surely **Allah** is Appreciative, Knowing.

﴿١٥٨﴾ إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ
الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ
بِهِمَا وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٥٨﴾

159. Surely those who conceal the evidence and the guidance that **We** have revealed, after **We** have made it clear to mankind in the Book, they are accursed by **Allah** and the ones cursed by the cursors.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ
وَأَلْهَدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ
أُولَئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّعِينُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

160. Except those who repent and make amends and make known (the Truth). To them I relent, for I am Relenting, Merciful.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَئِكَ
أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦٠﴾

161. Those who disbelieve and die as non-believers, on them is the curse of **Allah**, and of the angels and of all mankind.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْ مَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ
لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾

162. They shall remain in it forever. Neither shall their punishment be lightened, nor would they be granted any respite.

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ
يُنْظَرُونَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

163. Your Ilāha is the only Ilāha. There is no Ilāha but **He**, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

وَاللَّهُمَّ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ
الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦٣﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

O you who believe! ... Indeed Allah is with the steadfast.

The Pious also face Trials and Tribulations

No one practising Zikr should misunderstand that he has gained a super human disposition and will be free of normal human needs, he will not feel hungry or thirsty; or that he will not be hit by sickness or poverty; or that he would not have an enemy or opponent. He should rather be prepared to fight many such problems and will have to go through comparatively more hardships than an ordinary person. In addition to the everyday problems of human life—financial, domestic, medical etc, the opposition of the society peculiar to the Aulia will also have to be faced. The society always wants to safeguard its rituals and customs while Allah's friends try to reform it and steer it away from undesirable trends, towards Allah's Path. This hurts the ego of the society and it decides to react by confronting them, with the exception of some virtuous people who are bestowed with guidance from Allah, though they are very few.

The reason why the Prophets^{AS} have to face the maximum of hardships is that they strive to eradicate all forms of evil, faithlessness and polytheism from the society, enforce the Divine Code of Life and pave the way for guidance. Their followers simply tread the path cleared by them, and face comparatively much less problems than the Prophets^{AS}. Probably this is the secret behind the saying of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} that he had to endure much more hardships than any other Prophet^{AS}. The reason being that they were raised for specific nations and faced the opposition of their respective nations only while the Holy Prophet^{SAW} was raised for the entire mankind and he challenged the rituals and malpractices all over the globe. Naturally the opposition he faced was stronger and widespread and as such he had to face more hardships than the others.

So when a person embarks on Allah's Path, there should be no retreat and he should remain steadfast. When the wrongdoers do not abandon evil, why should the noble give up piety? Indeed it is a difficult task but has a very simple solution, that is, to seek Allah's help through patience and Ṣalāt, which certainly is the antidote to all distress.

Patience means to restrain, that is to hold fast to **Allah**, and refrain from **His** disobedience, and also to stop wailing over worldly woes. In the presence of **Allah's** countless bounties, a person should not complain if he is put to a little trial. This would, of course, depend on man's inner relationship with **Him** and this relationship is based on **His** worship. Therefore, seek **Allah's** help through **Ṣalāt**, as an optimum level of **His** nearness is reached during **Ṣalāt**.

Although worships are a component of patience, yet also serve as a source of standing firm on patience. Amongst all worships, **Ṣalāt** is like the crown; therefore, patience and **Ṣalāt** will attract **His** special succour. And that help is in the form of **Allah's** Personal Company. "Lo! **Allah** is with the steadfast." It is absolutely sure that **Allah** is Personally present by those who practise patience; and when **He** is with someone, problems cease to be problems. Rather the apparent trouble carries a special pleasure and an inward joy, hard to capture in words.

Whereas the Aulia are blessed with **His** Personal Company yet it must be remembered that it is conditional to their qualities, which in this case is patience. If at any stage patience is given up **His** Company is automatically lost. This is because Wilayah is attained through one's personal endeavour and the danger of losing it prevails until the last breath. In the long and tedious journey of life as soon as one loses his patience, he is deprived of the Divine Company at once. This can happen to those who spend a lifetime struggling on the path of Wilayah, not to speak of those who are oblivious of Dīn and ignorant of this path? How can they claim to be friends of **Allah**? Their claim of Wilayah will be sheer ignorance. No one can attain Wilayah by deviating from **Allah's** Path. In fact privileged Wilayah is the name of excelling commoners in **Allah's** obedience.

Whoever deviates from the Prophet's way,

Will never reach the goal and go astray.

It is only the Prophethood, which is conferred as a gift by **Allah**, and is never revoked, since a gift becomes the personal property of the one to whom it is given. Therefore, the Prophets^{AS} are secure, whereas a Wali is in danger until his last breath. It is a separate issue that the Aulia enjoy Divine Protection, but only until they observe patience. To be a Wali by birth is a myth and is far from reality because Wilayah is earned through endeavour, which in turn pertains to maturity. A person is responsible for his actions only when he is mature. And only then he can endeavour to attain Wilayah. How can a baby cover the stations of Sulūk in its mother's womb? It is only a fable used for those fortunate ones who are born in pious families or virtuous environment, who by nature are pious, and dislike evil right from their childhood. On maturity they

attain privileged Wilayah or stations of Sulūk. Otherwise every child is blessed with the capacity to attain this by birth.

The Holy Prophet^{SAW} says that every child is born with natural qualities. It is the parents who mould him to their own way of life. That is why even a non-believer can attain the highest levels of Wilayah on embracing Islām, because the capability was already present in him, but was only blocked by the barricade of infidelity or the fog of impatience. When he breaks the barricade and reverts to patience he will certainly be a Wali. However, it must be remembered that this patience cannot be attained by itself but is one of the excellences of the Prophethood. There was a time when people slaughtered one another over a sip of water, but the company of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} gave them such a high degree of patience that even in the battlefield while being fatally wounded themselves, they were seen offering their share of water to others. They set exemplary standards of sacrifice. This extraordinary conduct was, and is, a reflection of the splendour of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. And so long as his lights do not descend on the hearts, it is difficult to acquire patience. It is a state that cannot be attained by mere words unless outward knowledge is complemented with the company of an accomplished saint. It would then be a reflection of the enlightened heart of that accomplished personality, who is a trustee of the Prophetic lights.

Another issue worthy of discussion here pertains to those termed as Majāzīb. Only he, who acquired the Divine Lights from an accomplished Shaikh, but at any stage lost his senses due to lack of capacity, is called a Majzūb. And any mentally unsound person who never pursued this path is merely a lunatic, not a Majzūb. Besides, being a Majzūb indicates a shortcoming, not an excellence. Had it been symbolic of excellence, the Prophets^{AS} would have been so. But no Prophet^{AS} was ever a Majzūb. In fact the accomplished are hard to discriminate from ordinary folk. The more one attains the excellence, the more his lifestyle becomes closer to that of a common man. And it must be noted that the company of a Majzūb cannot benefit anyone because he becomes unmindful of good and bad. Rather if a seeker of lower grade comes in contact with them, his spiritual states will be drawn away while their lights, will become stronger due to total concentration in one direction.

According to Shari'ah, it is best to leave such people to Allah and they should not be bothered. One must strive to attain steadfastness in Zikr, as it is the source of His Company. Once this is attained no one can bring any harm to a seeker, rather distress transforms into tranquillity. The maximum pain that can be inflicted upon any one is murder; while other punishments like captivity or fine are of lesser degree. So even if a person loses his life in the cause of Allah, he lives eternally as He forbids calling him dead. He has rather defeated

death in pursuit of the right path.

And do not speak of.... No, they are alive but you do not perceive.

Life of Shuhada'

Those slain in the cause of **Allah** will not be called dead, as they are alive. Assassination pertains to the physical body, and the act of killing is applied only on body. Whether cut by the sword, or blown off by a shell, the worldly life ends and one moves on to Barzakh. But he is not dead. He is very much alive in Barzakh as he was in this world. Although in matters of food, days and nights or seasons, comforts and distress the laws of Barzakh will apply yet the connection of the Spirit with the body will be the same as it was in life of the world and one is alive with physical body.

Upon the Shuhadā' are applicable the temporal laws of death. Their estate is distributed among the heirs, the widows abide by the waiting period before remarriage, the funeral and the burial take place yet their bodies retain the same connection with the Spirit as they had in this world, whether disintegrated to fragments, or cremated, or devoured by beasts. **Allah** is all Powerful; **He, Who** can place millions of microbes in a drop of human blood, is absolutely capable of granting independent life to the flesh becoming part of the beast.

In this context the best form of life after death is that of the Prophets^{AS}, as the temporal laws are partially affected after their departure from this world. Although funeral and burial take place yet neither the estate is divided, nor their widows allowed to remarry. In fact death is the name of the process in which the angel takes the Spirit out of the body and presents it before **Allah**. The body, because of the departure of the Spirit becomes unaware of its surroundings, even though it is in this world. Since the Spirit moves to Barzakh, therefore, the body is also subjected to the experiences of Barzakh, regardless of its state in this world. After presence before **Allah**, the Spirit is taken to its appropriate place in the 'Illyīn for the believers or Sijjīn for the non-believers. Since both Spirit and body had jointly participated in the worldly life, both equally share the requital.

The fact is that in this worldly life the physical body bears the responsibility while the Spirit is dependent on it. In Barzakh it is reversed. Therefore, the Spirit from its assigned station maintains a link with the body so that whatever is being experienced by it, comfort or agony, is also shared by the body; just as the experiences of the bodily joys or grief were shared by the Spirit in the world. To believe that in Barzakh, a replica and not the actual body is subjected to requital is foolishness. It does not make any sense that the good or bad is done by the physical body while the reward or retribution is taken by its

replica, who never came to this world, bore no responsibility, received no guidance from any Prophet^{AS}, yet suddenly appeared in Barzakh for recompense. It is simply absurd.

The Qurān testifies that the Pharaoh's folk went into the fire as soon as they drowned. Now the Spirit has nothing to do with drowning? It were the physical bodies, which drowned. And hardly any bodies were recovered, while the fish or other marine animals gulped most of them. In spite of this **Allah** says that they went into fire. To what kind of fire the Spirit was subjected to is beyond our perception, but the bodies are also burning in the same fire due to their connection with the Spirit, including the body of the Pharaoh though apparently kept safely in Cairo's museum. This is the state of non-believers.

The Spirit of a believer also has a connection with his body and the effects of eternal bliss reach out to it. In the case of a Shaheed or those killed in the cause of **Allah** the connection between the Spirit and the body is so strong that the bodies always appear fresh and alive for centuries together as has often been witnessed. In 1978 when the Holy Prophet^{SAW} Mosque was being extended, the graves of some of the Companions^{RAU} lay open during excavation. After fourteen centuries the bodies were as fresh as ever, and were shifted to Jannat ul Baqi' (Madinah's Graveyard).

Another point to note here is that if the body of a Shaheed does not remain intact, it will not be because of the effects of death. It can be for other reasons, for example, if it is cremated or cut into pieces. Whatever that can possibly happen to it when alive, can also happen posthumously. But there is no possibility of its decomposition due to the effects of death as the Qurānic term *Aḥya* (they are alive) applies to the body, which is alive even after being slain, as the act of slaying took place on the body and not the Spirit. Otherwise, the Spirit of even a non-believer remains alive, so what is so special about *Shuhadā'*? In terms of location they are in Barzakh, and the weather, the environment, the comforts prevail accordingly; but their life is just like the one they had in this world. It is not difficult for **Allah** to do as **He** pleases. Yet this phenomenon is beyond access of our medical science. We cannot perceive this with our physical senses. The best thing to do is to blindly believe in what **Allah** tells us, as **His** Words is always true.

The Qurān testifies to the life of the *Shuhadā'*, whereas the human intellect is still bewildered and confused over the life of the Prophets^{AS}. The reason is that people try to understand through logic and reasoning, while their hearts are not alive. Had their hearts been alive they would certainly have endorsed this reality ignoring the intellect altogether. For people of vision, life of the Prophets^{AS} after demise is axiomatic. May **Allah** enlighten the hearts of all Muslims!

And We shall surely test you ... glad tidings to those who bear with patience.

In further elaboration of this point **Allah** declares that believers will be put to trial by some fear, or hunger, or financial loss or loss of crops to see whether they remember **Allah** only in comfort, and are counting on apparent resources. Or would they give in to their fears of the enemy or a possible calamity and abandon **His** *Zikr*, and become oblivious? The believers will also have to live a normal human life but the difference will be that the distress inflicted upon the oblivious would indeed be distress. But the hardships of those whose hearts are enlightened by **Allah's** *Zikr* and illuminated with the light of faith, though outwardly may seem a distress, but in fact it will be a trial. And trial is always a pre requisite to success.

The Knowledge of the Almighty is Eternal, Perfect and Supreme, but **He** vindicates **His** bondsmen so that on the Day of Reckoning, it is proved to everyone that these radiant faces had sacrificed everything but did not abandon **Allah's** name and **His** service. And those unfortunate ones will also be seen along, who for the attainment of mundane pleasure, or in hope of averting worldly losses had worshipped others than **Allah**; who could neither avail them in the world nor in the *Ākhirah*.

Who say, when a calamity befalls them...and they are the ones rightly guided.

So O' **My** Beloved Prophet! Do convey the glad tidings to **My** bondsmen who under no circumstances give up patience, who in the face of every calamity and loss say that they belong to **Allah** and shall ultimately return to **Him**. Those who believe that their lives, property, honour and their children all belong to **Him** and remain thankful in adversity. Those who do not complain about their woes, although as human beings, they feel the pangs of pain too, yet that pain does not detract them from **Allah**. They rather display patience and remain steadfast on *Zikr*. They may be congratulated and assured that for one moment of pain felt in their hearts **Allah** shall grant them endless pleasure and happiness.

These are the people who are on the right path and the most blessed. Otherwise, had the worldly gains or pleasures been made conditional with worships, who would have been foolish enough to neglect them? For a salary of seven rupees per month during the First World War, people fought across the oceans and laid down their lives. So if people are assured of livelihood against *Ṣalāt*, fasting or *Zikr*, would they have ever walked out of the mosque? Certainly not! No one would have ever missed the five *Ṣalāt*, but would have also been healthy and wealthy. But this is not so at all. O believers, you have to worship and obey **Allah**, and also live a normal human life. This *Āyah* endorses the fact that whether or not the heedless are put through a trial, the heedful will

certainly be. This point is also elaborated by a Ḥadīth that the Prophets^{AS} suffer the most; followed by those closest to them and so on.

Today the greatest problem is that people have begun to believe that by their Ṣalāt and fasting they are doing a favour to **Allah**. Therefore, **Allah** must do as they desire! Praise be to **Him**! In other words, first they worshipped **Allah** and now they want to be worshipped, as obedience is worship. **Allah** forbid, if **He** became subservient to the human beings, who will manage and rule the universe? It is downright ignorance to expect this from **Him**. The real honour is to depend on **His** Mercy under all circumstances and to attain **His** Pleasure by surrendering ones will and purpose completely to **Him**.

Indeed Safa and Marwa ... then surely Allah is Appreciative, Knowing.

Just see how a believing lady made sacrifices all her life. On embracing faith she had to migrate from her native land. When she married Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} she had to bear the hardships of a migratory and impoverished life. She faced the cruel king and remained in prison. But she clung to patience and placed her trust in **Allah**, and was always rewarded until in her old age she was blessed with a son like Prophet Ismā'il^{AS}. But this too led to a trial. She was left in a barren desert alongwith her infant. When Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} was leaving, she asked, "O Friend of **Allah**, why are you leaving us here?" "It is **Allah's** Command," was the answer. "If this be the case, **He** will never let us perish," she replied.

Now there was a new problem. The stock of water ran out and consequently her milk dried up and the baby began to cry. When she could not think of anything, she impatiently climbed the nearest hillock, leaving her baby on the ground. She looked around for water but could not spot any. She headed for the next hillock, but when she descended in the valley she could not see the baby. She ran across trying to keep the baby in sight lest any animal harm him. She climbed the other hillock but no water could be traced there either. Restlessly she ran seven times between the two hillocks in similar manner. Apparently it was a great turmoil, but her passion was so much appreciated by **Allah** that **He** cleaved the desert in order to allow the gushing spring of water flow. **He** honoured the two hillocks to be amongst **His** symbols, and enjoined upon every pilgrim to run with the same enthusiasm as hers between the twain.

To run between the two hillocks seven times is according to Imām Aḥmed^{RA}, a Mustahib (meritorious) Sunnah, to Imām Mālik^{RA} and Imām Shāfi'i^{RA} it is obligatory and to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah^{RA} it is Wājib (compulsory) (Mu'ārif al-Qurān). **Allah** made it a rite of the great worship called Ḥajj and 'Umrah, by which a pilgrim is so cleansed of his sins as if he was just born. These are the blessings of Ḥajj known to everyone, while the eternal rewards are immense.

Those who criticize the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, the Qurān or the change of Qiblah are led by the scholars of Bani Israil, from whom the idolaters of Makkah also take guidance. These scholars are well aware of all the facts foretold in their Books, but they conceal them in order to maintain their own superiority.

Surely those who conceal... nor would they be granted any respite.

Those who conceal the Divine Revelations meant for the guidance of mankind are under the Divine Wrath. They are accursed by **Allah** and by **His** entire creation. Their concealment of truth generates darkness, that envelopes the entire creation, and in turn everyone curses them.

Indeed the effects of human actions are too far reaching. It were the evil deeds of the people of Prophet Lūṭ^{AS}, which brought destruction to the land and everything therein. And those of the people of Prophet Nūḥ^{AS}, which invoked the Deluge and saving only those in the Ark, all were drowned. All these calamities were the outcome of wrongdoings of mankind. On the top of all evils is the act of concealing the truth. A person who knows any aspect of Dīn, does not express it, or twists it in such a manner as to please the people, to safeguard his own temporal interests will be subjected to curse by **Allah** and **His** creation. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} is reported to have said that whoever conceals something knowingly will be made to wear reins of fire by **Allah**. However, an ignorant has no right to issue verdicts.

It is commanded to explain only those aspects, which are needed for the guidance of people. To raise controversial issues in order to satisfy personal vanity is a serious crime. Matters that are not within the comprehension of a common man must not be discussed lest they fall prey to misconception. These guidelines not only pertain to the teaching of the Qurān but also to Ḥadīth, as without it the former cannot be appropriately understood.

Ḥadhrat Abū. Hurairah^{RAU}, a renowned Companion, said that had this Āyah not been revealed, he would not have narrated any Ḥadīth. So all those who conceal the facts that Allah wants to convey to mankind are criminals of the highest order, worthy of being cursed. But if they repent, make amends, follow the guidance of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, and propagate the facts they had previously concealed, **Allah** will accept their repentance. **He** is ever Relenting and Merciful. Praise be to **Him**.

Those who turned away from such a generous offer of Divine Mercy and Forgiveness, opted for disbelief and died as such are accursed by **Allah** and the entire mankind. They were guilty of **Allah's** disobedience, due to which **His** wrath befell the human settlements. Because of this offence against humanity they deserved to be accursed by the entire mankind. The non-believers, therefore, will always be under this curse and never will they be

fore, will always be under this curse and never will they be given a respite. A point to take note of is that unless a person dies on disbelief it is not proper to curse him by name. However, the non-believers and the transgressors can generally be cursed without naming anyone.

When it is such a serious matter that until a non-believer dies as such, he must not be cursed, how can then a believer be cursed no matter how bad he may be. In our society women habitually curse others. If the one cursed does not deserve it, the curse is automatically reversed. Care must also be taken in the use of other words synonymous to curse. This was all about those who conceal the truth and dig ditches for themselves. As far as the believers are concerned, they must only keep **Allah** in mind, as **He** Alone is worthy of worship and **His** Pleasure should be their ultimate goal. Rest, whatever others have to say, must not bother them. *Your Ilāha is the only Ilāha. There is no Ilāha but He, the Gracious, the Most Merciful.*

(**Allah** is one; there is no one else like **Him** nor has **He** a partner. **He** alone deserves to be worshipped. **His** Pleasure is the desired goal and **His** obedience the aim of life. **He** is the most Merciful and the most Gracious.)

Section 20

164. Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, and in the ships sailing upon the ocean laden with what profits mankind, and in the water which **Allah** sends down from the heavens, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and in all species of beasts that **He** scatters through it, and in the change of the winds, and in the clouds harnessed between the heavens and the earth; (those) are signs for people who are wise.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ
الْيَلِّ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ
بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ
فَأَخْبَاهُ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ
كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ وَالسَّحَابِ
الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ
لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

165. And some people take for worship others besides **Allah**, loving them as they should love **Allah**. And those who believe love **Allah** passionately. If only the unjust saw

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا
يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا

now what they shall see when they see the punishment; that surely all power belongs to Allah. And Allah is severe in requital.

لَهُ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ ﴿١٦٥﴾

166. When those who were followed will disown those who followed them and they would witness the punishment and all their relations would be cut off.

إِذْ تَبَرَأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ ﴿١٦٦﴾

167. And the followers would say, "If we could possibly return, we would disown them as they have disowned us." Thus will Allah show them their deeds as bitter regrets. And they shall never get out of the Fire.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّا كُنَّا نَدْرِكُهُمْ لَسَبَّحُوا بِحَمْدِ اللَّهِ أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا كُنَّا نَسَبِّحُ بِهِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ اللَّهَ أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا يُرِيدُونَ نَفْسَهُمْ لَمَّا كُنُوا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٦٧﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Indeed in the creation of the heavens and...are signs for people who are wise.

Manifestations of Unity

The opponents found this very hard to digest that Allah Alone was worthy of worship and the Creator, the Master and the Provider for the entire creation, always showering His Mercy over everything. At the time of the revelation of Qurān in particular, every individual had his own idol, and for every matter, there were separate idols to turn to, which even today can be seen in all evil religions, as man thinks according to his intellect and comprehension. But to understand that there is only one Rabb of the entire Universe and He Alone is taking care of every matter is beyond the access of the intellect. To discover these realities, it is imperative to draw on the lights of Prophethood, as that alone can lead to the apex of understanding. This is so important that without these lights, people go astray even after taking Shahadah. The era of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} was an exemplary period, followed by the era of Companions^{RAU} and the period of Taba'in. Thereafter although the impact of La Ilāha (None worthy of worship) was so forceful that none of its believers could

these lights, people go astray even after taking Shahadah. The era of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} was an exemplary period, followed by the era of the Companions^{-RAU} and the period of Taba'in. Thereafter although the impact of La Ilāha (None worthy of worship) was so forceful that none of its believers could carve out an idol from clay, but a whole army of imaginary trouble-shooters and helpers can still be observed. The reason is that people take Shahadah as a ritual, generation after generation, without paying attention to the underlying realities. These can only be discovered with the help of the lights of Prophethood, whereas their hearts are void of these lights. However, to understand Unity, clear signs are there in the creation, which if observed and studied carefully can turn one's direction towards **Allah** and **His** Prophet^{-SAW}.

These manifestations are discussed here. For example, the creation of the heavens, the abode of angels therein and their duties in the administration of the world or the creation of Bait al-M'amur and Bait al-'Izzah (shrines of the angels in the heavens), which are the sources for the descent of Divine Lights. The heavens with many such realities enjoy the status of a Secretariat to administer the world; and the formation of the earth, and its being the centre of attention for all the planets, its treasures, its stocks of food and water, and its capacity to hold mankind in its lap; the alternation of days and nights, play a definite role in the affairs of the world. And where the heat of the sun is vital to sustain life the darkness is no less important; and to sustain this system the creation of oceans, enabling heavy ships to sail carrying the resources of human survival and material benefits from one continent to another; and the process of sending water from the skies or clouds, for it is poured down in exact quantity at the proper time, according to the precise requirement; drop by drop it saturates the land, making the rivers overflow; all this is nothing but a proof of **His** Omnipotence.

Had this pouring down been in the volume of a river, it would have destroyed the settlements, but not so! It pours down in a way that it penetrates through every vein of the soil, completely refreshing it. The wind blows in an appropriate manner in accordance with the seasons, animating and nourishing everything; sometimes it blows hot and cold, at others, from the East or the West, and controls that sea of water suspended between heavens and the earth in the form of clouds, which when pours rapidly becomes intolerable; imagine the result if it falls down as a whole. In short, all matters are inter-dependant and their timely and perfect coordination is the source of life on earth. And all that is happening, is ample proof of **Allah's** Unity. Had there been more than one **Rabb**, this system would have been destroyed long ago as a result of mutual conflicts.

To understand this reasoning an unbiased and straight thinking is required.

Allah forbid, if any aspect of this great system was in the hands of anyone else but **Allah**, a conflict was bound to arise, leading to the desolation of earth. But this is not so. Everything is happening at its proper time. From the highest tips of the 'Urush to the lowest point of the earth, everything is carrying out the tasks assigned to it. Certainly it is run by the only one Supreme Ruler, **Who Alone** is worthy of worship.

And some people take for worship ...and Allah is severe in requital.

Love for Allah and the Believers

There are some people who pin their hopes on others besides **Allah**, and thus appoint them as partners in the Divinity. Therefore, the love, which should have been for **Allah Alone**, is dedicated to their self-proclaimed gods, as they expect benefits from them. But the believers never do so. They love **Allah** most ardently.

The love of polytheists is gain-oriented, which forces them to bow before different gods for the fulfilment of varying desires. If life or wealth and the children of a polytheist are at stake, and since his love for these things exceeds the love for his idol, he abandons the latter but holds on to the former. This attitude is totally foreign to a believer. He, by nature, loves life, wealth and his children, but not to an extent that these could allure him away from **Allah**. On the contrary, he is willing to sacrifice them all in the cause of **Allah**, but never thinks of abandoning **Him** or **His Zikr**, because all affiliations are subservient to the love for **Allah**. The essence of **Taşawwuf** is that **Allah** is remembered so much that **His name** is embedded in the heart and mind, to an extent that nothing else remains indispensable save **Him**.

When those who were followed,... And they shall never get out of the Fire.

It would have been far better, had the transgressors learnt a lesson from the calamities, that no one can avert them except **Allah**. And how in deep trouble they forget everyone else but **Him**. If this is the state in worldly turmoil, the eternal seizure is much more severe. Who will then come to their rescue because all powers and authority rest with **Allah**? The ungodly leaders will be weary of their followers, let alone being of any help to them, because their own sins will be enough to drag them into the Fire. But all those who were led to the wrong path by these leaders will add to their burden, and since all hopes would have gone, they will find no way of escaping their fate. The leaders of the malefactors will see for themselves how the companionship of evil people is about to take them to Hell. They will long for a return to the world to get even with these disciples. But all this will be to make them more wistful and

grieved and nothing will benefit either group. And they will burn in Hell forever!

Section 21

168. O Mankind! Eat of that which is permissible and pure on the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of the Satan. Indeed he is your open enemy.
- يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ كُلُّوْا مِمَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا اُخْطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٦٨﴾
169. He only commands you to do what is evil and obscene and to say about Allah what you do not know.
- اِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوْءِ وَالْفَحْشَآءِ وَاَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا عَلٰى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا نَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٦٩﴾
170. And when they are told, "Follow that which Allah has revealed," they say, "Nay, we shall follow that on which we found our fathers", even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?
- وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ اتَّبِعُوْا مَا اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ قَالُوْا بَلْ نَسْبِعُ مَا الْاٰفِئَاةُ عَلَيْنَا اَبَآءًا نَّآ اَوْ لَوْ كَاْنَتْ اٰبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْْقِلُوْنَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٧٠﴾
171. The example of the non-believers is like the one who calls out to something which hears nothing except a shout and a cry. Deaf, dumb and blind, so they have no sense.
- وَمَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِى يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ اِلَّا دُعَاۗءً وَنِدَآءً صُمُّ بُكْمٌ عُمْى فَهُمْ لَا يَعْْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٧١﴾
172. You who believe! Eat of the pure things that We have provided you. And be grateful to Allah, if it is Him indeed that you worship.
- يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوْا لِلّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ اِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿١٧٢﴾
173. He has only declared prohibited on you dead animals and blood and pork, and that on which any other name besides Allah's is invoked. However, there is no sin upon the one driven by necessity,
- اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْنٰكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَّ وَلَحْمَ الْخِيْزِرِ وَمَا اِهْلٰ بِهٖ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ فَمَنْ اَضْطَرَّ

neither being deliberately disobedient nor transgressing. Surely, Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

غَيْرِ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾

174. As for those who conceal what Allah has revealed in the Book, and purchase a petty gain, they fill their bellies with nothing but fire. Allah shall neither speak to them on Yaum-al-Qiyamah, nor purify them, and for them shall be a painful punishment.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ
الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ
مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا
يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٥﴾

175. They are the ones who trade error for guidance, and torment for forgiveness. What boldness in facing the Fire!

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَى
وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ فَمَا أَصْبَرَهُمْ
عَلَى النَّارِ ﴿١٧٥﴾

176. That shall be because Allah has surely revealed the Book with truth, and those who dispute the Book are in wide schism.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ
الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿١٧٦﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

O mankind! ... and to say about Allah what you do not know.

O People! The only reason for this ill fate is Allah's disobedience. The entire activity of every living being is motivated by the sole aim of attaining food. Remember that all the nourishment available on this earth is for mankind, but Allah has classified some of it as prohibited and some as permissible. So if you wish to avert eternal doom, you must consume what is permissible and pure so that you may be spared the influences of the Satan, who is your avowed enemy. Even if you follow him, he will never tell you the right path, but would always instigate you to indulge in lewdness and evil. He would make you utter fabrications about Allah, making you attribute to Him what He has not ordered. Or else he will make you raise objections against Allah, but remember that the Divine classification of the permissible and the

prohibited is final. You must not fall in his trap to reverse this classification, consuming what is prohibited and refraining from the permissible. In pre Islamic days people used to dedicate animals to their idols and let them go free, and considered it forbidden to consume them. Somewhat similar is the practice of some Muslims today, who dedicate animals to the names of saints and consider them prohibited for themselves. This is totally illegitimate and a grave sin. The animal so dedicated will fall in the category of carrion, unless the dedicator rectifies his intention and repents.

And when they are told, ... so they have no sense.

When the non-believers are told to follow the Commands of **Allah**, they ask why should they abandon customs of their forefathers and not follow them? It would have been good to obey the ancestors provided they had been prudent and rightly guided. In that case it would actually have been **Allah's** obedience. But the forefathers of the non-believers were neither on the right path nor had the sense to discriminate between truth and evil.

Conformity

Some people interpret these Āyāt against conformity to the great jurists of Islām, which is very wrong, and is a pretext for escaping from the real meaning. In fact herein have been put forth two conditions for conformity: firstly, his wisdom and capability of deducing Islamic laws and secondly, his knowledge of the Qurān and the Sunnah, i.e. guidance. If these two qualities are not present it will be a blind conformity, which is wrong while conformity in truth is incumbent. The statement of Prophet Yūsuf^{AS} in the Qurān bears witness to it wherein he said that he followed the guidance of his forefathers, Prophets Ibrāhīm^{AS}, Ishāq^{AS} and Y'āqūb^{AS}. But to conform to one's ignorant ancestors against the clear injunctions of Qurān and the Sunnah is a grave transgression. And on top of that if such a person believes that the established rituals are the correct ways and, **Allah** forbid, the Divine Injunctions are worthless, he would indeed be a non-believer. People often make such statements now a days that if they conducted a particular matter in conformity to Shari'ah, it would cause them embarrassment. Such utterances vitiate faith. If one does act against the Sunnah, realizing that his action is wrong and Sunnah is the correct way, he will at least protect his faith.

This is the state of affairs of the Muslims, while the non-believers stand sternly on sheer falsehood. They prefer to follow their non-believer ancestors over Divine Commandments. They are hopeless beyond the point of being influenced by any advice. Advising them is like calling an inert object. Rather, they are deaf, dumb and blind, and above all extremely foolish; for to use the faculties of seeing and hearing only for the satiation of hunger is not humanity,

but bestiality. The real purpose of these faculties was the attainment of Divine cognition, which they failed to acquire. Hence in spite of having eyes and ears, they remained deaf, dumb and blind and directed all their mental capabilities only to earn the livelihood, whereas these powers were the very source of getting to the truth, thus they wasted their intellect too.

*O you who believe! ...if it is **Him** indeed that you worship.*

The Effects of Food

Allah has made available a variety of provisions to mankind, but the believers must remember to eat only that which is permissible and pure. The diet should not only be permissible, but also pure and clean. In fact, a person's character is built by what he consumes. There is a special effect and inauspiciousness in the prohibited food, which takes its consumer away from **Allah** and makes him more receptive to the whispers of Satan. According to Ḥadīth, many desperate travellers, weary after tedious and long journeys, cry for **Allah's** help, but their food and dress is unlawful, so how can their prayers be answered? The strength gained from prohibited food incapacitates the tongue to speak and the ears to hear the truth. It deprives the eyes of modesty and strips the heart of illumination. The effects of Satan over such people become stronger and they begin to follow in his footsteps.

The intake of permissible food kindles a light in the Qalb, and provides the power to speak the truth and to cherish it. It develops a taste for worship, and takes the sigh of the heart to the 'Urūsh. It makes a person repellent to sin and grants him the capability to be grateful to **Allah**. Therefore, those who worship only **Allah** must eat what is permissible and be thankful to **Him**. No one is allowed to declare anything unlawful on personal discretion. Only those things are prohibited, which **Allah** has declared as such.

*He has only prohibited for you dead... Surely, **Allah** is Forgiving, Merciful.*

Permissible and Prohibited

Allah has declared the consumption of carrion, blood, pork and the meat of those animals, which are slaughtered in the name of others than **Allah** as prohibited. Basically any animal falling into anyone of these four categories shall be prohibited otherwise permissible. The first category is the carrion. It includes those animals, which are permissible only when slaughtered, and not if they die before that, or are killed, either by strangulation or by striking with a stone etc. Then are those animals, which cannot be declared as permissible even after slaughter, in the Islāmic way. It does not matter how they get killed because they will be carrion anyway; and benefiting from them in any form is not allowed. According to Ḥadīth, fish and locust, are permissible even with-

out slaughtering. Quote: "For us two carrion have been permitted and they are fish and locust, and two blood i.e. liver and spleen. (Ibn Kathir)" However, the fish, which surfaces after death is prohibited. Among the animals that are to be slaughtered, those that cannot be caught can be hunted down with a sharp edged instrument after reciting the Takbīr (Bismillah, **Allah-o-Akbar**) and will be permissible even without formal slaughter. In fact, this act of striking would tantamount to slaughter. But the condition is that the instrument must be very sharp edged which would cut the flesh not rupture it; for example, an arrow, or a dagger. If an animal is shot, or stoned or clubbed, it has to be slaughtered before it dies. Mark that a bullet has a sharp pointed end, not an edge, and its pointed end cannot cut the flesh. Its ballistic power ruptures the flesh and breaks the bones.

It is obvious that just as it is prohibited to consume carrion, so is it to make profit out of it in any form, or to offer it to others. So much so that even the animals must not be fed on carrion, rather it should be kept at a spot from where a dog or a cat would take it away on its own. Yet the bones, skin and fur of carrion that are not edible, can be benefited from as is clear in this Āyah: *And from their wool, fur and hair He has given you comfort and domestic goods for a time.* (16:80)

It is absolutely allowed, without the condition of slaughtering. Yet the bones must be completely dry without any effects of flesh or fat; and the skin must be tanned to remove these effects. Like the flesh of carrion, its fat is also prohibited. The manufacture of soaps etc with its fat is not permitted either. The soaps imported from Europe are more likely to contain forbidden fats, even lard. It is imperative to be careful, but if one does not know for sure, then he may use such items. But those items, which clearly state on their wrappers or boxes that the contents contain a trace of any ingredient pertaining to swine, are totally prohibited.

The second amongst prohibited is the blood. Here, although the word Dumm is used meaning blood yet in Sūrah al-An'ām the word Masfūḥ is also added, which means flowing. Thus the blood that flows at the time of slaughter or from the wound of a wounded animal is prohibited. The blood that remains with the flesh even after slaughter is not prohibited.

While slaughtering, the throat must be cut and the two veins must be severed very carefully, without missing either. Besides, the neck must not be broken and twisted to cut the spinal cord, as this instantly arrests the heart and there is a possibility of blood retention in the flesh. Often the butchers cut off the spinal cord to hasten the process. And the trading of blood is also prohibited.

Blood Donation

Blood transfusion is a contemporary issue. It is done in an emergency without which the patient cannot survive. Since it is taken by a needle and then injected in the veins of the patient, it does not fall in the category of oral consumption and is not unlawful. Yet the donation of blood should be made only on humanitarian grounds and its trade is wrong.

The third category of prohibited food is the pork, which is not allowed under any circumstances. According to the consensus of the Ummah all the components of a swine are forbidden, as it is inherently unclean. Even taking remuneration on a job pertaining to swine trade in any form is forbidden; for instance dealing in lard, or herding or transportation of swine from one place to another. The same rules apply to alcoholic drinks and interest; the wages pertaining to the former and even the testimony regarding the latter are prohibited.

The fourth category includes animals slaughtered in the name of others than **Allah**. This has three aspects. Firstly, if an animal is slaughtered in the name of someone other than **Allah** to attain his nearness, the animal will be rendered carrion and cannot be put to any use in any way. Secondly, when an animal is slaughtered to acquire the nearness of someone save **Allah**, but at the time of slaughter **Allah's** Name is recited on it. This animal too will be carrion and as such prohibited as unanimously declared by all the Muslim jurists. Whether Hindus or followers of other religions do so to please their idols or Muslims sacrifice animals to please their saints, both are in the same category as they aim at pleasing someone other than **Allah**. Such cases will fall under the category of *Naşab*. *Naşab* encompasses all such phenomena where a thing or a person is worshipped as God, or is esteemed in a manner that is only deserved by **Allah**, or if such humility is displayed before them as should only be shown to **Allah**, be it an angel or a Prophet^{AS}. Just as the Christians believe Prophet 'Īsā^{AS} to be son of God, then in spite of him being **Allah's** Prophet^{AS} the Christians will be deemed as idolaters. So when they slaughter animals seeking his nearness even though reciting **Allah's** Name, the animal so slaughtered would be rendered prohibited. This will also apply to the goats and chicken reserved by Muslims to attain the pleasure of their saints.

The third situation is whereby an animal is dedicated to someone other than **Allah**, and is deemed as sacred, not to be put to any labour, sold or slaughtered. The first and second aspects equally apply to it. Such animals have been called as *Bahira* and *Sai'bah* etc. However, an animal does not become prohibited by mere presumptions. If such people repent and mend their belief, they can slaughter it. Someone who does not practise this ignorance can also

slaughter it. For example, if a father dedicated a goat in the name of a saint, but the son does not agree with this concept and slaughters it in **Allah's** Name, it will be permissible. If someone wishes to sacrifice such an animal in charity and wish its reward to any deceased saint, it is permitted, provided the animal is sacrificed in **Allah's** Name. According to Shari'ah it is his property and he has the authority to sell or gift it. Similar is the case of those animals, which the Hindus dedicate to their temples as oblation, or ignorant Muslims dedicate to the tombs and give respective attendants the option to retain or sell. The trading of these animals is permissible because of the given choice. But anything just placed at the tombs or left at the shrines does not become the property of the entombed. It remains the property of the person who kept it there. Therefore, its disposal shall require his permission. The same applies to the animals and sweets sent to shrines as offerings, whether Hindus send them to their temples or Muslim to the tombs. They are forbidden on the pretext of ascribing partners to **Allah** and desiring to attain the nearness of others besides **Him**. The trading, feeding or eating of these offerings is prohibited. For further details books on Fiqh may be consulted.

After the description of all aspects of prohibited, a rule of exemption is also laid down. If a person is dying of starvation and is neither seeking delight nor will eat more than his basic requirement then he may eat from the prohibited without being a sinner. But these two conditions must be present. Firstly, nothing else is available, and the life is threatened because of hunger, secondly, the aim is not to enjoy the food and he barely takes what is enough to save him rather than eating to his fill. In these circumstances the prohibited will not become permissible, but only the user will not be a sinner. The same applies to the medicines with prohibited ingredients, if there is no option, and a person's life is threatened then these are allowed. Otherwise, just for minor ailments and with the availability of permissible medicines, there is no reason for using them.

This rule is for those Western and European medicines that are definite to have the ingredients of alcohol and other impure things. Where the presence of such contents is doubtful, there is more flexibility in the rules. But either way one has to be extremely careful.

*As for those who conceal what **Allah** has revealed ... are in wide schism.*

Since these injunctions are directly in clash with the customs and it has been a human weakness through time that he holds on to something as a support, and draws satisfaction out of paying homage to it. This is what prevents the priests, monks and the peers from accepting and propagating the truth because

on one hand it is difficult to confront the customs and on the other it is not easy to give up a handsome source of income.

Before raising of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, people of various religions suffered from this ailment. Their priests and vicious scholars had made business out of such ignorant practices. The false religions had their very foundations on these rituals. Even the believers in the Divine Religions were also smothered by the darkness. Unfortunately, the vicissitudes of time have plunged the Muslims, the only descendents of the true religion, into the same quagmire. Today offerings are made and sweets distributed on shrines. A poor man, already crushed by debts, borrows more money to buy a goat to offer it on a shrine, so that he may be delivered of his financial troubles. But the fool gets deeper into difficulties and the bellied caretakers fill their coffers by selling the sanctity of the graves! They teach others to eat less and be patient, while they have continental food served at their tables and preach others to go to the mosques and themselves sit at home watching obscene movies. How can they dare reveal the true facts of Islām?

Allah declares that those who try to conceal the Divine Injunctions revealed in the Divine Scriptures to earn livelihood out of it, or alter them for worldly gains are flagrant sinners. Any one who receives offerings in the names of others than **Allah** and reassures the devotees that this act of theirs is not only permissible but also a source of charity, or accepts money to alter the interpretation altogether, eats nothing but the fire of Hell. Outwardly this wealth may appear as subsistence but its reality is fire, though invisible to the commoner.

The second aspect of this punishment is that “**Allah** will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection”. Even though some non-believers will be allowed to present their cases and after a few questions will be dismissed as unworthy of further conversation. After entering Hell they will call out for **Allah**, but will be scolded and told to remain silent and never again dare calling **Him**. Though rebuked, they will at least be answered by **Allah**. The agony of those who are amassing wealth by declaring the prohibited as permissible and a source of charity will commence right from the time of Resurrection. They will be deprived of being addressed by **Allah** and will not be purified. According to Ḥadīth, if a Muslim eats the prohibited, the flesh built thereof will be put into Hell. **Allah** shall then give him new flesh and admit him into Paradise, because not an iota of the prohibited can enter Paradise.

But the category of people under discussion will not be purified. For them will be a painful doom, much severer than that inflicted on the other dwellers of Hell. The people who forsake guidance for falsehood in fact reject **Allah**’s cognition in favour of **His** wrath. How contented they are with Fire!

The ignorant, in their own view, are having a good time. They do not realise that by ingesting fire how much can they possibly enjoy? The punishment awarded is no doubt very severe but their crime too is very grave. **Allah** sent **His** Message as a source of life for mankind, but these greedy scoundrels made shrines and tombs to thrive on and inflicted a spiritual death on humanity. They sold poison under the label of sweets and stood guilty of concealing the truth rather than expounding it. It was indeed a grievous sin. It is a solid fact that whoever bends and distorts **Allah's** Book commits blatant transgression and will qualify for the severest punishment.

Section 22

177. Virtue is not in turning your faces towards East or West, but truly virtuous is the one who believes in **Allah** and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Prophets, and gives his wealth for **His** love to relatives and orphans and the needy and the wayfarers and beggars and for the liberation of the slaves, and establishes Ṣalāt and gives Zakāt; and (those who) fulfil their promises after making them, and remain firm during hardships and adversity and at the time of crisis. Such are the people of truth and such are the God-fearing.
178. O you who believe! Qiṣāṣ is prescribed for you in cases of murder. Free for the free, slave for the slave and female for the female. And if any remission is made by his brother (the other party), it should be adhered to with fairness and payment be made with gratitude. This is a concession and a Mercy from your **Rabb**. And whoso exceeds
- لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ
وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ
وَعَاقَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَأَبْنَى السَّبِيلِ
وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ
وَعَاقَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا
عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ
الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾
- يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي
الْقَتْلِ الْحَرْبِ بِالْحَرْبِ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنْثَىٰ بِالْأُنْثَىٰ
فَمَنْ عَفَىٰ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَأَبْيَعُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَأَدَاءُ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَنٍ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ

the limits after this, shall have a painful punishment.

179. And in the Qiṣāṣ, there is life for you, O men of understanding, so that you may adopt Taqwa.

180. It is prescribed for you that when death approaches any of you, and he is leaving behind much wealth, he should bequeath it to his parents and kindred equitably, a duty on the righteous.

181. Then whosoever changes it after hearing it, then its sin shall be on those who alter it. Indeed Allah hears and knows everything.

182. But if anyone fears a mistake or a sin from the testator, and brings about a settlement between them (parties), on him there is no sin. For Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

وَرَحْمَةً فَمَنْ أَعْتَذَى بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ

الِيمٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَوةٌ يَا أُولِيَ الْأَلْبَابِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ إِذَا أَحْضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ
تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةَ لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

فَمَنْ بَدَّلَهُ بَعْدَ مَا سَمِعَهُ فَإِنَّمَا إِثْمُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ
يَبْدِلُونَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٨١﴾

فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مَوْصٍ جَنَفًا أَوْ إِثْمًا فَأَصْلَحَ
بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٨٢﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Virtue is not in turning your faces ... such are the God-fearing.

From the beginning of the Sūrah till this point, the address was primarily directed at the antagonists, and the Muslims were addressed only indirectly. For example, the topics discussed in series are (1) faith, (2) the categories of human beings with reference to their beliefs, (3) the invitation to the mankind to worship Allah, (4) the authenticity of the Qurān and of the Holy Prophet ^{SAW}, (5) the positive proofs of Unity, (6) the answers to the objections raised by the non-believers and in the same context the favours bestowed upon Prophet Ibrāhīm ^{AS} and his descendants, (7) the issue of the fixation of Qiblah, (8) the rewards of worship and finally (9) the principles of polytheism and its negation. These topics cover the first half of the Sūrah. From here onwards to the

end, which is roughly the remaining half, the addressees are primarily the Muslims, although the non-believers too are indirectly included. The discussion commences with the question; what virtue is and what it is not?

Since the non-believers were adamant that their customs be accepted as virtue, this portion begins with the word **Birr** (virtue) and elaborates each virtue in every aspect of life; e.g. in the laws of **Qisās**, legacy, fasting, **Jihād**, pilgrimage, spending in **Allah's** Cause, the laws of dowry, marriage, divorce and other matters pertaining to marital life, and also matters of trading. Finally, the **Sūrah** concludes with a promise of forgiveness and mercy by **Allah**. Maulāna Ashraf 'Ali Thānvī^{RA} has named the above grouping of **Āyāt** as **Abwāb al-Birr** (The Chapters of Virtue).

Faith and Worship

Allah declares that virtue does not end with the fixation of **Qiblah**. It is absurd to argue that the one facing in a certain direction is better than the one facing in another. On the contrary the real excellence is to have faith in **Allah** and to believe in **Him** as **He** really is, and in all **His** Attributes. In every religion there has always been a concept of the existence of a Supreme Being, more powerful than the rest and with **Whom** rests the ultimate authority. Yet all the religions have fixed the attributes of this Most Powerful Being according to their own understanding. However, faith requires that **He** should be believed in the way **He** actually is, which can only be determined by the Prophets^{AS}, who are blessed by **Allah** with knowledge and cognition of **His** Being and **His** Attributes. In order to believe, it is obligatory to believe in **Allah** the way Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW} tells us to believe, i.e. to have a complete trust in **Allah's** Omnipotence and **His** Knowledge and to accept **Him** as the Creator, the Owner and the Provider.

The foundation of beliefs is faith in **Allah**. If this is missing and a person ascribes partners with **Allah**, whether in Being or in Attributes, then what difference does it make whether he turns his face to the West or the East? A believer must believe from the core of his heart that one day he has to stand before the **One Who** knows the invisible and the manifest, and has to present an account of his actions to **Him**. **He** is the **One, Who** has laid a criterion for right and wrong; and it is before **Him** that he is answerable for his conduct. Besides, he must also believe in the angels, in the authenticity of the Divine Books and must have a deep-rooted belief in the truth and veracity of the Prophets^{AS}.

In fact the human psyche is such that every individual, at his own level, wants to impose his ideals and views, over the rest of the world and expects these to be accepted by all. It was for the satisfaction of this psyche that the non-believers gave their own views the status of religion and worship. And this

very attitude is causing conflicts amongst today's Muslims. Everyone desires to impose his own theology over the other and so much importance is attached to rituals, that those who object are declared as non-Muslims. The worshippers in one mosque declare those in the other, as non-believer, unmindful of the fact as to what a non-believer has to do with a mosque? If they are so fond of Jihād, there are comparatively more non-believers than Muslims on this earth; they should try to propagate Islām to them and work for their reformation, rather than branding those engaged in **Allah's** worship as non-believers.

In the Āyah under discussion, **Allah** has denied man the right to determine virtue and vice. It is the domain of **Allah**, whereas man's duty is to adopt the path of virtue and avoid the path of evil. **Allah**, through the Angel, the Book and the Prophet^ﷺ, will convey the criterion of right and wrong to mankind. Similarly, rituals have nothing to do with worship and only those actions would be taken as worship, which are determined by **Allah** as such. Secondly, man is very fond of wealth. **Allah**, instead of highlighting the ways of earning, has elaborated on the means of spending. This concept is only given by the economic system of Islām, whereby lines are drawn as to how far one can go in spending. Obviously, when a person is going to spend according to **Allah's** will, why would he follow his own desires while earning?

Therefore, for a Muslim the love of wealth and possessions is secondary as compared to his love for **Allah**. He spends his wealth for **Him** on relatives, orphans, and wayfarers, the deserving and on freeing slaves from bondage. And this spending has been mentioned before Zakāt to highlight that Zakāt alone does not absolve one of his financial obligations. Generally, these are given less importance whereas necessity renders these payments obligatory. For instance, if someone has paid his Zakāt, but a relative is in dire need then helping him becomes obligatory. Or if a needy is dying of hunger, it is not a valid excuse that one has already paid his Zakāt, rather, it is obligatory to save his life. Besides, the construction of mosques, schools etc, all fall in the category of ones obligations. All these miscellaneous expenditures are made obligatory only when there is a need, whereas Zakāt remains obligatory under all circumstances. However, Muslims must pay Zakāt and establish their Ṣalāt diligently.

Next to worships are the mutual dealings, wherein fulfilment of promises is a highly meritorious act. And the foremost is the promise made to **Allah** and **His Prophet**^ﷺ. The Shahadah is nothing but a sacred oath. So after taking this oath, it is unbecoming of a Muslim to invent or give importance to rituals against the sayings of the Holy Prophet^ﷺ. That is why wise people always advice that before taking a friend, do determine whether he is loyal to **Allah**

and **His Prophet**^{SAW}. If not, such a person is not worthy of trust. A believer observes righteousness in mutual dealings at all levels.

Then are the good morals. The believers remain patient in hardship and poverty. Patience is a quality, which assists in all the aforementioned matters, as it is based on trust in **Allah** and **His Prophet**^{SAW}. As they believe that **Allah** is aware of their conditions even more than they themselves are and **He** is a greater well wisher of theirs; therefore even distress must certainly be better for them. They stay steadfast even on the battlefield when heads are falling, as they firmly believe that only that which is destined by **Allah**, will prevail, as **He** shall only wish what is in their interest. When Ḥajjāj bin Yūsuf was on the throes of death, his mother sat by him and wept. He said, "Mother why do you cry? Millions of people died before my eyes, after all one day I had to go too, and that day has finally come." She replied, "I do not cry because of this but for the treatment you will receive after death." Ḥajjāj said, "Mother! If **Allah** assigns you the task for my reckoning would you forgive me?" She answered, "Certainly!" **He** said, "According to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, **Allah** is kinder towards **His** creations than a mother is to her children." When this conversation was reported to Khawajah Ḥassan Baṣrī^{RA} he observed: "What Ḥajjāj said may become the cause of his salvation" as patience is also based on trust in **Allah**, and the entire obedience is based on patience.

Those people who have the above-mentioned beliefs, worships, mutual dealings and morals, are indeed truthful, sincere and God-fearing. In other words they have developed a special link with **Allah** called Taqwa. Where this is missing, it makes no difference whether the face is turned to the East or to the West.

O you who believe! Qiṣāṣ is prescribed for you ... you may adopt Taqwa.

Qisas

In a society, generally when a person does not like the other person for any reason, he wants him eliminated forever. Given the chance, he kills him. This is usually caused due to jealousy or greed etc. Whatever the motive, it is an established fact that through times, man has been killing his fellow beings. Especially at the advent of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, human life had no value. Every influential person deemed it as his right to kill the weaker. And if by chance the member of a powerful tribe got killed at the hands of any one of the weaker sides, strange demands were raised. For example, to avenge the death of a woman, man from the weaker tribe must be killed. Or if a freeman was killed from the weaker tribe, the stronger would offer a slave in his place. There were two tribes at war before the advent of Islām whose men; women and slaves had been killed. When they embraced Islām and negotiations began

for establishing mutual friendship, one of the tribes actually demanded that in place of their slaves and women, freemen and women from the other tribe must be killed in order to make peace possible. In other words they considered themselves superior to the other tribe.

While discussing virtue, **Allah** dealt with this matter first as it directly pertained to human life. **He** tells the believers that Qisās is enjoined on them. Qisās literally means similarity. In terms of Shari'ah it means avenging an intentional murder with a murder, or an injury for an equal injury. This authority to avenge the murder is not given to everyone. Rather it is the duty of the ruler to punish the murderer or the assailant. If he fails to do so, he himself will be an accomplice to the crime before **Allah**.

Now, justice demands that only the murderer must get punished for his act, and not that an innocent freeman is killed in place of a slave, or the punishment of a female murderer is awarded to her husband. **Allah** enjoins that a freeman be killed for murdering a freeman, a slave for a slave, and a woman for a woman. That is, whether the killer is a slave or a freeman, a woman or a man, he or she will be killed as a punishment of his or her crime.

After streamlining this ignorant and cruel tradition, another fine aspect of reformation is enjoined. A life, in any case, has already been lost. But if the heirs of the slain agree to forgive the killer for the sake of **Allah**, this kind gesture may well pave the way for the reformation of the criminal. Else, if they wish, they can demand blood money from the killer. This money will be a reprimand for the killer and a financial aid for the heirs of the slain. According to Shari'ah, the blood money is one hundred camels or one thousand Dinars, estimated by the author of Mu'ārif al-Qurān as 33 kilo, 906.65 grams of silver today. The value of silver can be determined or if a certain amount is mutually agreed upon, it shall become the blood wit. Details may be seen in books on Fiqh. Even if a single person from the bereaved family forgives the killer, he will not be killed in Qisās. It does not matter if the killer or the slain is white or black, free or slave, man or woman; because the rule pertains only to the murderer and the murdered, as every member of humanity has an equal status.

Only Islam provides this level of justice. Otherwise, all the ungodly religions or the so-called modern civilisations carry the same stigma; that the mighty crushes the weak and does not even let him cry. In Hinduism if a Shoodar (untouchable) spits on a Brahmin (the high caste Hindu), his tongue is chopped off; whereas if a Brahmin kills a Shoodar it is not taken as a crime. Similarly, the democratic laws of the Western world, which are also imposed on us, have ushered in, their own miseries. The heirs of a slain have to forget the tragedy, and worry about the lawsuit, the witnesses, and the fee of the lawyer and allied

problems. The proceedings of the case drag on in the courts for years, which the heirs have to frequently attend and finally the killer is acquitted, as over the period the witnesses have either died, or have become disabled or the judge has accepted bribe. This system generates so much disgust among the victim party that they implicate innocent people along with the actual murderer to disgrace the guilty faction and teach them a lesson. Ironically, the lawmakers speak sarcastically of the Islāmic Law of Qiṣāṣ, which means absolute peace while the man-made laws are totally mischievous.

A living example is provided today by a comparison of the Western society and the Kingdom of Sa'udi Arabia. Observe the value of human life in the USA and what all goes on in England. The same treacherous English rulers of this sub continent who would order indiscriminate shooting over trivial matters, killing masses at large scale, are still wondering how to punish the killers of thousands of Asians in their own country. Whether even to fire a rubber bullet on them or not? And the BBC, which instantly broadcasts the slightest news around the world, is mum over these killings. In Sa'udi Arabia, where only Islamic Penal Laws are in force and Qiṣāṣ is implemented, even the most impoverished does not fear the richest, as he has his own rights. If exemplary peace is to be seen anywhere in the whole world, it is in this country. Although they do not follow the Dīn ideally, yet the blessings of Islāmic laws can be openly observed. The wise, of course, understand that Qiṣāṣ is vital for the survival of a society. History bears witness to the fact that a society which does not stop a tyrant from oppression, begins to collapse.

And Qiṣāṣ is a blessing in this as well as in the eternal life. It is a source of attaining **Allah's** nearness and of fostering Taqwa. It leads to reformation of the society and salvation in the Ākhirah.

It is prescribed for you that ...Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Wealth and property left behind by those who die a natural death also sometimes becomes a source of dispute. Therefore, O believers! It is obligatory for you to make a will, with justice, in favour of parents and kindred according to their rights. Do not assign anyone more or less than his right. In this Āyah, wealth has been termed as Khair (virtue). Since a believer earns his wealth lawfully and spends it according to the Shari'ah, thus what he leaves behind is virtue. Islām does not prohibit building a fortune, but is against employing unfair means for doing so, and at the same time forbids illegitimate spending. Working for a lawful livelihood is by itself an act of worship; spending it properly and leaving behind for survivors, is a virtue.

Until the laws of inheritance were revealed, it was obligatory for the dying to make a will. But when **Allah** fixed the rights of the heirs, this command was

superseded, as it is entirely up to **Him** to retain or quash a law. However, a will can still be made with the permission of the heirs. Also, according to a consensus of the Ummah, a person has the right to make a will in one third of his property. This law stands for a person who has no outstanding dues or obligations towards anyone, nor had been entrusted with the possessions of others. In that case, making a will becomes incumbent. Besides, the will made for one third of the possessions can be rightfully changed by the owner anytime in his life. How temporary is this world, that the owner can only make a will after seeking the permission of the heirs! In other words the heirs are the true owners and once they acquire the possession they too will become owners of the wealth, which actually will belong to their heirs. Now if a person disobeys **Allah's** injunctions for the ephemeral wealth, which he has to leave behind, it is indeed very foolish.

The duty of those who witness the will is that they must not alter it, as **Allah** is Hearing all and Knowing all. They must bear in mind that one day they have to stand before **Him** for reckoning. But if the testator has made a mistake or partiality and unfair distribution is feared, then an amendment that would abridge the differences between the heirs may be made in all fairness. To achieve this if the will becomes altered there is no blame on the witness as **Allah** is Merciful and Forgiving.

Indeed the reformation of one's conduct is based on his belief in the **Ākhirah** and a firm belief of appearing in the Court of **Allah**. All actions must, therefore, be taken keeping in view the results these will bear in the **Ākhirah**.

Section 23

183. O you who believe! Fasting is ordained for you, as it was ordained for those before you, so that you may acquire self-restraint.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ
كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٣﴾

184. A fixed number of days! But if any of you is sick or on a journey, for him is the like number from other days. And for those who face hardships is redemption: the feeding of a poor man. But whoever does good of his own accord, it is better for him. And it

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَن كَانَ مِنكُم مَّرِيضًا
أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى
الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ
فَمَن تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَن تَصُومُوا

is better for you to fast, if you only know.

خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾

185. Ramadhān is the month in which the Qurān was revealed: guidance for mankind, an open proof of guidance and a Criterion. So whoever is present in that month shall fast. But whosoever is sick or on a journey, (is to fast for) the like number from other days. **Allah** desires ease and does not desire hardship for you, so you shall complete the number and shall extol **Allah** for having guided you, and that you may be thankful.

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَتْيَامٍ أُخْرَى يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

186. And when My servants ask you about Me, I am indeed close. I respond to the call of every suppliant when he calls Me, so let them hear Me and believe in Me, so that they are led aright.

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾

187. Love making with your women on the night of the fast, is allowed to you. They are your garments and you are a garment for them. **Allah** knows that you were deceiving yourselves. So He relented to you and forgave you. So now (you may) associate with them and seek what **Allah** has ordained for you. And eat and drink until the white streak of dawn becomes distinct to you from the darkness of night. Then complete the fast till nightfall. And do not approach them while you are retreating in the mosques. These are the limits

أَحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُم مِّن لِّبَاسِكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا مِنْهُنَّ مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتِمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ وَلَا تُنَاسُوا هُنَّ وَأَنتُمْ عَنِكُمُوهُ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ

set by Allah, so do not approach them. Thus Allah explains His revelations to mankind so that they may acquire Taqwa.

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ
اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

188. And do not unjustly eat up one another's property, nor use it as bait for the judges, to devour sinfully a part of other people's riches.

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَذِلُّوا
بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ
أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالإِثْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

O you who believe! Fasting is ordained for you... may acquire self-restraint.

Divine Injunctions about Ramadhan

The third Divine Command in the Chapter of Virtue is about fasting. A special style of expression has been adopted here. Earlier mankind was called upon in general to worship Allah: "O People! Worship your Rabb". But here the address is direct: "O you who believe! Fasting is ordained for you, as it was for those before you." The reason for this change in expression is obvious. The first addressee was mankind and the second are the Muslims, and for them has been made a special arrangement for spiritual training and attainment of Mercy.

In fact, a human being comprises a Spirit and a physical body. Just as the body is a solid dense form of matter, the Spirit is extremely subtle, subtler than the angels including those bearing Allah's Throne. The Spirit is united to the physical body so that the body can worship Allah. Now when this physical body, in spite of its multifarious needs and availability of means to fulfil them, prefers to enforce upon itself the laws of Allah rather than its own desires, it qualifies for His nearness. The Spirit by itself could remain engaged in Allah's worship, but this act would have been similar to that of the angels who ceaselessly worship Allah. Since they have no encumbrances to deter them from worship, they make no progress beyond the status assigned to them. But when man enters the practical life, he possesses a definite standing in terms of knowledge and practice. He is conversant with the provisions of the world and their characteristics; he needs them and derives comforts and pleasure from them.

If he employs those codes laid down by **Allah** for exploiting these resources, he is blessed with **His** nearness and truly becomes human. But if he becomes hedonistic and gets lost in the fulfilment of his desires, he falls from the exalted status of humanity, and becomes far worse than the animals. The level where a person ignores his desires and prefers **Allah's** obedience above everything is acquired only when his Spirit is strong to overwhelm the faculties of his physical body. This is possible only when the Spirit has established its connections with **Allah** and the superlative form of this connection is that of the Prophets^{AS}. It is so strong that they can never act against **Allah's** will, and are innocent. The rest of the creation connects itself to **Allah** through the Prophets^{AS}. Whosoever takes Shahadah gets linked with **Allah**, and once enrolled as a believer qualifies for **His** special addresses and rewards. Whereas **Allah** prescribed ways for fulfilling the needs of the physical body, whereby alongwith satiation **Allah's** obedience may also be observed. At the same time **He** has also prescribed some forms of worship, which are financial, physical and of life itself.

Worships indeed are the food for Spirit and the provisions for its life. Those who get connected to **Allah** are provided with the sources to attain further spiritual strength and **Allah's** nearness; of these fasting is one of the major means. That is why it has been made obligatory for the believers. It is such an important worship that it was obligatory for the earlier believing nations too, with variation in the days or the details. It is obligatory for the Muslims, so that they can establish a strong connection with **Allah** called Taqwa, which is the real aim of fasting. The literal meaning of Şaum (fasting) is to abstain and in terms of Shari'ah it stands for abstaining from eating, drinking and coitus from dawn to dusk. If after dawn or before sunset anything is eaten, no matter how little, the fast is invalidated.

As far as the benefits of fasting are concerned, these are plenty; rather it is one of the pillars of Islām. Whereas a Muslim abstains from all forbidden things around the year, during the blessed month of Ramadhān he abstains from even the permissible things for a prescribed time, thus demonstrating the highest level of obedience to **Allah's** Commands. By doing so he develops a semblance with the angels inspite of living on earth and possessing a material existence, which facilitates him in acquiring **Allah's** Mercy. As a result he attains Taqwa; a special relationship with **Allah** and the Holy Prophet^{SAW} that checks his limbs against wrongful actions. It does not let him transgress the limits set by **Allah**.

A fixed number of days! But if any of you is sick or on a journey, for him is the like number from other days. And for those who face hardships is redemp-

tion: the feeding of a poor man. But whoever does good of his own accord, it is better for him. And it is better for you to fast, if you only know.

The days of fasting are few in number, whereas to enjoy foods and drinks, eleven months are open. Only one month is ordained for fasting, and that too carries exemptions for the sick and the traveller, who may not fast during their sickness or journey. However, they must complete their count after the prescribed month, when healthy or stationed so that they are not deprived of the blessings altogether. The term 'sick' refers to that patient who would have to endure an unbearable pain by fasting or whose disease is most likely to aggravate. The term 'traveller' refers to that person who leaves for a destination accessible after three days of journey on foot. This distance, according to a consensus of the jurists, derived from the sayings of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and the practice of the Companions^{RAU}, is forty-eight miles. When a traveller intends to stop over for fifteen days at a particular station during his journey, he becomes like a resident. But if the intended stay is only for a couple of days and he is ever ready to move, but for some genuine reason, continues to extend his stay, and even if the duration exceeds fifteen days he would still be considered a traveller. He may stay for fifteen interrupted days in various cities, he would still be a traveller. If the patient after recovery, and the traveller after return home, survive the number of days required to complete their counts, it is incumbent on them to fast for the missed days. However, if they die before doing so, they are absolved of the responsibility. Besides, there is no restriction on the order in which the count is completed. The only requirement is to fast for the number of days missed, even at random and leave the rest to **Allah, Who knows the best.**

Ransom for not Fasting

This refers to that category of people who are neither sick nor travelling but would not like to fast and are willing to pay compensation in lieu. In the early days of Islām, it was prescribed for them to feed one needy person. But the next revelation revoked it and laid down that every one but the sick and the traveller will fast during Ramadhān. However, those travellers, sick or old who do not have the strength to fast, or those sick or old who have no hope of recovery must pay the ransom. The quantity prescribed for ransom is almost one kilo and six hundred forty seven grams of wheat and its market price be paid to one needy. Neither should the amount be divided amongst two nor should the ransom for many days be given to one person at one time. If a person cannot afford ransom, he must beg for **Allah's** forgiveness and must make a resolve that he would pay it as soon as he has the means. Although these concessions are also piety, yet it is far better to fast, because the merit attained by fasting cannot be had through ransom. Therefore, it is better to fast, and it

may not be taken as something ordinary, for this month enjoys a special excellence over the rest.

Ramadhan is the month in which the Qurān was revealed ... may be thankful.

The Superiority of Ramadhan

It is this blessed month in which the Qurān was revealed, which is Allah's own Message. It is the sublime guidance for the entire mankind, adorned with clear signs, differentiating between truth and falsehood. Amongst all possibly imaginable material or spiritual blessings it is the most superior gift that a helpless and humble creation is addressed by its carefree Creator with Mercy and is honoured with His Message. Praise be to Him!

It is this blessed month in which the Divine Message was revealed. According to Ḥadīth all the Divine Books and Scriptures were revealed during Ramadhān. The Qurān itself was sent down from the Guarded Tablet to the visible first heaven in an auspicious night of Ramadhān. And then, over a period of twenty-three years, it was continuously revealed unto the most sacred Qalb of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. Ramadhān is a month of great benediction. Therefore, whosoever is present in this month must fast. Being present means that a person qualifies for fasting i.e. is a Muslim, an adult and sane. If a non-believer embraces Islām, or if a minor turns an adult any time during Ramadhān, they will be obliged to fast for the rest of the month without having to worry for the days missed before this event. But if a Muslim turns insane he will fast for all missed days after he regains his senses. Similarly a patient, a traveller or a menstruating woman will fast for the days they have missed, as soon as they are able to. The term 'being present' also alludes to sighting the moon or getting the news from a reliable witness, or the completion of thirty days of Sh'bān, whence the month of Ramadhān will commence. However, if the weather is cloudy on the twenty-ninth of Sh'bān and the moon is not sighted, or if no reliable evidence is provided, there will be no fasting on the following day. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} prohibits fasting in case of doubt.

Days and Nights of Six Months

In certain countries days and nights extend over a period of six months each. These are exceptional circumstances as the month of Ramadhān cannot be identified there as such and besides the Hanafi scholars have enjoined upon those people to offer their five Ṣalāt according to their six-month long day or for example, if the dawn follows immediately after Maghrib, the 'Isha' prayer will not be obligatory anymore. Maulāna Thānvi^{RLIA} agrees with this opinion. Some scholars have adopted a different view in light of the Ḥadīth which alludes to the indications of the appearance of Dajjāl (the Anti-Christ), whence the day will be as long as seven years, and then two years lesser. The Compan-

ions^{RAU} are reported to have inquired, "O Messenger^{SAW} of Allah! How would one offer Ṣalāt?" He replied that these would be offered by approximation, completing five in a day.

This means that the number of Ṣalāt to be offered in a year-long day would be the same as offered in one year. Therefore, those people will have to offer their Ṣalāt by approximation.

There is subtle point here. During the time of Dajjāl, the day will not become actually longer but will appear as such because of the conditions he would create. The Ṣalāt for one year will have to be offered by approximation in the year-long day. But in the countries under discussion, where the day is actually of six months while in the rest of the world six months pass by against their one-day the situation demands that they should offer only five Ṣalāt in their whole day while fasting will not be obligatory because of non-identification of Ramadhān. But it is far better to be careful. Just as they determine their timings with the help of watches, in order to keep in touch with the rest of the world, they should do the same for worship, which, for the Spirit, is like food for the body. If food is a necessity for the sustenance of physical body, the worship too, is necessary for the Spirit. When such people make so much effort to assign the timings for their meals why shouldn't they do the same for their spiritual nourishment?

To reiterate the point, whosoever finds Ramadhān must fast, and for the patient and the traveller there are concessions. They can miss their fasts during ailment or journey as the case may be, but must complete the count afterwards, and Allah makes things easier for mankind.

The Spirit of Eid

The believers must praise the magnificence of Allah, as He guided them, gave them existence, faculties, sense, wisdom and blessings. He is all-Powerful to withdraw these if He so desires; yet He only commands a willing restraint for a while, with the promise to bless them with a special reward for this act.

Praise be to Allah! Such generosity can only be His Attribute, as He is the Most Magnificent. Thus Muslims must acknowledge His Favours and be grateful to Him for the mercy and blessings being showered on them.

And when My servants ask you about Me, ... so that they are led aright.

The Acceptance of Prayers

If one aspect of fasting is exemplary obedience, the other is the acceptance of prayers by Allah. Since a person observing fast forsakes everything that can distract him, such as food, coitus etc., thus his entire attention is focused upon

Allah. This condition is declared ideal for **His** nearness and acceptance of prayers. **Allah** is in fact, always very close; it is man who gets so entangled in his needs that these absorb all his attention. But when he forsakes these things by **Allah's** Command, he is blessed with a special degree of Divine nearness.

Allah addresses the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}: "When **My** servants ask you about **Me**, tell them I am very close." The term 'My servants' refers to those who are busy serving **Allah**; who have all their attention focussed on **Him** and so they attain **His** nearness and their prayers are accepted. And all this is possible only when they are determined to obey **Him**, for which first of all they must acknowledge **His** Magnificence and believe in **Him** and **His** Attributes. And then dedicate all their efforts to the execution of **His** Commands, so that they may qualify for **His** nearness and the acceptance of prayers. This indeed is the aim of life and the path of righteousness. It also indicates that the prayers of a fasting person are answered, a fact also supported by Ḥadīth. Besides the words 'I Am very close', imply that a supplication must be made quietly and within oneself.

Love making with your women on the night of the fast, ... other people's riches.

Lives of Companions - a general Standard

It must be understood that **Allah**, having declared the Companions^{-RAU} as a standard has implemented the laws of Islām. That is why people sometimes wonder why many a Karamah originated from the Aulia and not from the Companions^{-RAU}, who enjoyed a singular status. One of the reasons is that they were declared as a general standard, and if they found any injunction difficult to execute, **Allah** made it easier for them. For their great favours, the entire Ummah is indebted to them. Take this particular injunction, for example. In the beginning, the rule of Ramadhān was that one was allowed to eat, drink or have coitus after Iftār only, until he remained awake. But once he slept the next fast would commence. Some of the Companions^{-RAU} could not resist going to their wives, but did not conceal this fact like we would have done, and went to the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} the very next morning and confessed their mistake.

Some of the Companions^{-RAU} faced a different situation. Like Ḥadhrat Qais bin Sarfa^{-RAU} of the Anṣār; who returned home one evening, after a daylong labour and found that there was nothing to eat. His wife went out to arrange for some food but before she returned he had fallen asleep and thus the fast had commenced. So when he woke up he could not eat anything. The next afternoon he fainted because of weakness. Thus **Allah** permitted food, drink and marital relationship with the spouse through the night, and fixed the time of commencement of fast. One was allowed to sleep during night and eat before the

appearance of the white thread of dawn. Rather eating at dawn became a Sunnah.

Husband and Wife

The marital relationship with wives was permitted during the nights of Ramadhān, as it was difficult for some to resist, with the provision that this relationship must not be maintained only for lust, but the objective ordained by **Allah** must be sought for. The contract of marriage called Nikaḥ is indeed a sacred covenant whereby a man and a woman together lay the foundation of a family and perform the noble task of procreation and preservation of human race. It is, therefore, imperative that they be co-operative, loving and sincere towards each other. By doing so, they will contribute good and noble individuals to the society. They should rear a generation in such way that they become chosen servants of **Allah**.

Husband and wife are one another's garment. It is the attire, which is a source of elegance as well as protection from the weather. It covers up the physical body safeguarding modesty and concealing its shortcomings. Both spouses should mutually safeguard one another in terms of wealth, honour and life. They must try to be a source of mutual comfort and pleasure. **Allah** made things easier for them, and forgave their previous mistakes, so now on they may eat and drink and copulate during the nights of Ramadhān until the white streak of dawn becomes distinct from the darkness of night. Then the fast ought to be completed till dusk.

The Status of Sunnah

The injunction repealed here is not proved from Qurānic text, but was acted upon on the instruction of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. But here it has been declared as **Allah**'s Command; because it is a command endorsed by the Sunnah.

Therefore, now the timings for starting and breaking the fast have been fixed, that is, it is permissible to eat and drink until the breaking of dawn becomes distinct from the darkness on the horizon. On mere doubt, it is not correct to commence the fast early. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} is reported to have said: 'Do not stop eating on the Aẓān by Bilāl^{RAU} as he calls out while it is still night. But commence your fast on the Aẓān by Ibn-e Kulthūm^{RAU}, who calls out at dawn'.

But these instructions apply to those who can read the horizon correctly; others must be very careful and must either ask someone or hear the Aẓān themselves. If someone ate beyond the defined time, assuming it wasn't over yet, but later discovered his mistake, he must fast for another day to complete the

count although he will not be guilty. The fast lasts till sunset, and is not carried into the night, as is clear from the Qurānic words *E-lall-Lail*.

The Shiites who have attempted at creating a parallel Islām, delay the Iftār (breaking the fast) until the night sets in. whereas, when the darkness emerges from the East after sunset and before it spreads, the fast must be broken. If someone, by mistake, breaks his fast minute or so before time and later discovers that it was not correct, he must fast for another day to complete the count. But if the commencement is delayed deliberately or breaking of fast is hastened, expiation would be mandatory. Therefore, those who call out the Azān must be very careful as many people rely on them for their Ramadhān schedule. Now the rule of I'tekāf also stands clarified. Sexual relationship with the spouse is not permitted during I'tekāf, which means retreating to the mosque during Ramadhān, with definite rules, and to do so in the last ten days of the month is the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. Men can stay only in mosques for I'tekāf and that also in those mosques where the congregational Ṣalāt is held five times a day. As for eating and drinking the rules are the same except that marital relations with wife are not permitted. Engaging in any needless conversation or leaving the mosque without a genuine excuse is not allowed either. Fiqh books may be consulted for details pertaining to I'tekāf.

These are the limits laid down by **Allah**, so keep away. There should be no over stepping of these limits during fasting including kissing, hugging between spouses, and it is desirable and cautious to prefix and suffix a minute or so in commencement and breaking of the fast respectively.

The wealth and possessions of one another must not be seized unlawfully. Nor should anyone misinform those in authority, so that it may help one to usurp the wealth of others. This injunction, in a way, is the essence of fasting because a person, despite possessing permissible and pure food, delays its intake from dawn to dusk just to obey **Allah**. And does it then befit him to take anything unlawfully from anyone?

Well-known means Mandatory to Earn Livelihood

It is obviously unbecoming of a believer to usurp the wealth of others by deceit, which is a detestable act with **Allah**. In fact, the good or bad aspect of wealth is judged by the means employed to earn it, a principle accepted by all nations of the world. It is almost universally agreed that stealing, robbing, or deceit etc. are incorrect means of attaining wealth. And there are certain means, which are acceptable to some but not to others. The reason being that the thought process of every nation is commensurate with her temperament and national interests. That is why no universally acceptable law could be en-

acted despite so many international conferences. As a result, perpetual enmity continues to prevail between various nations.

Islām is a Divine Law for the entire mankind laid down by the Creator of the universe, **Who** not only gave life to **His** creations but also created their needs, provided the means for fulfilling them and taught the method to benefit from these means. This method alone can ensure peace and safeguard the rights of everyone. It is a balanced and a comprehensive code in conformity with natural needs. For example, the things of common interest such as air, water, greenery, wild forests etc. are free for all to share.

The law of individual ownership, including transfer of property, has been enacted for things, which if shared, would have disrupted the human society. Great emphasis is laid on the fact that whosoever works hard for acquiring provisions of life should not be deprived of his rights, nor should he harm others by usurping theirs. That is why mutual consent of both parties has been made mandatory in all such matters, whether it is transfer of ownership, division of inheritance, terms of payment of wages or buying or selling. And all those means have been made unlawful which have any element of deceit or transgression, such as charging money for an uncertain or unknown commodity or service which affects the rights of the public at large, e.g. gambling, interest etc. These matters cannot become legal even if the parties concerned agree upon the terms of transactions. Misappropriating the wealth of others is in reality wasting one's own wealth, because when it becomes a common practice, the wealth of the swindler will suffer the same consequences. For example, if the milkman adulterates milk to earn extra money, he would, in turn, be similarly robbed by the grocer. And when everyone violates the rights of others, it will result in widespread unrest on earth.

No one should covet the possessions of others, nor should anyone initiate lawsuits to usurp the rights of anyone. Islām not only spells out the rules for earning, but also guides on ways of spending, because squandering wealth violates the rights of inheritors. The vision of a believer must focus far beyond the attainment of wealth, unto the obedience of **Allah**, a prerequisite for peaceful eternal life. Thus the act of spending in this world should not only be beneficial here but it should also contribute to eternal salvation. Food plays a vital role in the formation of human temperament. If it is permissible, the conduct will be noble, leading to righteous deeds; otherwise it shall corrupt both thought and conduct. According to Ḥadīth, the prayers of a person using prohibited food are never answered and all his worship goes in vain. May **Allah** spare all Muslims from this trial!

189. They ask you about new moons. Say, "They are time-marks for mankind and for Hajj." And it is no virtue that you enter your houses from the rear. But truly virtuous is the one who exercises Taqwa. So enter the houses by their doors. And fear Allah, so that you may succeed.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهِلَّةِ ۖ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ
لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا
الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ اتَّقَى
وَأَتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا وَأَتَقُوا اللَّهَ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٨٩﴾

190. Fight in the cause of Allah, against those who fight you. But do not step beyond the limits of law, for Allah does not love the transgressors.

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ
وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ
الْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١٩٠﴾

191. And kill them wherever you find them and expel them wherefrom they expelled you, for militancy is worse than killing. But do not fight them near the Sacred Mosque, unless they fight you therein. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the reward of the non-believers.

وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَفَفْتُمُوهُمْ وَآخِرُ جَوْهَرٍ مِنْ حَيْثُ
آخَرَجُوكُمْ ۚ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ
الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ
فَإِنْ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ ۚ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩١﴾

192. But if they desist, then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

فَإِنْ أَنهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٩٢﴾

193. And fight them until there is no more militancy and the Dīn is of Allah. But if they desist, let there be no hostility except against the wrongdoers.

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ
فَإِنْ أَنهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩٣﴾

194. The sacred month is for the sacred month, and all sacredness is reciprocal. But if any one is violent against you, you offer

الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَتُ قِصَاصٌ
فَمَنْ أَعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَعِدُّوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا أَعْتَدَى

violence likewise against him. And fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who observe Taqwa.

195. And spend in the way of Allah, and do not ruin yourself with your own hands. And do good, surely Allah loves those who do good.

196. Perform Hajj and 'Umrah for Allah. And if you are prevented, then send a sacrificial animal you can easily afford. And do not shave your heads till the offering has reached the destination. But if any of you is sick or has an ailment in his head, the ransom is by fasting or alms or sacrifice. If any one wants to combine 'Umrah with Hajj in peaceful conditions, he should sacrifice an animal that he can afford. And if he cannot afford, then he should fast three days during the Hajj and seven days on return. That is ten in all. This is for him whose family does not dwell near the Sacred Mosque. And fear Allah and know that, Allah is stern in punishment.

عَلَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾

وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٩٧﴾

وَاتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ أُخْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَمَنْ تَمَعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَعْيِهِ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْكُمْ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلَهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١٩٨﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

They ask you about new moons... Such is the reward of the non-believers.

The Chapter of Virtue continues. Till the end of the Surah, matters like Qīṣāṣ, Blood-wit, Will, Fasting, I'tekāf and the identification of permissible and the prohibited are being exacted.

Schedule of Worships and Lunar Calendar

The discourse now turns to Jihād and Ḥajj. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} is informed on the question of waxing and waning of the moon, that in this natural phenomenon, there is a great facility in keeping track of the time for matters which may be voluntary, for example demand of rights etc. or involuntary, such as worships like Ḥajj, Fasting, and Zakāt etc.

It is evident that the lunar calendar shall be followed in matters of worships although calculation of time can also be determined by the solar system, provided the required observation instruments and mathematical calculations are available. Contrary to this, even a person living in a far off jungle can easily calculate a month by means of lunar revolution, from the first appearance of new moon to that of the next. Therefore, according to Islamic Shari'ah, it is imperative to draw our worship schedules by the lunar months, and preferable to use the lunar calendar in the conduct of our daily affairs.

Phases of the moon provide a natural measurement of time for mankind. To know the reality of the phenomena of its waxing and waning is not relevant here since it does not concern the human beings in any way. The Divine Mode of Expression in answering this question makes it very clear that a person must only probe into things to that extent, which concern human expedience. Time, effort and resources must not be wasted in futile investigations.

Firstly, the reality of heavenly bodies is beyond the reach of human knowledge and secondly, this knowledge does not in any way affect his practical life. Therefore, all such endeavours are useless. Although countless natural effects are associated with the rising and setting of the moon, like sweetening of fruits etc, yet man has no control over this process, nor can he decrease or increase its light and other effects. It is, therefore, sufficient for him to calculate months and years from the moon. Especially a Muslim should do so for the purpose of his worship. The notion of inhabiting the moon is a waste of time and money. If only the billions of dollars being spent on this research are diverted towards facilitating human life on earth, there would never be a need to escape to other planets, in search of a better abode. And if any nation manages to develop a technology to make life possible on any other planet, it will certainly take its nuclear weapons along for the purpose of maintaining peace!

It is not a virtue to follow rituals in worships as the idolaters did during the days of pilgrimage. They would not enter their houses through the front door, but would jump over the rear wall of the house. This is outrightly absurd. Indeed piety is that man must remain conscious of and obey Allah, and reject all customs, which conflict, with His Commands. A noble act ought to be substantiated by the Sunnah. Entering the house from the back is not corroborated

by it; therefore, it is not an act of piety. In fact the injunctions of the Qurān stand substantiated by Sunnah of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. Otherwise people could easily distort the original meanings by individual interpretations, through lexical manipulations.

Therefore, fear **Allah**, and avoid everything that may annoy **Him**. Not only should the rituals contrary to Islām be abandoned, but also those, who fight Muslims and plan to enforce their rituals, must be fought back. This fighting should only be for the cause of **Allah** and not for any personal vengeance or benefit. Since the opponents are also **His** creation, they must be treated fairly and it must be remembered that **Allah** does not like the transgressor. That is why war has been replaced by Jihād, which aims at the welfare and reformation of the opponent. Because of this noble aim, wherever Muslims went as conquerors, they managed to win over the hearts of the vanquished, as against the atrocities of non-believing rulers where the land trembled under their tyranny. The admirers of the Western society may compare the historical accounts of the Muslim and Christian rule in Bait-al-Maqdas to see the difference for themselves.

If the, non-believers indulge in transgression, the believers must fight chivalrously and drive them out of the city, just as they had done to them, because mischief and intrigue against Islām is a crime far more serious than murder. Besides, in all this fighting, the Greatness of **Allah** must never be lost sight of, and the perimeters of the Sacred Precincts must be respected. But if the non-believers initiate fighting within it, it is permissible for the believers to fight back vigorously to teach them a lesson, as they asked for it.

But if they desist ... and know that Allah is with those who observe Taqwa.

These Āyat were revealed when the Holy Prophet^{SAW} left for 'Umrah in the year following the Truce of Hudaibiyyah. Although the idolaters had signed this pact with him, yet the Companions^{RAU} had their reservations.

At that time, three consecutive months Ziq'ad, Zil Hajj, Muḥarram and the fourth, Rajjab, enjoyed sanctity, which was upheld by Islām; though some scholars hold that it was absolved in the 7 Hijrah. Nevertheless, the reverence attached to these months stays and according to consensus only defensive fighting is permitted during these months (Mu'ārif al-Qurān).

Even in those days these months were considered to be a period of peace and people travelled freely. The sanctity of the Sacred Precincts was observed and will continue to be observed till eternity. Even hunting and cutting off any greenery is not allowed within the Sacred Precincts, but what if the idolaters went back on their word and conspired to harm the Holy Prophet^{SAW}? **Allah**

revealed the solution. If the non-believers try to take undue advantage, they ought to be prevented. The jurists permit fighting in self-defence within the Sacred Precincts, and the offenders must be done to death ruthlessly even if they try to hide behind the drapes of K'abah. But those who neither fight nor are capable of fighting, such as children, women or the old people must not be bothered, as **Allah** does not approve of injustice. And, if after all their wrongdoing the non-believers repent and submit, **Allah** is Forgiving and Merciful. Praise be to **Him**! However, if they do not mend their ways, fight them and do not lay off your arms until the total eradication of evil and mischief. The Will of **Allah** must prevail. **His** laws must be enforced upon **His** creation and not man-made constitutions, which are nothing but packages of personal whims. Every human being, whether Muslim or a non-believer, must enjoy his status and rights within the limits ordained by **Allah**.

And if the non-believers give in, they must be forgiven except those guilty of crimes. They should not be punished merely for their animosity towards Islām as they have given it up. However, if someone has transgressed against the other, the rights of the oppressed must be restored. The same rule stands for the holy city of Makkah. If the non-believers observe its sanctity it is fine but if they do not, then a defensive war must be fought. Sanctity is reciprocal; if the non-believers observe it, they will be treated likewise, else all the blame will rest with them. Whosoever does wrong unto the Muslims will be treated like for the like. Their animosity stems from the fact that the Muslims have embraced the true faith. So while retaliating, bear in mind the truth and never be amongst those who oppress others, as **Allah** always helps the pious, who are modest and who observe the limits laid down by **Him**.

And spend in the way of Allah ... surely Allah loves those who do good.

'Infaq' is a term generally applied to the spending of money, yet a better explanation is to expend one's entire energy in **Allah's** cause, whether it is money, co-operation, power of speech or pen or ultimately the sacrifice of life itself. In other words, this temporal life, this fleeting power and wealth must all be spent for **Allah** so as to ensure great eternal rewards; on the contrary making these things the aim of one's life amounts to inviting an eternal doom. "*and do not ruin yourself with your own hands*", means that one must not become a source of his own destruction by attaching such importance to material things that they become his sole ambition of life. These, after all, will be lost one day, and by not striving in **Allah's** Path the eternal bliss will also be lost. Therefore, always try to lead in righteous deeds and do good as **Allah** loves those who are kind to others.

Virtue is another name for the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. All actions falling within the framework of Sunnah are noble, and the person executing them is a beloved of **Allah**. According to the jurists of Fiqh, apart from Zakāt, there are certain expenditures obligatory for Muslims only in case a need arises such as raising funds for Jihād.

Forsaking Jihād is indeed ruining oneself. According to Abū Ayūb Anṣārī^{-RAU}, this Āyah was revealed at a time when suzerainty of Islām had been established and there was a general feeling that the need for Jihād had lessened, and that energies could now be diverted to agriculture. Some scholars also derive the meaning that a clash, which is sure to result in massacre of Muslims without any harm done to the enemy, also amounts to self-destruction. But this meaning, though apparently plausible, seems to be far-fetched. Basically all such endeavours in **Allah's** Cause are based on the sincerity of intentions. That is why it is ordained to take every action with sincere intention and a pure heart. The Holy Prophet^{-SAW} himself explains the term Iḥsān, in Hadīth Jibrīl^{-AS} in these words: "Worship **Allah** in a way as if you are beholding **Him**, and if this is not achieved, be absolutely sure that **He** is seeing you."

Perform Hajj and 'Umrah for Allah..., that Allah is stern in punishment.

Hajj

The eleventh injunction in the Chapter of Virtue pertains to Hajj, which is explained from here till Āyah 203. Hajj is one of the tenets of Islām and a very important obligation. Its importance is amply reiterated in the Qurān and the Sunnah. According to Ibn-e Kathīr, quoting a consensus the conditions for Hajj were laid down in the third year of Hijrah in Āl-e-'Imran, "And pilgrimage to the House is a duty unto **Allah** for mankind..." (3:97), and a severe warning is given for those who do not perform Hajj inspite of being resourceful. But this Āyah was revealed on the eve of Ḥudaibiyyah, which took place in the 6th year of Hijrah. Therefore, the rites rather than the obligatory aspect of Hajj and 'Umrah are explained here. And since there is no mention of 'Umrah in Āl-e-'Imran, it is clarified here that both Hajj and 'Umrah become binding once a person puts on Iḥrām, although 'Umrah is not so but a Sunnah as agreed upon by the scholars.

Just as Iḥsān is mentioned in the preceding Āyah, it is followed by the command that Hajj and 'Umrah must also be performed for **Allah** Alone, with the sole purpose of attaining **His** Pleasure. The aim must not be merely a trip for recreation, trade and fame. Although to some extent these things happen automatically i.e. the tourism, the purchases, the prestigious title of "Ḥajī Ṣaḥīb" (Mr. Pilgrim) yet these must not be the real objective. It can be tested by

our demeanour. If we are concerned about all the rites of Ḥajj or 'Umrah and fulfil each with great care and concern, certainly the intention is right. On the contrary, if we are irregular in our obligatory Ṣalāt, we must search our souls as to why did we undertake this journey? We must fear Allah, as He is very severe in punishing the guilty. Our contemporaries believe that the journey of Ḥajj is a blessed one under all circumstances. This is not correct. If during this noble journey and while performing the rites of Ḥajj we act carelessly, it is enough to invoke Allah's Wrath. Whereas one Ṣalāt is rewarded equivalent to a hundred thousand Ṣalāt, missing out one in such a holy place would also result in a corresponding loss.

Now let us take the rites. Firstly, if after being clad in Iḥrām some one stops a pilgrim from performing the 'Umrah, as was done to the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and his entourage at Ḥudaibiyyah, the Iḥrām can be taken off after offering a sacrifice and in token shaving the head or trimming off some hair. The offering, whether a goat, a cow or a camel is to be slaughtered in the Sacred Precincts of Makkah. If one cannot get there personally, he may send it through someone else, as suggested by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah^{RA}. It is obvious that shaving off the head is not permitted while in Iḥrām. And although this is applicable in the circumstances whereby an enemy creates the hindrance, the scholars, because of the similarity of pretence, extend it to sickness also. From the practice of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} it is obvious that if for some constraint one has to take off the Iḥrām after the offering, he must expiate as soon as normal conditions are restored, as this expiation is imperative.

The shaving of the head or trimming of hair is symbolic to the opening of Iḥrām. However, if a person because of illness or some other compulsion is forced to cut the hair from either head or any other part of the body, he may do so but must give ransom by fasting and alms or by giving an offering. This offering is to be given within Sacred Precincts, whereas the alms giving and fasting can be done anywhere, and is Sunnah. The number or quantity is not laid down in the Qurān but is explained in Ḥadīth as three days of fasting, or providing six needy persons with approximately two kilograms of wheat each. (al-Bukhārī). The market value of the wheat can also be paid in lieu.

Before the advent of Islām it was considered sinful to combine Ḥajj and 'Umrah from the month of Shawwāl onwards. This is corrected here. Those who live within the Sacred Precincts must not combine the two devotions as for them it is not difficult to undertake the journey for 'Umrah. While others are allowed to combine Ḥajj and 'Umrah.

Sacred Precincts are the landmarks on all the routes entering Makkah. To go inside these, without being clad in Iḥrām for Ḥajj or 'Umrah is forbidden for

the pilgrims. And those who combine Hajj and 'Umrah must display gratitude by sacrificing a cow or a camel. But if anyone cannot afford this, he must fast for ten days, three till 9th Zilhajj and the remaining seven after completion of Hajj, whenever and wherever is convenient. If anyone cannot fast for three days during the Hajj, he must offer a sacrifice, when possible, but it must be within the Sacred Precincts, as suggested by the scholars including Imām Abū Ḥanīfah^{RA}. There are two forms of combining Hajj and 'Umrah: -

- (1) Whereby the Ihram for both 'Umrah and Hajj is put on from the Sacred Precincts and is taken off after Hajj. This is known as Qiran.
- (2) To put on the Ihram for 'Umrah only at Sacred Precincts which will be opened after performing the 'Umrah. Again on the 8th of Zilhajj, before leaving for Minā, the Ihram is worn for Hajj. This is called Tamatt'a.

Allah must be held in awe during all these proceedings. This feeling must not be marred by negligence or laziness, as **Allah** is very severe in **His** punishment. Today most people do not bother about it. They waste all their efforts by blindly following the ignorant and hired guides for pilgrimage. Some spend the precious time with friends gossiping, and many do not even care for the obligatory Ṣalāt, let alone the Sunnah and the etiquettes. May **Allah** guide us to mend our ways!

Section 25

197. The months of Hajj are well known. So whoever undertakes this duty should refrain from lewdness, wickedness and quarrel during Hajj. And whatever good you do, **Allah** knows it. And take provisions for the journey. Surely, the best of provision is Taqwa. So fear **Me**, O people of understanding!

الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَةٌ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ
الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ
وَمَا تَفَعَّلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمَهُ اللَّهُ
وَتَزَرَّوْا وَأَقْبَابُ خَيْرِ الزَّادِ النَّقْوَى
وَأَتَّقُوا يَتَأُولَى الْأَلْبَبِ ﴿١٧﴾

198. It is no sin for you to seek the Grace of your **Rabb** by trading (during Hajj). So when you return from 'Arafat, perform **Allah's** Zikr near the Sacred Monument. And remember **Him** as **He** has

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا
فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُمْ
مِنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَأَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ
الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ وَاذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا

guided you. Although, before this, you were of those astray.

199. Then return from the place whence the other people return. And ask Allah's Forgiveness. Indeed Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

200. And when you have completed your rites, do Zikr of Allah as you used to do Zikr of your fathers, rather this Zikr should be much more intense. And so there are people who say, "O our Rabb! Give us in this world", and they have no share in the Ākhirah.

201. And there are some who pray, "O our Rabb! Give us the good in this world and the good in the Ākhirah and save us from the torment of the Fire."

202. For such is the share of what they have earned, and Allah is swift at reckoning.

203. And remember Allah during the appointed days. Then whoever hastens away in two days, on him is no sin. And whoever stays on, there is no sin on him either, provided Taqwa is observed. Fear Allah and know that you shall surely be gathered unto Him.

204. And among people there is one whose discourse about the life of this world may impress you, and he cites Allah as Witness to what

هَدَيْنَاكُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ

لَمِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿١٩٨﴾

ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ

وَأَسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٩٩﴾

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمْ مِنْ صَلَاتِكُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا

اللَّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا

فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي

الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلْقٍ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا

حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ

النَّارِ ﴿٢٠١﴾

أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا

وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٠٢﴾

﴿٢٠٣﴾ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَعْدُودَاتٍ

فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ

تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ

وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ

الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ

is in his heart, while he is the most contentious adversary.

205. And when he turns away, he speeds through the land to make mischief therein and to destroy the human civilization. And Allah does not approve mischief.

206. And when he is told, "Fear Allah", his false pride drives him to crime. Hell is enough for him and an ill resort indeed!

207. And there is a type of person who would sell himself to earn the Pleasure of Allah. And Allah is Most Kind to His servants.

208. O you who believe! Enter Islām completely, and do not follow the footsteps of the Satan, for he is your open enemy.

209. And if you waiver after the clear proofs have reached you, then know that Allah is indeed Mighty, Wise.

210. Are they only waiting that Allah should come to them in the shadows of the clouds, and also the angels, and the matter is decided? And to Allah are all matters brought back.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي الْخَصَامُ ﴿٢١﴾

وَإِذَا تَوَلَّى سَعَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيهَا
وَيُهْلِكَ الْبَحْرَ وَالنَّسْلَ وَاللَّهُ
لَا يُحِبُّ الْفُسَادَ ﴿٢٢﴾

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ أَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْإِثْمِ
فَحَسْبُ جَهَنَّمَ وَلَيْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿٢٣﴾

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ
مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٢٤﴾

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَذْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ
كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ
إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

فَإِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْكُمْ
الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَاذْكُرُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ
وَالِلَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٢٧﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

The months of Hajj are well known... So fear Me, O people of understanding!

The Rules for Hajj

Whereas there is no fixed date or month for 'Umrah which may be performed throughout the year, it is not so for Hajj. For Hajj, the month, the dates, and the places and within those dates and particular places the actions and rites are well defined. The months of Shawwāl, Ṣiq'ad and ten days of Ṣilhajj, fixed for pilgrimage in the pagan days, were upheld by Islām. So before Shawwal it is not lawful to wear the Iḥrām for Hajj. An intending pilgrim must understand this at the very outset that there is no place for any lewdness, wickedness or any sort of disputing during Hajj. No form of intimacy with women, even in language, much less in practice, is permissible once the Iḥrām is put on. A serious effort must be made to avoid all those actions, which are forbidden while in Iḥrām, as this great blessing is rare in a lifetime, and even trifling errors mar its excellence and beauty. And certain acts of disobedience invalidate the Hajj altogether, such as copulating with wife in Iḥrām before the stay in 'Arafāt. Besides the penalty of sacrificing an animal, Hajj will have to be repeated in the following year. This is why lewdness has been mentioned independently. The other forbidden actions are to hunt land animals or to guide any hunter, to cut hair or clip nails, to use a perfume, and for men to wear stitched clothes and to cover the face or head while in Iḥrām. The covering of face is not allowed even to women.

All the forbidden acts must be thoroughly avoided. Similarly in such a massive gathering of people it is natural that minor disputes may arise, sometime amongst fellow pilgrims, on administrative arrangements such as cooking food etc or while bargaining in trade, or while going the rounds of K'abah or running between the hillocks. Being constantly on the move, making temporary stopovers, eating irregularly and fatigue adds to the volatility of temperaments and cause slackness in worship. All these factors contribute to the possibility of disputes, which must be avoided by deliberate effort. The only way of achieving this is that not only the Shrine be in sight but also the hearts must be filled with the Magnificence of its Master. And while the tongue utters 'Labbaik Labbaik' (I am here, I am here) the heart is also engaged in doing Ṭawāf of the K'abah. All efforts to abstain from any wrongdoing should be motivated only by a desire to seek Allah's Pleasure and a firm belief that He is a Witness to everything.

Provisions for Hajj

On journey for the Hajj, all provisions must be fully taken care of, lest you become burden on others or resort to begging. The purpose of the journey is to seek **Allah's** Pleasure and not to plead for provisions on others doors. This is why Hajj is obligatory only for those who can afford it. It is an observation in daily life that a person who cannot work to earn his own livelihood cannot be expected to perform acts of charity.

There are people who spend their lives giving sermons from the pulpit but they fail to speak out the truth because it is their source of earning a livelihood. If only they opted for some other means of livelihood and then preached, no power on earth could have deterred them from speaking the truth. Therefore, at least for a worship as sublime as Hajj, one must not have an eye on the pockets of other people.

History bears witness to the fact that right from the Companions^{-RAU} to the present age, whoever brought about revolutionary changes earned his livelihood through well-known means, and never made his religious service as a means of subsistence. They may be the eminent jurists of the four Schools of Thought or other leaders of Fiqh, Hadith, Tafsir or Tasawwuf; from Shaikh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani^{-RUA} down to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhandi^{-RUA}, all earned their livelihood through well known means. The fear of **Allah** is the apex of greatness, and a fear of annoying **Him** and a link with **Him** is the fruit of all worships and struggles. This fear is lost if hopes are pinned on human beings. It is no wisdom to please the created at the cost of annoying the Creator!

*It is no sin for you to seek the Grace of your **Rabb** ... you were of those astray.*

Before the advent of Islām, Hajj had been reduced to mere rituals and was primarily undertaken for mundane gains and pomp and show. Worship was just a façade; large markets were set up and fairs organized. This is being corrected here that while trading during the months of Hajj to benefit from **Allah's** Grace is permitted, to make Hajj as a business trip and a source of earning is outrightly wrong. Although trading is allowed, yet it better be avoided as it is not the real aim. However, intention is the deciding factor.

On return from 'Arafāt remember **Allah** by the Sacred Monument in Muzdalifah as directed. 'Arafāt is a plain about 12 miles outside Makkah. It is here that the essential ceremony of the Hajj called Wuqūf (standing) has to be performed on the 9th of Zilhajj anytime from midday till evening. Immediately on return from 'Arafāt in the evening of 9th Zilhajj, Maghrib and 'Isha Ṣalāt are combined and the night is spent in Muzdalifah in the open.

The Sacred Monument is a hill located in Muzdalifah and the pilgrims after spending the night there return to Minā early in the morning. So the trading is permissible but the real objective is **Allah's** cognition, and the only way of attaining it is through **Allah's** *Ẓikr* as directed, because no worship or method of worship is acceptable to **Him** unless backed by *Sunnah*.

Although people are, to a certain extent, cautious about the obligatory aspects of *Shari'ah*, they often invent their own methods in voluntary acts of charity and *Ẓikr*. For example, distributing money or sweets on a particular day in memory of some departed saint to convey its reward to him, or the present day innovation of reciting salutation to the Holy Prophet ^{-SAW} before the *Aẓān* on the loud speaker and many other rituals of the sort. These practices neither existed during the time of the Holy Prophet ^{-SAW} nor are endorsed by the *Sunnah*. The irony is that the one, who does not seem too enthusiastic about them, is not even considered a good Muslim. All such innovations are being negated here. No one is free to do in worship as he pleases. All forms of worship must draw their authenticity from the *Shari'ah*. In the days of the Ignorance, the Quraish had established a custom to maintain their superiority by virtue of their being the caretaker of the Sacred Precincts. They would not go beyond Muzdalifah, which is within it, while others proceeded to 'Arafāt, located outside it. This was corrected and every pilgrim was directed to return from the prescribed place, begging **Allah's** Forgiveness all the time.

Then return from the place whence ... Indeed Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

With this correction of a practice of the era of Ignorance, a golden rule is laid down for the entire human society, which it badly needed. Basically all human beings are equal and the economic or social superiority of one does not make him superior to the other. So always carry yourself as a human being in all walks of life whether social or religious. No one should adopt an attitude of superiority as it creates hatred and rivalry, whereas living together as equals develops mutual love and brotherhood. The Holy Prophet ^{-SAW} declared in his farewell *Hajj* Address that "no Arab holds any superiority over a non-Arab nor a white over a black, in any way". If this social system is adopted by nations, it would certainly eradicate the age-old tug of war between haves and have-nots, which indeed is the root of all problems.

The pilgrims must worship **Allah** together without any distinction and must beg **His** Forgiveness for all sins including the shortcomings during the *Hajj*, as **He** is extremely Relenting.

And when you have completed ... and they have no share in the Ākhirah.

Zikr: the Seed and the Fruit of Worship

When all the rites of Ḥajj are over, the pilgrims must remember **Allah** much more intensely than they used to remember their forefathers in the days of Ignorance. In those days the real motive behind Ḥajj was acquisition of wealth or self-aggrandizement. On return to Minā, they would set up large markets for trading and gather to boast on the achievements of their forefathers. Both were rectified, (i) the trade is neither the basic objective of Ḥajj, nor is it forbidden to the extent that one cannot even fulfil his needs. Hence there is no room for trade exhibitions and (ii) Ḥajj is a solemn worship entailing many hardships like separating from the kindred, arrangement of finances, sparing so much time, stresses and strains of journey and health. Therefore, the One **Who** has enabled you to undertake the pilgrimage, must be remembered much and with intensity. But if a pilgrim indulges in self-projection or praise even after returning from 'Arafāt, he certainly stands deprived of **His** cognition.

Allah's Zikr and cognition are complementary to one another. If Zikr is the source of attaining cognition, the end result of cognition is also Zikr. Even an iota of cognition unfolds the Divine Magnificence enabling one to witness his helplessness and dependence vis-à-vis the Divine Generosity. He regards his existence, his qualities, his honour and his status, as **Allah's** Favours, which drive him to do Zikr profoundly. Just as the seed is the source of a tree and also the end product obtained from its fruit, **Allah's** Zikr is the beginning as well as the end, the seed as well as the yield.

Keeping **Allah's** favours in sight, the Muslims are asked to remember **Him** much. Although the pre-Islāmic customs do not exist there today, yet unfortunately the victims of so called modernization still indulge in entertainment parties and recreations wasting precious moments, which must be avoided. Every moment should be spent in **Allah's** Zikr, which is the real motive of Ḥajj. Some people only pray for worldly gains, whereas the real life is that of the Ākhirah, which they do not even mention. In fact all the ungodly religions have attracted people by promising them worldly gains, and have associated some benefit with every worship. The pleasure of every deity is promised to lead to some worldly success. But Islām has given every individual the Divine cognisance and consciousness of eternal life. Therefore, to pray only for mundane gains tantamounts to depriving oneself in the Ākhirah.

Today people are advised to recite certain incantations for gaining worldly benefits. They visit holy places laden with hope that their worldly desires will be fulfilled. Many even offer voluntary prayers for attaining some material gain. Similarly people associate themselves with the Aulia, dead or alive,

seeking temporal advantages only and believe that their prayers and penitence will solve many problems, in trade and in legal battles etc.

If this materialism is removed from the scene, there will hardly be anyone visiting the Aulia merely for **Allah**. So all those who visit the Aulia or offer voluntary prayers or undertake long journeys to visit holy shrines merely for material gains are eternal losers. They have no share in the eternal bliss.

*And there are some who pray, "O our **Rabb!** ... **Allah** is swift at reckoning.*

The worldly benefits must, of course, be sought from **Allah**, but in a different style: "**O Allah!** Grant me what is good in this world and not that which will estrange me, or which **You** do not like; it should be a source of **Your** remembrance and nearness. Grant me power and capability to act according to the Sunnah, and to earn and eat what is permissible and pure." In other words, neither seeking nor forsaking the world should be the objective as this very world is Dīn too. Man is dependent on its resources for his survival and for the fulfilment of his obligations towards **Allah** and mankind. He must, therefore, seek this world but only to the extent that it is a source of eternal bliss. This also rectifies the wrong concept held by people that renouncing the world is the key to **Allah's** Pleasure and nearness and that praying for the mundane gains is against their self respect. This indeed is ignorance.

The rule as practiced by the Prophets^{AS} of **Allah** is that the worldly phase must not be the aim of life, but only a preparation and springboard for the **Ākhirah**. This kind of life, together with **His** Protection from Hell, should be requested. A life against Shari'ah is in fact the fire of Hell, while every lawful worldly activity becomes an act of worship. This is the beauty of this world and herein lies the emancipation in the **Ākhirah**. Take note that **Allah** is very Swift in Reckoning, as **He** is Aware of everything whether hidden or manifest.

*And remember **Allah** ...and know that you shall surely be gathered unto **Him**.*

And remember **Allah** in the appointed days. These are the days of stay at Mina after returning from Muzdalifah, i.e. 10th, 11th and 12th **Ẓilḥajj**. These are the days of 'Eid ul-Adḥā and mark the end of **Ḥajj**. The pebbles are cast on Jam-rāt (Satanic posts) during these days and the pilgrims engage themselves in **Allah's** **Ẓikr**. Whether the moments of relaxation or of activity; while on the move or standing, during **Ḥajj** or 'Eid, no moment or state should be void of **Ẓikr**.

Now if someone stays in Mina from 10th to 12th **Ẓilḥajj** or till 13th, both options are open and correct. According to the jurists, if one witnesses the sunset of 12th in Minā, he must wait till the 13th of **Ẓilḥajj** and return after supplicating on the 13th. However, if he leaves Mina on the 12th after supplicating before

the sunset, the supplication on the 13th is no longer incumbent, which again is permitted before noon on the 13th.

All these precepts relate to the feelings deep down in the heart and are for those who fear **Allah**, whose heart yearn for **Him** and who cannot afford to annoy **Him**, as against those who are void of such feelings and who perform Hajj for self-aggrandizement. For them it is the same, whether they observe these rules or ignore them. O People! Do fear **Allah**, as you all will one day stand before **Him**. According to Ḥadīth, the performance of Hajj renders the pilgrim as free of sins as a newborn baby. So when a person who was disobedient in the first place also performs his Hajj carelessly and disobediently, and remains the same on return from Hajj, is as if he never performed it. Had he been cleansed of his sins, his heart would have become repulsive to evil and his limbs would have restrained from **Allah**'s disobedience because during the Hajj, at every Sacred Monument, he had sought **Allah**'s Forgiveness and promised to be careful in the future.

The sign of acceptance of Hajj is that the heart becomes weary of worldly love, and is inclined towards the Ākhirah. May **Allah** bless the entire Muslim nation with this positive change!

And among people...Hell is enough for him and an ill resort indeed!

End Results Depend on States of Heart

Some people may speak in the most fascinating manner, full of good advice. They swear by **Allah** that their words match their intentions though all this is tall talk. In their practical lives they do nothing good, and are always among the mischief mongers. Their efforts aim at the destruction of life and resources. One aspect of this mischief is the apparent unrest and turmoil. And the other is that every sin adds to the intensity of the darkness and curse, which in one way or the other affects the entire world. Therefore, a sinner is not only disobedient but also guilty of bringing calamities to the world. It is extremely unfortunate to make verbal claims without any feelings in the heart.

Akhnas bin Sharīq was a person who would speak nice words in the audience of the Holy Prophet ^{SAW} and would pledge sincerity, but would practically disobey him and create mischief. **Allah** quoted this attitude as a proof of his hypocrisy, adding that **He** does not like mischief.

Hajj and its rites are performed to change one's practical life. If this is not achieved, it is a futile effort. If a person is warned against wickedness and told to fear **Allah**; and he instead of taking the advice, considers it as a challenge to his ego and prestige, and persists on his mischief, he certainly deserves Hell, which is indeed an awful place.

And there is a type of person ...and Allah is Most Kind to His servants.

Contrary to the non-believers and hypocrites there are people who even sell themselves to please Allah. Praise be to Him, the sincerity of the Companions^{-RAU} is unmatched. Hadhrat Şuhaib^{-RAU} was surrounded by the non-believers on the eve of his migration to Madinah. He addressed them; "You very well know that my quiver is full of arrows and I am an expert archer. I will fight you with my spear and sword and as long as I live you cannot get to me. Is it not reasonable that you let me proceed and take over all that I leave behind in Makkah." They agreed and took all the information on his assets, and allowed him to go. Hadhrat Şuhaib^{-RAU} reached Madinah and informed the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, who said twice: "O Abū Yahya! Your transaction has indeed been profitable". According to Tafsīr-e Mazharī there are many such incidents behind the revelation of this particular Āyah.

The aim of this discussion is that a person must sacrifice everything, whether it is the worldly benefits, or matters of ego and prestige, for the sake of Allah's Pleasure. Hajj is a training programme for this. Away from home, family, business, the comforts of life and personal pomp and show, clad in two un-sewn white sheets, bare footed and crying out 'Labbaik', 'Labbaik', (I am here, I am here) means that these things can only be enjoyed with Allah's Pleasure and can be abandoned for His sake. Allah is very Compassionate towards His servants and is Forgiving at all times.

O you who believe! ... the footsteps of Satan, for he is your open enemy.

The believers must submit to the will and purpose of Allah in all aspects of life; whether it is earning livelihood or an act of worship. Anything outside the confines of Islām tantamounts to following Satan and must be avoided as he is a blatant enemy of the believers. Some people mistook Islām as confined only to Şalāt and Fasting and considered themselves free in all other matters. Others took to the mosques and did not contribute anything to the society. A third group considers even Şalāt and Fasting to be a waste of time. All this is chaos and confusion. Believers must subjugate their entire lives, from beliefs and ideas to all actions, to Islām and must endeavour for achieving this obedience outwardly as well as inwardly. At the time of Şalāt they must be seen in the mosques, during business hours in the markets, and at the time of Jihād in the battlefields. The teachings of Islām must be the guiding force in all circumstances.

And if you waiver ... and to Allah are all matters brought back.

It must be carefully noted that if after receiving clear signs (in the person of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, the Divine Scripture and the ordinances of Islām) people

go astray; **Allah** is Powerful enough to punish the wrongdoers. But **He** may give respite, as **He** is Wise. This respite may not appear to be a punishment in this world, but in reality it is, as failure to repent is a prelude to eternal doom. Will these people, who remain non-believers despite the clear signs, accept faith on that day, when everything will be unfolded before them? But that would be too late. Remember that all matters would turn to **Him** and **He** Alone will pass the verdict.

Section 26

211. Ask the Children of Isrāil, how many clear signs **We** gave them. And if any one changes the favour of **Allah**, after it has come to him, then **Allah** indeed is severe in punishment.

سَلِّ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ كَمْ ءَاتَيْنَهُمْ مِنْ ءَايَةٍ يُبَيِّنُ
وَمَنْ يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢١١﴾

212. The life of this world is made alluring for the non-believers. And they scoff at those who believe. But the Muttaqīn will be above them on Yaum-al-Qiyamah. And **Allah** provides subsistence, without measure, to whom **He** wills.

زَيْنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ
الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢١٢﴾

213. Mankind was one community. So **Allah** raised Prophets as bearers of glad tidings and as warners, and sent with them the Book with truth, to decide between people respecting what they differed in. And none other than those to whom it had been given disputed it due to mutual spite, even after the clear proofs had come to them. So **Allah**, by **His** Grace guided the believers to the truth of the matter in which they differed. **Allah** guides whom **He** will to the straight path.

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ
مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ
بِالْحَقِّ لِيُخْلَمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ
وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ
مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ
الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ
وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢١٣﴾

214. Do you think that you shall enter Paradise, while that which came to those before you has not yet come to you? They encountered adversity and distress, and were so shaken that the Prophet and the believers with him exclaimed, "Where is Allah's Help?" Surely Allah's Help is near.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ
مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ
وَالضَّرَاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ أَلاَ إِنَّا نَنْصُرُ اللَّهَ
قَرِيبٌ ﴿٦٧﴾

215. They ask you, how will they spend? Say, "Whatever you spend of wealth, let it be for parents and kindred, and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer. And whatever good you do, indeed Allah knows it well."

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُ مِنْ
خَيْرٍ فَلِللَّذِينَ وَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالتَّامِلِينَ
وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ
عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٨﴾

216. Fighting has been ordained for you, though you dislike it. And it is possible that you dislike a thing and that is good for you and you like a thing and that is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know.

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهُ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى
أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى
أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

O Prophet ^{SAW}! Ask the Banī Isrāīl and see their history; how they were blessed with innumerable clear signs by Allah through His Prophets ^{AS}, aimed at their reformation. But when they rebelled and ignored the clear signs, they were subjected to various punishments. It is the Divine Law that wherever a blessing, especially that of His Guidance, is not valued by a person, he is deprived of Allah's Mercy and qualifies for His Punishment, which indeed is very severe. Just as His Mercy is boundless, so is the severity of His Punishment beyond human understanding. May Allah protect us. Now when a person deliberately ignores Divine Guidance, the standard of his likes and dislikes changes automatically. He is captivated by his desires and all his efforts are focused at

pursuing mundane pleasures, while he thinks that he is striving in the right direction.

Waywardness mars Discrimination between Good and Evil

A wayward person ultimately reaches a point where he believes that those who sacrifice short lived material pleasures for the sake of eternal bliss and *Ākhirah* are foolish. He ridicules them and says that it is nonsensical to needlessly bind oneself by so many restrictions and not to enjoy the comforts of life. But his thinking is mere ignorance. The fact is that this existence is temporary, whereas the *Ākhirah* is eternal; even though in this world also tranquility and comforts are only for the believer as he leads a life closest to nature. The life of the non-believers, on the other hand is entangled in unnatural rituals and customs and they do not perceive the truth. For them the criteria of happiness are only wealth, a beautiful house, fine clothing and good food. They will see for themselves in the *Ākhirah* how much better off were the believers in terms of provisions. When the non-believers would be drowned in Divine perdition, the believers would be enjoying the blessings in Paradise. **Allah** is all-Powerful; **He** bestows at **His** will.

By virtue of its creation mankind was one nation having the same ideology and beliefs. But when the horizon of its needs expanded, the difference in interests gave rise to varying ideologies. This coupled with individual temperaments led to many opinions, resulting in utter confusion in which each was adamant to uphold his own. **Allah's** mercy came to the rescue and **He** raised **His** Messengers^{AS} who drew a line between right and the wrong. These Messengers^{AS} gave glad tidings to the obedient and warned the other group of dire consequences in the form of **Allah's** Wrath.

Allah sent **His** Messengers^{AS} with Books to establish justice and resolve the differences amongst the people. But inspite of this and the clear ordinances, people did not follow the teachings of the Prophets^{AS} out of arrogance and remained deprived. However, **Allah** eased out the lives of those who submitted to guidance and pulled them out of the quagmire of disputation. **He** blessed them with the straight path, as it is **He Who** guides whosoever **He** chooses.

Only Two Nations in Terms of Beliefs

The Qurān has divided mankind into two nations on the basis of their beliefs and ideology. So long as the mankind held the same ideology and beliefs they remained one nation. The word Ummah here denotes the unity of beliefs, although literally it stands for a people uniting for any reason, geographical or chronological. The difference under discussion here is ideological. Therefore, here it stands for a nation united ideologically. According to some scholars mankind remained one nation in the era of Prophet *Ādam*^{AS} and his children

while others allude that it refers to those saved after the Deluge in Prophet Nūh's^{AS} time.

These explanations may be correct, but the Qurānic way of expression denotes that mankind basically did not bring disputes along but as a result of interaction, various methods were adopted to satisfy personal preferences and needs. Each individual naturally considered his opinion as correct, but **Allah's** Messengers^{AS} were raised to spell out the Divine Criteria for right and the wrong. Only those people did not benefit from their teachings, who had lost the capability to accept the truth and destroyed themselves out of sheer arrogance. One of the effects of arrogance is that it strips the temperament of its capacity to comprehend the truth. Such people can never be convinced. This must not, however, discourage those who propagate truth. They must carry on their work with sincerity and complete devotion being the seekers of **Allah's** Pleasure and being hopeful of admission to Paradise, a manifestation of **His** Pleasure. This grand pursuit naturally demands grand sacrifice and hard work. To prove worthy of rewards one has to have some performance to his credit to satisfy the Divine Law of cause and effect. A look at the lives of the believers gone by shows that they were put through so many trials that not only they but also their Prophets^{AS} cried out; "When will **Allah's** Help come?" and they were assured that it was near.

Struggle, Prerequisite to Rewards

It can be deduced here that struggle is a pre requisite in the Divine System. It is, however, not necessary that the effort be voluntary. Even the imposed one is beneficial. The greatest benefit of struggle is **Allah's** nearness and freedom from all hopes on anyone save **Him**. If a person puts himself through hardships for the sake of fame or attaining any excellence it is not the struggle for the Divine reward but a grave sin. The hardships faced by **Allah's** people are, in fact, an excuse for the elevation of their status. In this context the Holy Prophet^{SAW} is reported to have said: "The most to suffer amongst mankind are the Prophets^{AS}".

Praying to **Allah**, when in trouble, is not against complete trust. Rather, crying for **His** help with humility and awe is the consequence of struggle and an evidence of **His** nearness. And a struggle undertaken voluntarily has its own terms and conditions which must be kept in mind. For example, spending for **Allah's** Pleasure is a form of struggle, but squandering wealth is not. Again, spending must be out of the wealth earned lawfully and in the prescribed order of priority, i.e. on parents, relatives, orphans, needy and the wayfarers. Of course this discussion pertains to voluntary charity but where parents are im-

poverished and are in need of food and medicine, the charity by the son in refugee camps, under the flashing cameras, is not acceptable.

Secondly, the charity money spent must belong to the person spending it and not that the creditors are given a tough time and the debtor is busy giving away alms. He must first pay off his debts. In short, the charity money ought to be personal, lawful and spent purely for seeking **Allah**'s pleasure. Only then will the entire effort be fruitful. To attain higher stations through struggle Jihād has been enjoined upon the Muslims.

Jihād comprises both aspects of the struggle, voluntary as well as imposed. Although outwardly it may seem difficult and unpleasant, yet it is quite possible that something apparently unpleasant may be very beneficial indeed. It is also possible that things attractive outwardly may be in reality very harmful. To perceive the realities of things is outside the pale of human understanding. It is a Divine Attribute and only **He** is Aware of the realities of things. Praise be to **Him**! It must, therefore, be remembered that whatever befalls a believer is always a blessing and a reward from **Allah** and is for his betterment, no matter how harsh the ordeal may appear. On the contrary whatever a non-believer receives, is indeed a punishment, whether in the form of affluence or power.

Jihād basically is obligatory, but it is a collective obligation. It means that if one group is engaged in Jihād, it is sufficient for the rest, but if the task demands more manpower then it becomes obligatory for all the Muslims in the vicinity. Similarly its scope extends out to the Muslims of the entire world if need be.

Section 27

217. They ask you about fighting in the prohibited month. Say, "Fighting in it is heinous. But hindering people from the way of **Allah**, and disbelieving **Him**, and in the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque, and expelling its dwellers therefrom, are grave (offences) with **Allah**. And militancy is worse than bloodshed." They will not stop fighting you till they turn you back from your religion, if they could. And anyone who renounces his religion and dies a

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ قُلْ
قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ وَصَدُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
وَكُفْرٌ بِهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِخْرَاجُ أَهْلِهِ
مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ
وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يَقْتُلُونَكُمْ حَتَّى يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَنْ دِينِكُمْ
إِنْ أَسْطَعُوا وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ

non-believer, such are the ones whose deeds will be lost both in this world and in the Ākhirah. And they will be inmates of the Fire wherein they will live forever.

فَبِمَتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ
هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾

218. Of course those who believed and those who emigrated and did Jihād in the way of Allah, they hope for the Mercy of Allah. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ
وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١٨﴾

219. They ask you about intoxicants and gambling. Say, "There is great sin in both, and some benefit for people. But the sin is greater than their benefit." And they ask you, as to what shall they spend? Say, "Whatever you can spare." Thus Allah explains His Āyāt to you, so that you may reflect

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ
قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْتَفِعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا
أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ
قُلِ الْعَفْوَ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١١٩﴾

220. On this world and the Ākhirah. And they ask you of orphans. Say, "Their betterment is good, and if you mix them with you, they are your brothers. Allah knows the miscreant from the reformer. Had Allah desired, He could have put you in difficulty. Indeed Allah is Most Powerful, Wise."

فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَى
قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ وَإِنْ تُخَالِطُوهُمْ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْمُفْسِدَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِ
وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْنَيْنَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾

221. Do not marry polytheist women until they believe. A believing slave woman is better than a polytheist, even though she attracts you. And do not marry (your women to) polytheist men until they accept faith. A believer slave is better than a polytheist,

وَلَا تُنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَةَ حَتَّىٰ تُؤْمِنَ وَلَا أُمَةٌ
مُّؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مُشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ
وَلَا تُنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا وَلَعَبْدٌ
مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مُشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ ۗ وَلَٰئِكَ

even though he pleases you. They call you to the Fire, while Allah calls you towards the Paradise and towards forgiveness, by His Grace. And Allah explains His Āyat to the people so that they may pay heed.

يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ
وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ - وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

The Sacred Months

While discussing Jihād, its rules are being laid down, amongst which the basic consideration is that of the sacred months namely Rajjab, Zil Qa'dah, Zil-Hijj and Muḥarram. Even in pre Islamic days it was deemed improper to fight during these months. Islām also upheld this sanctity. However, there was a possibility that the Muslims observing the sanctity would not even defend themselves if attacked by the enemy, while the non-believers would be free to cause damage to them through war. Allah laid down a statute. Although it is a grave sin to fight in these months, yet hindering people from the Way of Allah, disbelieving in Him, and driving out the righteous from the K'abah are no less severe. In fact such a mischief is far more grievous than bloodshed. If the non-believers indulge in such intrigue during these months or initiate a war, they will be guilty of the violation of the sanctity of these months. The Holy Prophet ^{SAW} never took up arms during these months unless the non-believers initiated fighting. The non-believers can never be friends of Muslims and will always cross swords with them. They are so mean in their hostility that, given the power, they would certainly try to turn the believers apostates.

Punishment of Apostasy

If anyone from amongst the Muslims turns apostate and dies as such, all his righteous deeds would be wasted. He would neither be benefited in this world nor in the Ākhirah. The apostates would be condemned to Hell forever. In this life their marriage bond is nullified, they cannot inherit from Muslims, no funeral prayer is offered for them nor can they be buried in the graveyard of Muslims. A male apostate is killed if he is not penitent, whereas a female is imprisoned for life, and the consequence in the Ākhirah is eternal Hell. Yet if they repent they can become Muslims again. According to the Ḥanafī School of Thought such a person will have to repeat the Ḥajj also, subject to the

availability of resources, as the one previously performed is nullified due to apostasy. Same applies to all the other acts of piety, but Imām Shaf'ī^{RA}, however, differs. The noble deeds of a non-believer remain suspended and if he embraces Islām, he is rewarded for all these in the Ākhirah. But if he dies a non-believer, all will go waste. Therefore, the case of an apostate is even worse than a patent non-believer.

The non-believers cannot tolerate the Muslims as such. It can be seen even to-day that the apostates bearing Muslim names, who make fun of Islāmic beliefs are held in great esteem by the non-believing world, the so called champions of human rights, while the true Muslims are termed as fundamentalists and uncivilised. Therefore, to counter the anti-Islām conspiracies of the non-believers is not only recommended but is imperative under all circumstances as practically demonstrated by the Companions^{RAU}. They renounced everything for the sake of Allah, the kindred, the wealth, the home or the country. Indeed anything that stood between them and Allah was brushed aside. And they did not stop at this but spent their entire lives fighting for Islām. They genuinely desired Allah's Mercy, and their actions reflected their intentions. They never pinned their hopes on anyone save Allah, the Relenting and the Merciful.

Customs of Ignorance versus Islam

Alcohol and gambling were a part of the Arab society before Islām. No celebration was deemed complete without alcohol, and those who abstained from gambling were termed as niggardly and cowards. Both these practices were so deeply rooted in the very temperaments of the Arabs that to expel these from their system was almost beyond imagination. It was indeed a miracle that the Muslims not only denounced these evils but also accepted the prohibition from the core of their hearts. This was indeed a great evidence of Prophet Muḥammad's^{SAW} Prophethood. Some people argue that Islām also adopted some of the pre Islamic customs, but they forget that it had also eradicated so many heinous evils, which no one other than a Prophet^{AS} could have ever done. For example, drinking and gambling or the lewdness practised under the pretext of Mut'a were rooted out. Islām replaced Mut'a by formal marriage bond and ordered the couple to enter into this lawful pact to live together decently.

Is the Europe of today not fed up with its alcoholism and sexual abuse? Are their intellectuals and leaders not worried about the eradication of these evils? But they just cannot get rid of them and are totally helpless. It is only the relationship of love and devotion with Islām and the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, which has the power to eradicate these evils. Any European who embraces Islām today

begins to hate all these vices, which he had once cherished. I personally know such converts from the snow clad countries of Sweden and Finland, where alcohol is consumed like tea in our country, who now spend their time contemplating in Islām and thank **Allah** for getting rid of their abominations.

Islām did, however, retain some pre-dated customs either fully or with slight modification such as going round the K'abah, the stay at Minā and 'Arafāt. These were either derived from previous religions or were incidentally in line with **Allah's** Will. Had Islām been impressed by the strength of these customs, gambling and drinking would never have been stopped nor would the sexual relationship be judiciously streamlined. Of course, this revolutionary task was carried out gradually. In the case of gambling and drinking, for instance, it was at first declared that there are some benefits but the sins thereof outweigh the benefits. The harm is comparatively too great. It is sheer meanness that a few people make money but destroy the economy and the morals of an entire nation, driving it to ignorance. Such profit is in no way attractive.

This was the first revelation of Divine wisdom regarding alcohol and gambling. Some people were already not very fond of these and the others gave them up after being cautioned. Then the Muslims were forbidden to offer their Ṣalāt when in a state of intoxication. And the Companions^{-RAU} took note that when a great worship like Ṣalāt cannot be offered in this state, there can be nothing good about it. Later, upon the declaration of total prohibition, all the Muslims renounced alcohol completely.

After the revelation of Āyah 90 of Al Ma'idah in Madinah (*O you, who believe! Wine and gambling and stone altars and diving arrows are only an abomination, handiwork of Satan, shun it that haply you may thrive*), the liquor was poured down the drain, in that it began to flow in the lanes. Whenever it rained even after years, the colour of alcohol would appear on the surface together with its stench.

The Holy Prophet^{-SAW} commanded that anyone possessing alcohol should deposit it at a given place. The Companions^{-RAU} immediately complied. He went there and cut open some of the leather containers personally while ordering the Companions^{-RAU} to waste the rest. One of the Companions^{-RAU} used to import wine had gone to Syria to buy it with all his savings. On his return, he asked for the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} word, who said that all the wine was to be wasted away by cutting open the containers. He spilt all his investment without least hesitation.

Although the prohibition of alcohol was gradual, yet once the orders came, it was enforced ruthlessly. The Holy Prophet^{-SAW} is reported to have accursed ten people; the one who extracts it, the one who drinks it, the one who offers it,

the one who brings it, the one for whom it is brought, the manufacturer, the seller, the customer, the one who gifts and the one who lives on the income accrued from it. Simultaneously, gambling was also declared unlawful, with the same emphasis. All its forms came under the prohibition, whether in practice at that time or developed later under any name.

Lottery

It is a consensus that the term Maisir occurring in Āyah 90 *ibid*, includes all forms of gambling even those games of chance played by children. Ibn-e-‘Abbās^{RAU} says that Al-Mukhaṭarah is a form of gambling. It implies a situation where there is a chance of losing and gaining to some extent, like the modern system of lottery or the business of puzzles etc.

In fact, the definition of gambling is that such terms are fixed for acquiring the ownership of any thing, which carry an equal chance of having or not having it at all, and both the parties are exposed to total gain or total loss. According to Ḥadīth, even chess and dice games are forbidden and the same applies to playing cards; and betting is a pure form of gambling. According to Al-Muslim whosoever plays the dice game taints his hands in blood and flesh of the swine. Adds, Ibn-e ‘Umar^{RAU} that playing chess is even worse than dice.

The commentators have recounted many financial physical and political disadvantages of gambling. The general rule is that aversion of harm is more important than the acquisition of benefit. If something is profitable but its harm is obvious, it is better to quit it. A snake might look beautiful but its venom is fatal, or when people commit crimes such as murder, robbery or kidnapping they do it in the hope of gaining something. Can the ruination of so many homes for the sake of benefit for some be justified? Same is the case with benefits associated with drinking and gambling; that a momentary gain or pleasure becomes a source of eternal loss and in some cases leads to the destruction of a nation.

Just as the income should be lawful, so should be the spending. The Companions^{RAU} asked the Holy Prophet^{SAW} how they should spend. He was directed to tell them to give away that which is surplus or more than their requirement. Some took this to mean everything surplus, without saving anything for the future. This was the view of Ḥadhrat Abū Zār Ghaffārī^{RAU} and some Aulia too. But the majority of Companions^{RAU} opted for the middle course and also saved something for the future needs, which indeed is the motive of the injunction. Allah reveals His Commandments for people to contemplate on the affairs of their mundane as well as eternal lives so that they remain vigilant of their needs in the Ākhirah and at the same time make provisions for the present life of cause and effect.

Had saving not been approved of, the Zakāt due only on savings, would never have been declared obligatory. Yet the savings should not be confined to selfish purposes but the needy around should be looked after too. This is not only for the welfare of the poor but is also an investment for the eternal life. A balanced attitude is the best policy as it ensures comfort both here and in the Ākhirah.

The Holy Prophet^{SAW} is also questioned about the treatment to the orphans. A common situation was that the majority of the orphans lived with the heirs of the deceased, and these custodians were entrusted with the wealth of their parents. **Allah** enforced strict discipline with regard to the wealth of the orphans and declared: "Those who usurp the wealth of orphans fill their stomach with fire."

After this revelation the Companions^{RAU} totally separated the money of the orphans from their own, which created problems like separate cooking, neither consuming nor giving away in charity any of their left over food etc. **Allah** made it easier and permitted the custodian to keep the wealth of orphans together with their own but with the intentions of benefiting them, they being the kindred. But if anyone under the cover of a well-wisher intends to usurp their wealth, he must not forget that he can never deceive **Allah**, **Who** is well Aware of the noble and the malefactor. **He** is Mighty and Powerful, from **Whose** holds no cheat can escape. **He** is the Wisest and the best Planner. In the matters of social relationships, a Muslim orphan is like a brother to a fellow Muslim, while an idolater has nothing to do with a Muslim even if he is a blood relation.

Faith is pre Requisite for Marriage Bond

Do not marry polytheist women unless they become Muslims, as a Muslim bondwoman is better than a beautiful polytheist woman. Similarly a Muslim woman must not marry a polytheist male, as a Muslim slave is far better than him even if he excels the Muslim slave in his looks. The most important thing is the long-term consequences of the marriage. A marital bond is a very strong tie. Even if the relationship with an idolater fails to convert a believer back to disbelief, it will atleast diminish the hatred for polytheism in his heart, which is indeed one step towards Hell and paves the way to polytheism and faithlessness.

The polytheists invite people to Hell; hence by virtue of their kinship and influence, they are the merchants of Hell. **Allah** invites people towards **His** Mercy and Paradise through **His** Guidance. The term polytheist refers to absolute non-believers and does not include the People of the Book because they do believe in the Unity of **Allah**, the Ākhirah and agree upon one or the other

Prophets^{AS}. Although they deny the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} yet are lesser in degree than the arch non-believers who deny Allah's Unity, the Prophets^{AS} and the Ākhirah altogether. Therefore, Muslims were permitted to marry a woman from amongst the People of the Book, but not to give away Muslim woman in marriage to them. This is because a woman, by nature, is subservient to man and marriage with a Muslim male may well reform her. Even though such marriage is allowed and the offspring will be lawful, it is not recommended. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} directs to seek in marriage, a practising Muslim woman. When marriage is not proper even with a wayward Muslim woman, how can it be recommended with a non-Muslim? Besides, the marriage with women of the Book is permitted only when they are believers of their own faith. Today the Christians and the Jews can be termed so only as a formality. Looking deeply, it will be found that they neither believe in Allah nor in the Ākhirah. They neither have faith in Prophet 'Isā^{AS} nor in Prophet Mūsā^{AS} respectively. This is why Caliph 'Umar Fārūq's^{RALI} issued prohibitive orders against such marriages held in Syria. He directed that these marriages would be politically and morally harmful for Muslim families (Kitāb al Āthār Kalām-e Muḥammad^{SAW}).

And today the way the non-Muslim, the Jew and the Christian women are entering Muslim households with the aim of defaming, as well as spying on them, is a heart breaking fact. Because of the conspiracies of the Jews and the Christians, Jewish girls bearing Muslim names are present in almost every influential household of ruling families in the Middle East.

If only the Muslims could understand the ruse. And another unfortunate fact is that today almost all the rulers of African countries have Jewish wives.

As for the renegade People of the Book, or those self-proclaimed Muslims who are non-believer by virtue of their beliefs such as the Mirzāis and the Rawāfiz, (the former because of their denial of Finality of the Prophethood and the latter because of even greater transgression in their belief of Continuation of Prophethood) and the deniers of Ḥadīth, (which amounts to denial of the Qurān); marriage with their women is prohibited and there is no excuse for marrying them.

Section 28

222. And they ask you about menstruation. Say, "It is a pollution, so keep away from women during menstruation. And do not draw near them until they

وَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذَى
فَاعْزِلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرُبُوهُنَّ
حَتَّى يَطْهُرْنَ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَأْتُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ

are clean. But when they have cleansed themselves, go in unto them as enjoined by **Allah**." Indeed **Allah** loves those who turn to **Him** in repentance and those who remain clean.

أَمَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ

وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ ﴿٢٢٢﴾

223. Your women are tillage for you, so go to your tillage, as you like. And send (good deeds) before you for your souls. And remain conscious of **Allah** and know that you are to meet **Him**. And give good news to the believers.

نِسَاؤُكُمْ حَرْثٌ لَكُمْ فَأَتُوا حَرْثَكُمْ أَنَّى شِئْتُمْ
وَقَدِّمُوا لِنَفْسِكُمْ وَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا
أَنَّكُمْ مُلَاقُوهُ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٢٣﴾

224. And make not your oaths in the name of **Allah** impediments to virtue, righteousness and promotion of peace among people. And **Allah** hears and knows everything.

وَلَا تَجْعَلُوا اللَّهَ عُرْضَةً لِأَيْمَانِكُمْ
أَنتَ تَبَرُّوْا وَتَتَّقُوا وَتُصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ
وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

225. **Allah** will not take you to task for your thoughtless oaths. But **He** will call you to account for the intentions in your hearts. And **Allah** is oft Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ
بِمَا كَسَبَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٥﴾

226. Those who swear to abstain from their wives, have four months of grace. If they return, then **Allah** is Forgiving, Most Merciful.

لِلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ تَرَبُّصُ أَرْبَعَةِ أَشْهُرٍ فَإِنْ
فَاءُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٦﴾

227. And if they resolve a divorce, then **Allah** is Hearer and Knower.

وَإِنْ عَزَمُوا الطَّلَاقَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٧﴾

228. The divorced women shall withhold themselves for three monthly courses. And it is not legitimate for them to conceal

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ
وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ

what **Allah** may have created in their wombs, if they believe in **Allah** and the Last Day. And their husbands have a greater right to take them back in that period, if they desire reconciliation. And they have similar rights (over men) as they have over them according to rules. And men are a degree above them.

إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ أَهْلَ
بُرُوحِهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ
الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ
وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

The Rules of Coition

And when marriage is mentioned, the question of physical nearness to the woman will certainly arise and the condition of the woman has to be considered vis-à-vis coition with a menstruating woman. **Allah** Commands His Prophet ^{SAW} to let the Muslims know that menstruation is an impurity and copulation with women is forbidden until they are cleansed; and that copulation is permitted only the way **Allah** has enjoined, i.e. in the vulva. It must be remembered that **Allah** loves those who repent and beg for forgiveness i.e. if someone overwhelmed by his sexual drive commits the sin of copulating during his wife's menses, he must beg for **Allah**'s Forgiveness, and pay alms to the poor if possible, as it is the best form of atonement. **Allah** loves those who keep themselves clean, who abstain from all that is forbidden and strive in His obedience.

Wives are the tillage for husbands and the primary goal of conjugal act is begetting children for the preservation of human race rather than carnal indulgence. So a man may enter his tilth in any way he wants and may adopt any posture in doing so but must remember that the entry is permitted only wherein the seed is sown for the offspring and not anywhere else. Moreover the sperm does not penetrate when a woman is menstruating and it is pollution. Nor does any filthy, unnatural practice fulfil the aim of procreation. The aim is not to indulge in carnal pleasures but to reform the society without losing sight of moral and spiritual ends for the eternal bliss.

Fear **Allah** under all circumstances. Men must not think that by marriage they have taken possession of a woman merely to seek reckless pleasure. The

women have their rights over men, being human beings. It is very important to observe the limits set by **Allah** even during a sexual act. It must be remembered that everyone has to stand before **Allah** for Reckoning. O Prophet^{SAW}! Give glad tidings to those believing in the Greatness of **Allah**, who do not allow their emotions to violate the limits set by **Him**, and convey to them the promise of Divine rewards.

The Name of **Allah** and an oath in **His** Name should not be made a barrier in the embellishment of social life, lest one should say that he would have certainly done a certain good deed had he not sworn upon **Allah** in anger or in annoyance not to do it. If the action is noble, or it is a matter of mutual reconciliation amongst people, it must be done. **Allah** knows and is Witness to every thing. Beware of your words and ensure that your mind and heart are unpolluted. Think virtuously, speak graciously and act righteously.

Never Swear On a Sin

If you have lied inadvertently or have sworn upon a lie mistaking it to be a truth, it is **His** Grace and Mercy to condone and not punish you. But for matters, in which you are determined to prove falsehood as truth on oath, knowing it to be so, **Allah** will take you to task, although **He** may grant some respite. Never take liberty with **His** Clemency, when **He** grips, **He** grips hard. Similarly if a man swears that he will not go to his wife, he has a period of four months. If they re-unite during this period it is fine but if they decide to separate, **Allah** is all Hearing, all Knowing. This situation is called Aila', having four options. Firstly, a man does not fix any period and swears that he will not seek her; secondly he fixes a period of four months; thirdly a period of more than four months is fixed and lastly a period of less than four months is fixed. In the first three situations if he breaks his oath before the lapse of four months and goes unto his wife, he must expiate for his oath and his marriage remains valid. But if the four months have passed, the divorce has taken place; he cannot revert to his wife without a renewal of marriage contract. In the last situation if he breaks his oath, he will expiate, but if he does not, even then the marriage remains valid, as the period is less than four months (Bayān al Qurān).

If the divorce has taken place, a woman must wait for three menstrual periods i.e. a woman whose marriage is consummated, and she has periods, and is free, not a bondswoman. If such a woman is divorced, she cannot remarry before the lapse of three periods. It does not behove a believing woman to conceal her pregnancy or her menstruation. And if the divorce is revocable, which will be discussed later, the husband has the right to have her back without the renewal of marriage contract, provided that his intention is of reformation and

not persecution, though reunion will still be valid. Just as men enjoy rights over women so do the women have rights over men. Yes, men do have a degree of superiority over them, as by virtue of her physical structure a woman finds security under male protection. And the real Sovereignty belongs to **Allah**, before **Whom** both men and women are accountable. It is **He Who** created this system, with wisdom.

Woman and Islam

Society originates from a man and a woman, spreading out into families, tribes and nations. To beautify the social system, Islām works on the reformation of its very foundation, by establishing the status of each sex vis-à-vis their rights and responsibilities. Equality in Islām is that situation whereby everyone carries out his duties and gets due rights. As for the *Ākhirah*, the deciding factor shall be Taqwa. There shall be surely such women who would excel over millions of men in *Ākhirah*.

Before Islām, a woman was taken as an item of household use. She was traded, and also passed on to the heirs of her master as part of the legacy. The Europeans were not even prepared to accept her as a human being, while in India, she was burnt alive on her husband's pyre. In 586 A.D. it was decided in France after great hesitation that though woman was also human, but her only purpose was to serve man and be his handmaid. Today, in stark contrast to those times, no pain is spared to establish her rule over men! Movements of inequality are run in the name of equality, giving unbridled freedom to women and pushing the whole society towards destruction.

It is only Islām that got the glory of woman acknowledged as a mother, wife, sister, and a daughter. Together with her duties, her rights were first spelled out, giving her a vital role in the building up of the society. She was made a shareholder in the inheritance and given the right to reject an offer of marriage on reaching the age of puberty. If she does not accept it, the marriage will be invalid. Similarly, upon being divorced or widowed, she retains her freedom and cannot be forced into marriage. Besides, spending on the wife by the husband is declared as worship. If the husband does not fulfil his obligations towards her, she has the right to go to the court to compel the husband to either fulfil her rights, or else to divorce her.

Given these rights, she too has not been allowed freelancing but has been kept under the protection of man. To build up the family and upbringing her children, a gigantic task by itself, she has been spared the pangs of earning a livelihood and in the process becoming an item of entertainment for men. Such an exposure amounts to transgression on her rights and does not only lead to her deprelation but to the destruction of the entire society.

Allah has determined the rights of everyone and has commanded to execute them in a decent manner. By granting superiority to man **He** has alluded to the fact that a woman is weaker than a man and where she errs, it is the responsibility of man to overlook and find a way of amity. In fact all troubles stem from the fact that people demand their rights without discharging their duties. The beauty of a social system lies in the positive attitude of an individual whereby he fulfils his duties diligently towards others and demands his rights with grace and tolerance. This principle is effective from an individual to a government and is a sure guarantee of peace and tranquillity.

Section 29

229. Divorce is twice. Thereafter, she is either retained honourably or released kindly. And it is not legitimate for you to take away whatever you have given them, except when both fear that they may not be able to observe the limits set by **Allah**. And if you fear that both may not be able to observe the limits set by **Allah**, then there is no blame on any of them for that with which she redeems herself. These are the bounds defined by **Allah**, so do not trespass them. And whosoever crosses the limits set by **Allah**, then it is they who are wrongdoers.

الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَانٍ فَإِمْسَاكَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ
بِإِحْسَنِ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا بِمَا
ءَاتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ
اللَّهِ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا أَفْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا
وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٢٩﴾

230. If he divorces her finally, she is not lawful for him, until she marries another man and he also divorces her. Then there is no blame on them if they reunite, provided they feel that they shall be able to keep the limits ordained by **Allah**. And these are the limits of **Allah**, which **He** explains for people who know.

فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتَّى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا
غَيْرَهُ فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا إِنْ
ظَنَّا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا
لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣٠﴾

231. And when you have divorced your women and they have spent their waiting-term, then either retain them honourably (before expiry), or release them kindly. And do not retain them to their hurt so that you may take undue advantage. Whoever does this surely wrongs his soul. Do not hold Allah's Commands in mockery, and remember Allah's Favours on you, and that He has sent down upon you the Book and wisdom, by which He admonishes you. And remain conscious of Allah and know that surely Allah has full knowledge of everything.

وَإِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلْيُنَّ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ
بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ
ضِرَارًا لِنَعْتِدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ
وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوًا وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ
اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ
وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣١﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Divorce is twice... then it is they who are wrongdoers.

If a man decides to separate from his wife or such a situation arises whereby living together may become harmful, or in case the spouses fail to develop an understanding, there is a definite course of action for dissolution of the marriage. The contract of marriage has specific terms and conditions: (1) not every man can marry every woman rather there are rules according to which certain men and women cannot marry each other (2) two witnesses must be present, for without witnesses marriage is invalid even if, for the rest of their lives, no one from the couple denies it. (3) The announcement of marriage is also a Sunnah. According to the jurists of Fiqh, marriage is a contract having the status of worship, and Qurān and the Sunnah bear witness to it.

Just as the marriage contract is conducted in a prescribed manner, so is there a definite rule for its termination due to any reason, as explained in this Āyah. The dissolution of a marriage not only affects the two parties but also there is a possibility of the children being adversely affected; and sometimes it results in family and tribal feuds, affecting the entire society. That is why Islām emphasises on marriage as a life long partnership, and in case of differences en-

courages an amicable solution by mutual understanding and arbitration. By appointing one mediator from each side it is ensured that the matter neither remains restricted between the couple nor does it go outside the affected families. But sometimes all these efforts fail and the continuation of marriage may lead to more bitterness and conflicts.

Islām therefore, lays down a code of dissolving the marriage gracefully unlike the ungodly religions, which do not permit the marriage to break at all. The right to divorce has been given to man, as by nature he has more tolerance, forbearance, prudence and deliberation than a woman. And because a woman gets influenced easily, her impulsiveness could have made the right to divorce as a mere game. At the same time, Islām does not allow that a woman may remain subjugated and helpless for the rest of her life and forced to bear the foul treatment of her husband. She has been given the right to file a suit in a Shari'ah Court and lead evidence for the annulment of marriage. Although man has been freely given this right, yet the Holy Prophet^{SAW} has observed: "Of all the lawful acts, divorce is the one most disapproved by Allah." Therefore, this right must not be exercised in anger or in impulsive haste. Neither should the wife be divorced during her menstruation, nor during that clean period in which the couple had conjugal relationship, as this would prolong the waiting period to her discomfort. Besides, marriage cannot be annulled at once, like other contracts that the contract is cancelled and the parties go free immediately. There are three stages in the form of three independent pronouncements followed by the waiting period during which neither the woman can remarry nor the man gets free of certain obligations. In case of one or two pronouncements the marriage is not dissolved immediately but remains valid till the completion of waiting period. If during the waiting period the couple resort to reconciliation, the marriage remains intact but this concession is only permitted when the divorce is pronounced once or twice. If this is done three times, the right to reconcile is abolished. And if the couple wish to remarry they cannot do so unless the woman is married to another man, and her second marriage is lawfully terminated after consummation and the lapse of the waiting period. This Āyah explains the law that the "divorce is twice", and that marriage is not dissolved right away. The man has the right to retain his wife in the wedlock within the waiting period or else the divorce will automatically become irrevocable.

"Either retaining her honourably or releasing her kindly" means to take her back in love and amity, or to let her go finally but in any case to be honourable and kind. The reunion should neither be to disgrace or humiliate her nor should he demand any money from her for release. On the other hand it is enjoined upon men not to demand what they had already given to their wives i.e.

dower or gifts. Divorce itself creates bitterness and if substantiated with such demands will add to the acrimony. However, in this too there is an exemption. If the woman feels that she will not be able to fulfil her duties towards her husband and thereby will violate Allah's Laws, and the man feels that the continuation of marriage in a decent way is no longer possible, there is no harm if the man divorces her with the condition that she returns or forgoes the dower. All these are neither mere temporal matters nor only a source of satisfying one's emotional desires, rather these are the bounds of Allah. Adhering to them is an act of worship, while trespassing them is a great violation. Those who press these limits are termed here as transgressors.

If a person pronounces the third, the irrevocable divorce, that woman shall no longer be lawful for him unless after the expiry of the waiting period, she marries another man, this second marriage is consummated, she is then either divorced or the husband dies and she completes the prescribed waiting period. Now she can remarry the first husband provided both are sure that they shall guard the bounds of Allah and will be able to live a married life amicably. This condition is added to the law to discourage divorces on impulse, and those who have the knowledge understand very well that these Divine Injunctions are the most appropriate ways of life.

The Qurān, Ḥadīth and the practice of the Companions^{RAU} pertaining to divorce clearly reveal that where there is no alternative except the divorce, the husband should pronounce the sentence once during Ṭuhr (interval between periods) and let the divorce become absolute by expiry of the waiting period. Even if he adds another pronouncement during the next Ṭuhr, which is indicated by the term, Aṭṭalāq-o Marratāne (divorce is twice) as distinct from Aṭṭalāq-o Ṭalaqāne (divorces are two) and does not reunite with his wife within the waiting period, the marriage will be dissolved. In both these cases if they wish to reunite in marriage, again it will be permissible, but if the third divorce is pronounced then the only form of reunion is as discussed in the preceding paragraph.

Divorcing thrice simultaneously is not appropriate. It is against the purpose of Islamic Shari'ah and is a grave sin. Nevertheless the divorce becomes effective, just as assassinating anyone or plundering another is a sin, but the victim ends up dead or robbed respectively.

During the era of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, such incidents did take place and in spite of disliking it, he enforced the divorce. There are many reference books available on this topic. The notion that during the Holy Prophet's^{SAW} and Ḥadhrat Abū Bakr's^{RAU} times, three simultaneous pronouncements of divorce were considered as one is not correct. In one incident, a Companion named

Rakana^{-RAU} divorced his wife using the word Albtatah, which was commonly used for three divorces but did not literally mean three. He pleaded before the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} that he had only meant one divorce and that indeed was his intention. Some books of Ḥadīth have it that he had divorced thrice, but Abū Dāwūd has taken the stance that Ḥadhrat Rakana^{-RAU} had divorced using the word Albtatah. As the word was a connotation of three divorces, the narrator of the incident reported it as such. However, all agree on the fact that the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} took an oath from him and he swore that he did not intend three pronouncements. This also proves that he had not uttered clear cut words announcing three divorces otherwise there would have been no question of intentions. Thus the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} declared it as one divorce. Therefore, it became a rule that if the intention was to divorce once but the words uttered were such which insinuated three, or out of simplicity the word for divorce is repeated over and over again for emphasis, the husband will have to take an oath that he actually meant one divorce. It would then be accepted as one.

During Ḥadhrat Abū Bakr's^{-RAU} Caliphate and in the first two years of Ḥadhrat 'Umar Fārūq's^{-RAU} time, this remained the practice. But when Islām spread to far off lands and many people converted to it, the level of honesty and piety could not remain the same as attained in the company of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. And according to predictions of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} it was to diminish further. Ḥadhrat 'Umar Fārūq's^{-RAU}, in order to prevent the misuse of this concession, and in consultation with other Companions^{-RAU}, decreed that if a person would simultaneously divorce his wife thrice it would be taken as three and the pretext of intention would not be acceptable any longer. This indeed was a decision of great farsightedness.

The Companions^{-RAU} were all well acquainted with the propensities of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. Their consensus on any matter is, therefore, a code of Shari'ah. It is, therefore, an enormity to depose that the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} had declared three divorces as one and Ḥadhrat 'Umar^{-RAU} altered it. Why did all the Companions^{-RAU} agree with him? They were the very people who spread the Holy Prophet's^{-SAW} Message to the expanses of the world and enforced Shari'ah. They only restrained people from misusing a concession granted by the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, which was, and is, absolutely proper. Besides, this is a matter of Fiqh and a detailed discussion is not intended here, for which relevant books may be consulted.

*If he divorces her finally... which **He** explains for people who know.*

When the waiting period of a woman given a revocable divorce is about to end, the husband has the right to take her back or to let the marriage be dissolved. But in both cases the word "honourably" is used i.e. that the matter be

handled according to the Islamic law and with grace. If he decides to take her back, he must cleanse his heart of all anger and malice and resolve to live happily in future. He should not do so merely to disgrace or humiliate her. It is enjoined (in Surah At-Ṭalāq) that if he decides to retain his wife, two reliable witnesses must be present to guard against any future denial of the event by the twain. These two witnesses shall testify the event in order to avoid any conflict. But if he does decide to part with her finally, that too should be done gracefully and the money or any other thing given to her in the past is not to be demanded back. On the contrary, she should be given something as a departing gift because she has certain rights.

And when you have divorced your ... Allah has full knowledge of everything.

If the marriage has been consummated, and the dower has not been paid yet, it must be paid in full, otherwise the husband has to pay half the money. The husband must allow her to stay at his place until the completion of her waiting period and bear her expenses. At the time of her departure she should be given something as a goodwill gesture, so that she too does not feel degraded, neither the two families turn hostile. Failure to do so will not only disgrace the lady but would also cause much distress to many hearts, for which the husband shall be held responsible. Above all he will also earn the annoyance of Almighty **Allah** and **His Prophet**^{SAW}; which is a great loss in the eternal life. It must, therefore, be remembered that the laws of **Allah** are not to be trifled with.

Do not turn this injunction into child's play. During the era of Ignorance, men would divorce their wives, or free their slaves and later retrieve from such statements. They would argue that it was only a joke, without any intentions of doing so. **Allah** prohibited joking in such affairs and decreed that divorce will take place even if pronounced jokingly.

According to Ḥadīth, there are three matters which even if done jokingly stand enforced, (1) divorce, (2) freeing of slaves and (3) marriage bond. If a man and woman in the presence of witnesses, even as a joke, accept one another as husband and wife the marriage will take place; and if a slave is told in a joke that he is free, he will stand freed.

All the above discussion has been presented from a different angle, that the believers must remember the Favours of **Allah** and re-count **His Blessings**. **He** blessed them with **His Book**, full of wisdom and knowledge, revealed to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. It is unfair to return **His Favours** with disobedience, by making **His Laws** a laughing stock. **His Awe** must always prevail and it must be remembered that **He** is fully Aware of not only the conduct but also of the thoughts and intentions in the bosom. **He** knows the hearts, which cherish **His**

Blessings and those who ignore them. Therefore, behave in such a manner that the end results of your actions do not lead you to any embarrassment or trouble.

Section 30

232. And when you have divorced your women and they have completed their waiting term, do not prevent them from marrying their husbands, if they mutually agreed in a fair manner. This is an admonition for every one of you who believes in Allah and the Last Day. This is the most virtuous and the cleanest (course) for you. And Allah knows and you do not know.

وَإِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْصُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنْكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضَوْا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ذَلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ لَكُمْ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

233. And the mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years, this is for him who intends to complete the period of suckling. And on him (the father) is the mother's provision and clothing in a fair manner. No soul shall be burdened beyond its capacity. Neither shall a mother be made to suffer because of her child, nor a father on account of his child. And the same duty shall devolve on the heirs (of the father). So if both desire weaning by consent and mutual counsel, there is no blame on them. And if you decide on a foster-mother there is no blame on you, provided you pay her the agreed (wages) honourably. And remain conscious of Allah and know that He sees all that you do.

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَدَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تُضَارَّ وَالِدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَالِدِهِ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَسْرِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْكُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالْقَوْلِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

234. And as for those who die and leave behind widows, they shall keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten days. Thereafter, there is no blame on you for what they do with themselves honourably. And **Allah** is aware of whatever you do.

وَالَّذِينَ يَتُوفُونَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذُرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرَبَّصْنَ
بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ
أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِي
أَنْفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٣٤﴾

235. And there is no blame on you if you propose indirectly to those women, or conceal it in your souls. **Allah** knows that you will soon make a mention to them. But make no promise in secret with them, except that you mention in an honourable manner. And do not resolve on wedding before the prescribed waiting-term is completed. And know that **Allah** knows what is in your souls, so be mindful of Him. And know that **Allah** is Ever-Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَّضْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ خِطْبَةٍ
النِّسَاءِ أَوْ أَكْنَنْتُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ
أَنَّكُمْ سَتَذْكُرُونَهُنَّ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُوَاعِدُوهُنَّ
سِرًّا إِلَّا أَنْ تَقُولُوا قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا وَلَا تَعْزِمُوا
عُقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْكِتَابُ أَجَلَهُ
وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ
فَاحْذَرُوهُ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣٥﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

And when you have divorced your women ... Allah knows you do not know.

How should the divorced woman be treated? The Qurān asserts that after divorce a woman neither becomes so helpless that her opinion is given no importance nor does she become a symbol of bad omen to be deemed a burden by her family. In fact she is the same human being she was prior to her divorce. She has her self-respect, which remains unaffected by the mishap of divorce on grounds of incompatibility. Indeed after waiting period is over, neither her first husband nor her guardians have the right to prevent her from a second marriage.

And if she decides to remarry her first husband, her guardians must not stand in her way, provided both agree in accordance with the dictates of Shari'ah. The term, Bil M'arūf means that no party should be forced or compelled into anything nor should the woman be pressurised. Both man and woman should be willing and inclined to remarry and this willingness should have the approval of Shari'ah, i.e. it is a revocable divorce because in case of three pronouncements of the divorce they cannot remarry without pre-conditions discussed heretofore. Or if she wishes to marry another man, it must be done legally, unlike what happens in Europe where they simply begin to live together without marriage on the grounds that they have already tried formal marriage contract, and that now they are trying it without it, until as long as they desire. It is obligatory to stop such situations from arising. Or if she plans to remarry before the lapse of her waiting period, it is incumbent on the Muslim community in general and the guardians in particular to stop her from acting illegally. However, marriage in accordance with Shari'ah must not be stopped out of family ego or any greed etc. Such an attitude does not befit a Muslim, as his vision is much above the false traditions of this mortal world.

The Divine Ordinances are for the guidance of those who believe in **Allah** and the Day of Judgement, for whom the truth is what has been determined by **Him** and the real honour is that, which would redeem on that Day. This is that spirit of faith, which gives a person the courage to stop from acting against the truth and usurping anyone's rights. He progressively adopts virtue, voluntarily and without any external pressure, merely to seek **Allah's** Pleasure. This will be a sure key to success in both the worlds.

If, however, only the worldly conveniences are kept in view, even here the Divine Law is better and purer. For example, if someone tries to prevent a divorced woman (or a widow) from marrying again out of personal ego, it is quite possible that she might commit a mistake, which not only wrecks family honour, but also results in destruction through discord and feuds. Similarly if she is prohibited to remarry out of greed that too could lead to serious consequences; it is possible that in an endeavour for wealth one loses his life itself. Compelling anyone into going against the law of nature will always end in a fiasco.

Allah's Law is in fact nature itself. The acknowledgement of **Allah's** Greatness to achieve eternal bliss is one thing, but the compliance with **His** Laws is also essential in order to run the affairs of the world in the best possible manner. **His** knowledge is comprehensive; **He** is fully Aware of all the facts pertaining to **His** creations, the natural instincts and the biological drives of every human being. On the contrary, man's knowledge is limited, imperfect and based on speculations, which are more often wrong than correct.

*And the mothers shall suckle ... and know that **He** sees all that you do.*

The Term of Suckling

For comprehensively discussing the relationship between spouses, the topic of children needs to be addressed. **Allah** lays down certain rules for the welfare of the offspring. In principle, it is the mother who is responsible to feed the infant for two years, unless there is a genuine lawful excuse. In a display of anger towards her husband if she does not feed the baby, she would indeed be a wrongdoer.

Here it is clarified that the period of suckling is two years. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah^{RA}, the Qurānic Āyah: "And the bearing and the weaning is 30 months (46:15)" provides a pretext by which the children may be suckled for two and a half years, due to weakness etc. of the baby. Beyond this period the breast-feeding is, however, prohibited. It is the duty of a mother to feed her baby during the term of suckling without demanding any wages from her husband. At the same time it is his responsibility to provide for food and clothing to the mother as goes on in a happy and contented home.

The estranged relations and the divorce must not be allowed to affect the child. The mother ought to feed her baby willingly and the father must provide for the mother, who can lawfully demand wages in case of divorce, provided it is a fair demand as may be made by any other fostering woman. The father in case of unfair demand will have the right to arrange a wet nurse to feed the baby. The rights of all the parties must be protected. For instance, whereas it is not proper for a mother to refuse feeding her baby it is also not permissible that she is forced, as she may be having a good reason for her inability to feed. In short a balance has been created in order to ensure the betterment of all the three parties.

In case of death of the father, it is incumbent on those who inherit from him to provide for the suckling of the child in proportion to the share they receive. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah^{RA} asserts that when the responsibility of arranging for the suckling of an orphan child is upon the heirs, then they are also responsible to maintain the child until maturity as the aim is not only to suckle but to maintain the orphan. If the grandfather and the mother are alive, they are the heir of $\frac{2}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ respectively and shall bear the maintenance of the child proportionately. Similarly the grandfather has the right to make a will in favour of an orphan grandchild from his property, a share even bigger than those of the sons. According to the rules of inheritance, a grandchild cannot inherit anything in the presence of sons, as a distant relative cannot surpass a closer one. But by making a will, neither the law is defied nor the grandchild is deprived.

If the twain mutually agree to stop suckling before the expiry of two years for reasons of the mother's or the baby's health or for any other valid reason, they are allowed to do so. If they decide to hire a wet nurse to feed the infant, they are permitted provided the wages of the wet nurse are settled before hand and the payment is made promptly. The condition of mutual agreement of the parents is probably imposed to ensure the welfare of the child and it is the duty of the parents to provide the child a good upbringing. "Fear **Allah**" i.e. do not try to play with the life of an innocent in any likely tussle. Neither should the mother refuse to feed the baby without any valid reason nor should the father take away the child just to vex the mother. In all such matters, fear **Allah** and obey **Him** and remember that **He** is aware of all your actions.

And as for those who die ... Allah is Ever Forgiving, Most Forbearing.

In the context of the above discussion, there can be another situation. If the husband dies, the widow must observe an waiting period of 4 months and 10 days, during which she must not adorn herself with perfumes, make up, henna or lamp black, etc. nor should she wear fancy or colourful dresses. She should not stay the night at any other house. The same applies to the divorced woman. She must not leave the house even during the daytime except for a highly compelling reason, nor should she talk of a second marriage during the waiting period. Thereafter she may remarry according to Shari'ah and no one has the right to stop her. Similarly no one should send a proposal in her waiting period, nor should any promises be made in this context. However, a statement by implication or an indirect troth is permitted. Secret messages or meetings during the waiting period are forbidden. It is possible to hide things from the people but not from **Allah**, **Who** is well aware of what lies in the bosom. Therefore, always fear **Him** and seek **His** Forgiveness if a mistake is made. Do not become bold if **He** relents because of **His** Compassion but always obey **Him** in every detail.

This code of Islām is the most effective. Not only it commands the ruler to enforce the law but also bids all the Muslims to exert for upholding the law. At the same time it keeps on reminding the individual of his relationship with **Allah**, that he can evade the Government or may deceive the society but can neither hide from **Allah** nor conceal his intentions from **Him**. It is not only a matter of reputation in this world but also that of accountability on the Day of Judgement, which must be kept in view in all aspects of mutual dealings.

Section 31

236. There is no blame on you if you divorce women whom you have | لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ

not yet touched, nor fixed their dower. But give them a suitable gift, the wealthy according to his means and the poor according to his means, an honourable gift due from those who do good.

أَوْ تَقْرِضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً وَمَتِّعُوهُنَّ عَلَى الْمَوْسِعِ
قَدْرُهُمْ وَعَلَى الْمُقْتَرِ قَدْرُهُ مَتَّعًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا
عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

237. And if you divorce them before touching them but after having fixed their dower, give them half of it, unless they forego it or he in whose hand is the wedding-knot forgoes: and that you should forego is higher in piety. And do not forget kindness among yourselves. Indeed Allah sees all that you do.

وَإِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ وَقَدْ
فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً فَنِصْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا
أَنْ يَعْفُوَ أَوْ يَعْفُوا الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ عُقْدَةُ
النِّكَاحِ وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَى
وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٨﴾

238. Be watchful over Ṣalāt, especially the middle Ṣalāt. And stand before Allah truly devout.

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى
وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

239. And if you fear, then pray on foot or mounted, but when you are secure, remember Allah in the manner He has taught you, which you did not know.

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ
فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلَّمَكُم مَّا لَمْ
تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

240. And those of you, who die and leave behind widows, shall bequeath for them a year's maintenance without expulsion. If, however, they leave (of their own accord), then there is no blame on you in what they may do with themselves honourably. And Allah is Almighty, Wise.

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا
وَصِيَّةً لَازِوَاجِهِمْ مَتَّعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ
إِخْرَاجٍ فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي
مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِنَّ مِنَ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللَّهُ
غَفِيرٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾

241. And for the divorced women an honourable gift, incumbent upon the righteous.

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتِ مَتَّعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى
الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

242. Thus **Allah** makes His commands clear to you so that you may reflect.

كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ءَايَاتِهِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾

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Another aspect of divorce is discussed here, i.e. when a man divorces his wife before the consummation of marriage. Now either the dower has been already fixed or it is yet to be decided. In latter case, he must give her something in accordance with his status. **Hadhrat Hassan^{RA}** is reported to have paid twenty thousand Dirhams in a similar situation. According to **Hadhrat Ibn 'Abbās^{RA}**, the lowest form of this is a pair of clothes.

The Meaning of Mut'a

The word *Mut'a* here clearly means some provisions to the lady where the marriage ended up in a divorce before consummation of the marriage. But it is a pity that the Shiites gave it a wrong meaning altogether, defining it as wages to a woman for lewdness and debauchery, a custom of the polytheists of Arabia, revoked by Islām. They did not even fear **Allah** while blaspheming Islām. *Lughat ul-Qurān* (vol. 5 p. 296) clearly defines the word *Mut'a* as the amount paid to a woman divorced before the consummation of marriage for subsistence or as a gift where dower has not been fixed, and not as something given to a woman for fornication. What an enormity on **Allah's** Book? May **Allah** protect us all!

This giving must be done honourably, neither for any vested interests nor fame but only for the attainment of **Allah's** Pleasure, being incumbent on noble and sincere people i.e. the Muslims. Here it is expected from every Muslim that he possesses *Ihsān*. In other words, *Ihsān* is indeed the essence of faith, which simply means that a person recognises the Majesty of **Allah** with his heart and soul, according to his capacity. With reference to **Hadīth Jibrīl^{AS}**, the Holy Prophet^{SAW} is reported to have said that *Ihsān* means that you worship **Allah** as if you behold **Him**, or else be sure that **He** is seeing you".

To handle all such matters gracefully one needs that very inner strength which Islām desires to see in every Muslim. And this is attained by **Allah's** *Zikr* in the company of accomplished saints. The illumination of Qulub is a blessing of the company while mere words remain confined to logic and intellect. The Qalb is the seat of emotions and feelings and is not dependent on words. Don't the Qulub of the deaf and the dumb experience happiness and sorrow? They

certainly do, despite the fact that they have no understanding of the words or meanings. When the Qalb absorbs the feelings, meanings of the words are automatically understood and the execution becomes easy.

That is why the foremost amongst the duties of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} is Tazkiyah, followed by the teaching of the Book and the wisdom. The blessing of his company honoured the recipients with Companionship and when it snapped, no one could become a Companion^{-RAU}, though the Book and the wisdom were there. However, the company of the Companions^{-RAU} transmitted the blessings to Taba'in and they, in turn transferred them to Taba' Taba'in. This chain of transmission continues from Qalb to Qalb. The present custodians of those blessings are the accomplished saints whose company is a prerequisite for perfection of Islām, both in precept and practice.

Now the other aspect of divorce before consummation of marriage where the dower money was predetermined. In this case, the payment of half the amount will be incumbent while the other half will be exempted. However, if the woman voluntarily forgoes the entire amount, the obligation is liquidated. But if the husband, who has the authority to continue the marriage, decides to forgo the exemption given to him and out of goodwill pays the whole amount it is indeed commendable. The best course of action is a cheerful renunciation of one's right and whosoever does this, whether man or woman shall attain virtue, which is nearest to Taqwa.

To do good unto others to please **Allah** strengthens the bond with **Him** and must never be ignored. Whether the marriage stands or is annulled, both husband and wife must remember that they are Muslims and have rights over one another. They must show mutual consideration and remember that **Allah** is well aware of all their actions. Every action is either an act of **His** obedience or disobedience; and the latter certainly does not befit a Muslim. **Allah** must always be obeyed, as obedience is the essence of worship. To maintain this state of inner strength a careful execution of duties is imperative.

To fulfil the duties towards human beings, the fear of **Allah** is a prerequisite. And how can anyone, delinquent in his duties towards **Allah**, be God-fearing? To build a relationship with **Him**, one must guard his Ṣalāt and offer it with devotion. The 'guarding of the Ṣalāt' means that not even the minutest of its constituents is ignored. It involves observation of time schedule, proper raiment, careful ablution and efforts to join the congregation. The middle i.e. 'Aṣr prayer must be well guarded as it is preceded by the beginning and followed by the end of the day, and has two Ṣalāt, before and after it. And it is a time of great activity. From offices to meadows; the officers as well as the shepherds are reverting to their homes. Shopkeepers are occupied with their

merchandise while women are busy preparing dinner. Amidst this humming activity, if 'Aṣr is offered properly the rest of Ṣalāt will Insha **Allah** become easier to offer. Offering the Ṣalāt with full devotion is not only to fulfil a duty but also to attain those feelings, which help build a relationship with **Allah**.

Ṣalāt is not only an act of worship but is a food for the Spirit, as well as its medication. It is indeed necessary that both the diet as well as the medicine are pure, and well guarded. And if there is a danger or you are in a battlefield, you may offer the Ṣalāt either standing or even on a mount, but do not miss it and be punctual. The scholars opine that if it is not possible to offer Ṣalāt while standing at one place it may be postponed. If it is offered while standing, the gesture to show Sajdah must be lower than the gesture for bowing down. The aim is to offer the Ṣalāt on time fulfilling the conditions as far as possible. This will pave the way to **Allah**'s obedience.

The Order to Bequeath

This order was valid in the earlier period of Islām, prior to the revelation of the law of inheritance. But once the latter was revealed and a definite share of the widows determined, it was revoked. At that time the right to inherit was primarily based on the whims of the dying. Therefore, it was ordained that the wife must not be ignored while making a will. If she desires to stay on in her husband's house, he must bequeath in her favour one year's maintenance expenses from his estate. But if she decides, at her own accord, to marry again after the prescribed waiting period is over in accordance with Shari'ah, or leaves the house of her deceased husband honourably, there is no blame on the heirs as it was her right. If, however, she plans to do something contrary to Shari'ah such as to get married during the period of waiting period she must be prevented from doing so, failing which, those in authority will be wrongdoers and certainly accountable.

"For divorced woman a provision in honour" i.e. all the aforementioned injunctions aim at providing a reasonable sustenance for the divorced woman and to a great extent at their consolation and preservation of self-respect. This is derived from *Mut'a* that the women have their rights as human being which ought to be safeguarded and that a divorced woman must not be looked down upon, as is customary in our society because of Hindu influence. This word *Mut'a* is used for giving something to those women who were married with the intention of a permanent association but due to some unavoidable circumstances, the separation became inevitable; and not that a woman is married for a predetermined period of time after which the marriage stands revoked automatically, and on top of it there is no need of witnesses. This practice is forbidden in Shari'ah and to derive such meaning from the term *Mut'a* tanta-

mounts to misinterpretation of the Qurān. Obeying all the laws pertaining to marriage and divorce is obligatory for all those who fear Allah, who believe in Him and are virtuous. Allah revealed His Commandments so that the righteous may learn the etiquettes for an honourable life in this world. So that people may acquire wisdom and their society may become an ideal society.

Section 32

243. Have you not seen those who abandoned their homes by thousands for fear of death? Allah said to them, "Die", and later brought them back to life. Indeed Allah is gracious to mankind, though most people are ungrateful.

﴿الَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ﴾ (٢٤٣)

244. And fight in the way of Allah and know that Allah is Hearer, Knower.

﴿وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾ (٢٤٤)

245. Who is it that will offer to Allah a good loan, which He will repay, multiplied manifold? It is Allah Who restricts and amplifies and to Him you shall all be returned.

﴿مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْصُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ﴾ (٢٤٥)

246. Have you not seen the chieftains of Children of Isrāil, after the time of Mūsā^{AS}, when they said to their Prophet, "Appoint a king for us, so that we may fight in the way of Allah" He said, "if you are commanded to fight, may be you would refrain from fighting". They said, "Why would we not fight in the way of Allah, when we have been driven away from our dwellings and children?" But when fighting was ordained for them they turned away, except a

﴿الَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْعِلَآءِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّهِمْ اأَعِثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَاءِنَا فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ﴾ (٢٤٦)

few of them, and Allah knows the wrongdoers.

وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

247. And their Prophet said to them, "Surely Allah has appointed Talūt as king over you." They said, "How can he rule over us when we deserve to rule more than he, nor has he been given abundant wealth?" The Prophet said, "Surely Allah has chosen him over you and has increased him in knowledge and physique, and Allah grants authority to whom He will, for Allah is Bountiful, Knowing."

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مَلَكَهُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧﴾

248. And their Prophet said to them, "Surely the sign of his kingship will be that the Ark of the Covenant shall come to you with peace from your Rabb in it, and the relics of the household of Mūsā^{AS} and the household of Hārūn^{AS}, carried by the angels. Surely here is a sign for you if you are believers at all."

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ وَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

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If someone is under the impression that by obeying Allah his life would become very difficult or impossible, it is his misconception. All the problems of life are created by the people themselves. If they renounce Allah's disobedience, Who is all Powerful, they will certainly be at peace.

To highlight and clarify this misconception, Allah gives an example to the Holy Prophet^{SAW} of a people from Banī Isrāīl who were thousands in number and had fled from their homes fearing death. The Divine address: "Have you

not seen?" refers to that sure and definite knowledge of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, which is as good as actual observation, and is above all doubts.

Observation of Past Events through Kashf

It is reported in Ḥadīth pertaining to the Night of Ascension that when the non-believers questioned the Holy Prophet^{SAW} about Bait al-Maqdas, **Allah** placed the entire building right in front of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} who answered their queries by direct observation. If this is taken as the observation of the subtle heart it will be correct as confirmed by Fataḥ al Qadeer. It proves that if **Allah** wills, the heart with the same degree of clarity can see the incidents of the past as if seen by the eye.

The Banī Isrāīl had fled from their settlements in an attempt to avoid an epidemic. The term ulūf (sing: alif) denotes atleast ten thousand people, or more. Most of them must obviously have been physically fit, leaving the sick, the elderly and the poor behind. **Allah** did not approve of this action and commanded them to die, and they died. They had fled to save their lives yet their planning proved futile and resulted in their extermination.

The Holy Prophet^{SAW} forbids flight from an epidemic stricken area, as well as the return to it by those who happen to be away at the time. There are many sayings of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} on this episode and the basis of all is that life and death is the domain of **Allah**. He is all Powerful to protect against a disease or give death without it. It is, therefore, not proper to flee from the affected settlements, nor to stage a come back from the safe areas.

According to reports, **Allah** sent His angel to that valley, who conveyed to them the Divine Command to die. All died instantly including their cattle. When people of the surrounding areas heard of this episode they rushed to the scene but there was no way to arrange the funeral of so many. Therefore, they constructed a wall around them to let them decay in the natural process. After many years Prophet Ezeqiel^{AS} from Banī Isrāīl passed by the heap of bones and prayed to **Allah** to forgive and restore them to life. He was told to say: "Come to life, by **Allah's** Command".

And they all came to life at once, praised **Allah** and affirmed His Unity. They completed their normal span of life and died a natural death thereafter. Their previous death was abnormal whereby they neither lived in this world nor was the Ākhirah disclosed unto them. And once the Ākhirah is stepped into, there is no return to this world neither belief nor worship remains credible. Had they died after the completion of their natural span of life, they could have been brought to life only as a miracle for a short while but would have never been given the chance to inhabit the world once again. The episode only presented

an evidence of **Allah's** Omnipotence, so that people may learn a lesson and also be sure of Resurrection.

Punishment and Reward in Barzakh

Now let us take the question of how the decomposed parts of a dead body could come together. A modern segment of intellectuals raises the objection as to how can the components of the deceased, which are devoured by animals or burnt away or scattered over the land in the form of ashes, unless animated on the Day of Judgement, be rewarded or punished?

It is an irony that people take **Allah's** Powers like their own otherwise aren't these components less scattered now, than they were before birth? Every food and medicine consumed by a person comes from the soil, whether in the form of grains or vegetables. He gets his pre-determined share from all around the world. What is not meant for him is stored in his spine for the purposes of procreation and ultimately passes on to the mother's womb where it begins to develop into a separate entity. The mother consumes the food but the portion predetermined by **Allah** reaches the baby without let or hindrance.

Similarly, even if after death the elements of the body are scattered they still maintain a connection with the Spirit and are affected by the joy or agony experienced by it. **Allah** is all Powerful to punish or reward the components of a body even if in the belly of a predator without the animal knowing it. All creation is servile to the Creator, **Whose** Command conveyed through a Prophet^{AS} to the rotten bones and scattered elements, brought to life all dead in the valley, as mentioned above. **Allah** is indeed Merciful. He delivered those people from the agony and at the same time provided a solid proof of the Day of Judgement for others. Despite this there are many ingrates who are negligent in His obedience. Just to demonstrate an Islamic disposition is not enough. One must fight in **His** Way without any hesitation or reservation, because **He** controls life and death and He is well aware of everything.

Allah is free of any wants and is not dependent on anyone for anything. Nevertheless **He** accepts the obedience of **His** servants as an excellent debt. And since a debt has to be liquidated, **He** will return it as a reward, duly multiplied manifold commensurate to **His** Magnanimity. The sincerity behind the actions will determine the proportion of the increase. Everyone has to return to **Allah** one day. The best policy will, therefore, be to sacrifice the rituals over **His** Laws and to strive in **His** Cause with everything one has, including life itself.

A Companion^{RAU} from the Anṣar, on hearing this Āyah went to the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and donated his date palm garden with hundreds of laden trees in **Allah's** Cause. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} said, "**Allah** will reward you with Para-

dise instead." When he returned home he called his wife and children to announce the goodly loan. His wife was extremely happy. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} is reported to have said: "What spacious palaces and date palms laden with dates await Abi 'Addhah^{RAU}!"

Sacred Relics

The attention of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} is drawn to Banī Isrāīl who adhered to the teachings of Prophet Mūsā^{AS} only for a little while after him, and gradually gave up obedience to the Divine Commandments. They took to modern civilization against conservatism as is customary today. **Allah** subjected them to the rule of infidels, the 'Amaliqah. They captured their cities, took many as captives and seized the Ark containing the sacred relics of Prophets Mūsā^{AS} and Hārūn^{AS} including the broken tablets of the Torah, which were a source of **Allah**'s Blessings, peace and tranquillity for them. The incompetent descendants are always deprived of the sacred relics of their Prophets^{AS} and saints, just as the westernised Muslims of today have been deprived of their first Qiblah. May **Allah** relent and not deprive us of the K'abah. May **He** forgive us and grant us the courage to redeem the first Qiblah!

'Allama Ibn Kathīr^{RIA} quotes a Ḥadīth in this context that because of the piety of a true Muslim, **Allah** guides his children, grandchildren and also his neighbours. He also quotes the Holy Prophet^{SAW} that until the Yaum al-Qiyamah there will be seven persons amongst Muslims in every age, who will be a source of invoking **Allah**'s Succour, in the form of provisions and rainfall. Similarly in another Ḥadīth the presence of thirty Abdāl is reported.

In short, not only is the presence of **Allah**'s people a cause of Barakah but their belongings like dress, shoes etc also invoke **His** Blessings. This, however, is only for those who believe, act righteously and seek **Allah**'s cognition through the Auliā and not for those who ascribe divinity to them, a disastrous act both here and in the Ākhirah.

After a long time of subjection, a child was born in the Banī Isrāīl who belonged to a Prophetic family. A pregnant lady who had survived the war prayed to **Allah** to grant her a son and bless him with Prophethood. Her prayer was answered and the boy was named Shamuel (Samuel), which literally means 'My prayer is answered' (Mazhari). When he grew up and was appointed as **Allah**'s Prophet^{AS} he told his nation to obey **Allah** and fight the infidels. They requested him for the nomination of a king, under whose command they would fight. The Prophet^{AS} said that he saw no hope in them that they would be able to execute **Allah**'s Command once the fighting was enjoined. They said that given a strong leadership, they would wage a war against the infidels to avenge the capture of their cities, imprisonment of their

youth, demolition of their homes and their overall disgrace. Yet the Prophet's^{AS} fears came true. Once the fighting was enjoined, most of them evaded it and made all sort of lame excuses to escape. In those days the kings used to run the Government under the guidance of the Prophets^{AS}. So by Allah's command, Prophet Shamuēl^{AS} nominated Ṭalūt (Saul) as the king who was a descendant of Binyāmīn (Benjamin). Because the earlier monarchs had been from the affluent tribe of Yahūda, the Banī Isrāīl objected to the nomination of Ṭalūt and argued that it was their right to have a king from the latter tribe and that Ṭalūt was poor and had no financial status.

The Prophet^{AS} declared that Allah gave the rule to whomever He desired, purely at His own accord. And that Ṭalūt excelled everyone in wisdom, knowledge and physique. It was in Allah's knowledge that he would be able to govern in conformity with His Laws. And he was a man of commanding appearance and personal charm.

This highlights the fact that a ruler ought to be sound in the knowledge of Dīn or else he must have such experts who can guide him on every matter to ensure that the politics and the Government are run in accordance with Allah's Laws. He must also be fit both physically and mentally to ensure that ill health and mental worries of the ruler do not spoil the affairs of the State. The Banī Isrāīl are reminded that the land belongs to Allah and He may select anyone to rule over it. So their objection to the appointment of Ṭalūt is baseless. When He gives responsibility, the capability to fulfil it follows in the natural course.

The Eligibility to Hold an Office

Amongst the Aulia, we observe that the offices are conferred upon those who are learned scholars, and if not, they are simultaneously bestowed knowledge directly from His Presence. In the latter case even the scholars of repute benefit from them. There are many such examples amongst the Sūfīs. May Allah bless them all!

The Banī Isrāīl now demanded from their Prophet^{AS} some indication as a manifest symbol for their satisfaction. They were told that as a clear evidence of the Divine nomination of Ṭalūt as their king, the Ark containing sacred relics of Prophets Mūsā^{AS} and Hārūn^{AS}; their personal effects like garments, shoes, the staff of Prophet Mūsā^{AS}, and also the Tablets of Torah given to him on Mount Ṭūr will be brought to them by the angels without any effort on their part.

Allah put the 'Amaliqah, who had taken the sacred Ark as booty, in trouble. In whichever temple they would store it, the idols therein would be torn to pieces. Even the house or the city where that Ark was kept was destroyed. The

'Amaliqah, thoroughly frustrated, mounted it on some animal and drove it to the jungle, from where the angels guided it to the Banī Isrā'īl.

Section 33

249. So when Ṭalūt set forth with his army, he said, "Surely Allah will test you at a river, then whoever drinks of it shall not be mine. And whoever does not taste it, except him who takes a sip with his hand, will be mine." Yet they drank, except a few of them. When he and those who believed with him crossed the river, the others said, "Today we have no strength against Jalūt and his forces." But those who were convinced that they would meet Allah, replied, "How often has a small force defeated a large force by Allah's Command. And Allah is with the patient."

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرَبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْكُوا اللَّهَ كَمِ مَنْ فِتْنَةٍ قَلِيلَةٌ غَلَبَتْ فِتْنَةٌ كَثِيرَةٌ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٢٩﴾

250. And when they came face to face against Jalūt and his army, they said, "Our Rabb! Bless us with patience, and make our feet firm and give us victory over the non-believers."

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾

251. Then, by Allah's Command, they routed them and Dāwūd^{as} killed Jalūt. And Allah gave him kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of what He willed. And had it not been for Allah's repelling some people by means of others, the earth would surely be filled with corruption. But Allah is full of bounty for all the worlds.

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾

252. These are the **Āyat** of **Allah** that
We recite to you with truth, and
surely, you are one of the
Messengers.

تِلْكَ ءَايَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ
وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٢٥٢﴾

253. We exalted some of these Messengers more than others. To some Allah spoke directly, and some He raised in rank. And We gave clear signs to 'Isā son of Maryam and aided him with the Holy Spirit. And had Allah so willed, the succeeding generations would not have contended one against the other after the clear signs had come to them, but they differed. Some of them believed while others rejected. And had Allah so willed, they would not have contended one against the other, but Allah does whatever He wills.

﴿تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ وَءَاتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَقْتَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَلَكِنْ اخْتَلَفُوا فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ آمَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَفَرَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَقْتَلُوا وَلَكِنْ اللَّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

So when Talūt set forth with his army... surely, you are one of the Messengers.

Now Talūt (Saul) prepared for Jihād and marched on with his troops. He told them that Allah would try them by the ordeal of a river enroute. They shall not be allowed to drink water from it except only a handful.

The troops, fatigued by journey and violent hot weather could not resist except those who had a strong faith. All those who drank to their fill lost the strength to continue the march and their thirst remained unquenched too. Those who were content with only a handful as permitted were no longer thirsty and were honoured with participation in Jihād. But when they came face to face with the army of Jalūt (Goliath), which overwhelmingly outnumbered them, some of them were terrified. Jalūt the ruler of the 'Amaliqah was an extremely arrogant and tyrant, who had a large army. Those gifted with strong faith and perseverance amongst the Banī Isrā'īl, however, said that victory and defeat rests with Allah as the history of nations bears witness to the fact that often groups smaller in number vanquished group much larger in size.

People can be classified into three categories. Firstly the flawed, who could not even resist water and were left behind, secondly, the accomplished who marched on resisting worldly temptations; and thirdly the perfected who became a source of

inspiration for others to remain steadfast. When they faced the troops of Jalūt they prayed to **Allah** for steadfastness and for inspiring in their hearts patience and perseverance and also for victory over the infidels. This indeed is the true essence of trust, that **Allah** be requested to help and simultaneously all possible means must be pressed into service and maximum efforts exerted, leaving the results to **Allah**, which then must be accepted wholeheartedly.

Ḥadhrat Dāwūd^{AS} who at that time was very young, pale and weak, by **Allah**'s Will, killed Jalūt reducing his arrogance to dust. Jalūt gave his daughter's hand in marriage and also transferred the power of the State to him. **Allah** blessed Ḥadhrat Dāwūd^{AS} with Prophethood and with many an excellence. The iron in his hands would soften as wax; he was taught the art of making armours, which became a source of livelihood for him and he ruled in accordance with the will and purpose of **Allah**. He could understand the language of all the animals and was blessed with a moving voice. The mountains and the trees deliberately joined him in *Ẓikr Allah*, as distinct from routine *Ẓikr* practised by everything continuously. **Allah** always repels evil by the force of piety and the wicked by virtue of the righteous. It is indeed a great favour of **Allah**, as **He** is Merciful towards **His** creations.

All these accounts of past events are revealed by **Allah** with unchangeable accuracy to you O' Prophet^{SAW}, which you neither read nor heard. It is a strong evidence of your Prophethood. These revelations not only contain motivation and warning for mankind but coming of you constitute your great miracle. After your raising as a Messenger^{SAW}, mankind would have to choose between your obedience and **His** Reprobation.

We exalted some of these Messengers... Allah does whatever He wills.

The second Part of the Qurān is concluded on the authenticity of the Holy Prophet's^{SAW} Prophethood. The Divine accounts of the nations and their Prophets^{AS} prior to Islām given with such accuracy provide substantial evidence of his Prophethood. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} had never been to any school or a scholar or a recluse for education. Neither did he ever visit the public fairs nor availed the company of any storyteller. In fact he was raised as an orphan in a society, which offered no scope of education whatsoever and his childhood is marked with simplicity, truthfulness, modesty and lonely moments. An announcement by such a person in his forties, with each year of his life a milestone of veracity, that he receives the Divine Message has to be nothing but the truth. A person who, for forty long years, never told a lie about any fellow being, how could he possibly lie on **Allah**? And then his reporting of events of the previous nations with such precision, not even possible for their own scholars, amply testifies his Prophethood.

This Part commences with the Order of Precedence of some of the Prophets^{AS} and the Messengers^{AS}. Basically all of them enjoy a very high status, some have

singular honours while the Holy Prophet^{SAW} of Islām is the most exalted of all, the Prophet par excellence.

Allah's Messengers^{AS} are a sacred group. The Prophethood itself is an exalted status, because it is only a Prophet^{AS} or a Messenger^{AS} who can communicate with **Allah** directly. None else in the mankind is given this capability. For people the acme of excellence is that they establish a relationship with their Prophet or Messenger^{AS} so as to draw **Allah's** Favours and blessings through them.

The Prophets^{AS} and the Messengers^{AS} are as a rule innocent of sins, an indispensable quality for deriving Divine Beneficence directly. If a person believes that someone born after the Final Prophet^{SAW} is innocent, it amounts to believing in the continuation of Prophethood. This is infidelity as the Institution of Prophethood ends with the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. Now until the Day of Judgement, this Muslim Ummah, this Qurān and this very Dīn will prevail. Even Prophet 'Īsā^{AS}, on return to this world, will not follow his own Book or Shari'ah but will adhere to the Shari'ah of Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW} and also propagate it amongst the people of that time.

The Prophets^{AS} and the Messengers^{AS} share the same exalted chain of Prophethood. Yet in matters of Divine nearness, rewards of the Ākhirah and precedence, some excel the others. Ḥadīth forbidding fixation of precedence between them has been given different explanations. One, no human being can possibly judge them on his own. However, if it is established in the Qurān or Ḥadīth, it ought to be believed in. Secondly, in the essence of Prophethood all are equal. The only difference is in their levels of **Allah's** nearness, which can only be revealed by **Allah** or expressed by **His** Prophet^{SAW}, by **His** Command.

The Mutual Superiority of the Aulia

In fact all Prophets^{AS} are exalted human beings and none should be extolled at the cost of the other. Amongst them some are more while others most exalted. The Aulia should be treated in the like manner because Wilayah is a relationship between **Allah** and man. Only **Allah** knows who is nearer to **Him**. There is nothing wrong in eulogizing someone out of them provided it is done with caution and that others are not dishonoured in the process.

Some distinctions of the Messengers^{AS} are mentioned here. To some **Allah** spoke directly and some others were blessed with even higher ranks. Like Prophet Mūsā^{AS} was blessed with the honour of Divine Address without the media of Revelation and angel. Innocence is bestowed unto those chosen by **Allah** as Messengers^{AS} simultaneously with the Office. To be a human being possessing all the appetites of the flesh, to live in a society full of trials and temptations, and yet to conduct oneself with honesty, dignity, truthfulness and nobility without indulging in any sin or wrong whatsoever, is the innocence identified with **Allah's** Messengers^{AS} only. Those upon whom Revelation was sent possess this elevation. One can only

imagine the status of that person to whom **Allah** spoke directly, and the level of his purity and elegance. Praise be to **Him**!

Allah says that some of the Prophets have much higher status. The commentators agree that this **Āyah** points to the noble personality of the Prophet^{-SAW} of Islām. Prophet Mūsā^{-AS} had the honour of a dialogue with **Allah**, though not unveiled, on a part of this earth while the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} ascended beyond the heavens, across trillions of veils and conversed with the Supreme Being face to face. According to Al Najam **Āyah** 10: "So did **Allah** convey the inspiration to **His** servant what **He** meant to convey". When this conversation was going on, Angel Jibrīl^{-AS} stood waiting at Sidrat ul Muntahā, a station way below at the boundary of the seventh heaven while the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} was far away up where **Allah** willed, being satiated with **His** Refulgence. The request at Mount Tūr by Prophet Mūsā^{-AS} "show Thyself to me," was answered "you cannot see **Me**." (7:143) i.e. you will not be able to bear the sight. So did it happen, that when a ray of **His** Refulgence was released neither the Mount nor the Prophet^{-AS} of **Allah** could bear it. The mount was reduced to ashes while he fell unconscious.

At this point the scholars have two opinions. Some believe that Holy Prophet^{-SAW} did not see **Allah** whereas others believe that he did because the incapacity to see **Him** is a condition within this world whereas the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} was located way above the 'Arsh! In the **Ākhirah** both the eyesight and the Qalb will be empowered to an extent that believers will be able to behold their **Rabb**.

The Beholding of Allah

When a physical body composed of matter, yet so transparent, so pure, so subtle that it can go beyond the 'Arsh, the access to which is yearned by the Spirit, can inspect Paradise and Hell and can converse with **Him**, the possibility of beholding **Him** cannot be ruled out. This, indeed, is supported by the Qurān. "His sight never swerved, nor did it go wrong" (53:17) If it was not the Divine Refulgence, what did the eye not swerve from? I humbly feel **Allah**'s closest Personal Refulgence was witnessed only by the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. The term, "beholding **Allah**", in reality, means seeing **His** Radiant Glory or Refulgence as **He Himself** is beyond human access. If any eye can behold **Him** it would tantamount to limiting the Supreme Being, which is a false notion because **He** is Limitless, above any bounds.

For the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, "beholding **Him**" would denote witnessing **His** Personal nearest glory to which any of **His** creation could possibly have an access. This radiance was neither the Supreme Being Himself, nor was it separated from **Him**, and its excellence would, of course, increase continuously, making it possible to witness **His** Refulgence more and more closely. There are different stages of beholding **Him**, varying from person to person, their status and the timings.

Whereas all dwellers of Paradise shall have the honour to behold **Him** according to their own status, the Holy Prophet^{SAW} excels everyone by all standards.

Prophet 'Īsā^{AS} was blessed with miracles such as healing the sick, curing the congenitally blind and lepers, fashioning birds in clay, blowing on and enlivening them. Restoring the dead to life was also amongst his miracles; food descended for him from the heavens and Angel Jibrīl^{AS} was always in his attendance. All these were the Divine Rewards and a clear evidence of his Prophethood. Yet the Jews believed in Prophet Mūsā^{AS} and insulted Prophet 'Īsā^{AS}. The Christians declared him a son of God. Both these ideologies stand rejected because only an adherence to the precepts and practices of these exalted Prophets^{AS} would mean a real relationship with them.

Along with the idolaters of Arabia, the Jews and Christians were the two other nations who insisted on their religious standing and declared that they were on the right path. From the Order of Precedence of the Divine Messengers^{AS} discussed above and the teaching of the preceding Prophets^{AS}, it became clear that after the advent of Prophet Muḥammad^{SAW} it would be obligatory to follow only him.

Every person has a personal relationship with **Allah** and the results will be commensurate to the kind of relationship enjoyed by him. **Allah** is Omnipotent. Had it been **His** Will to save everyone, people would not have gone astray after the raising of such exalted personalities and absolutely clear signs, nor would have they killed each other and created mischief. But all this happened, as **Allah** in **His** Wisdom allowed them to exercise their choice. People kicked up disputes in their opinions and conflicts in their actions, which led to bloodshed. Some failed to persevere on faith while others disbelieved. This indeed is the history of the Prophets^{AS} and their people. **Allah** is all-Powerful and could have certainly prevented them from bloodshed but **He** is Wise and Sagacious and also the Owner, and does what pleases **Him**. This was indeed a great consolation for the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. Some people indulge habitually in disagreement and they would certainly do the same with him. It is indeed unlikely for all the people to agree on the same stance.

Section 34

254. O you who believe! Spend of what **We** have provided you, before the Day comes, when there shall neither be trading, nor friendship, nor intercession. And it is the non-believers who are wrongdoers.

بَيِّنَاتُهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ
مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ
وَلَا شَفَعَةٌ وَالْكَافِرُونَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٥٤﴾

255. **Allah!** There is no **Ilāha** but **He**, the Living, and the Self-Subsistent. Neither slumber seizes **Him**, nor sleep. **His** is all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. Who can intercede with **Him** except by **His** permission? He knows all that was before them and all that shall be after them. But they cannot encompass an iota of **His** knowledge except what he wills. His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth, and **He** does not weary in guarding both. And **He** is the Exalted, the Supreme.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ
وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا
الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ
أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ
مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ
الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٢٥٥﴾

256. There is no coercion in religion. Righteousness has become distinct from error. Then whosoever rejects Satan and believes in **Allah** has indeed got hold of the firm support that never breaks. And **Allah** is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ
يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِرْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ
اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ
سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥٦﴾

257. **Allah** is the friend of those who believe. **He** brings them out from darkness into light. And the patrons of those who disbelieve, are the Satan, who take them out from light into darkness. Such are the dwellers of the Fire; therein shall they abide forever.

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ
إِلَى النُّورِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَائُهُمُ
الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ
إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٥٧﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

O you who believe!... And it is the non-believers who are wrongdoers.

The Basis of Reformation

The improvement of man's worldly condition is based on economics. All the religions, if viewed closely, revolve around the urge for the fulfilment of worldly

desires. Human endeavour is focused on the attainment of wealth, as money is a major source of fulfilling the desires; and this is where all the trouble originates. However, if the expenditure is restricted, there remains no need or benefit of earning through unlawful means.

The economic systems of the world discuss only the rules for attaining wealth. Islām accepts that subsistence is from **Allah**. Man is only responsible to exert his effort and it is entirely upto **Allah** as to how much subsistence **He** actually gives, little or more. After acquiring one's share, its utilisation has also been determined in the form of obligatory and the supererogatory alms.

The human soul prefers to spend on the attainment of temporal pleasures whereas **Allah** draws its attention to spend, as **He** desires. This means spending in accordance with **His** Laws, whether in the form of Zakāt and alms or the maintenance of wife and children. Such a spending will obviously not only fulfil the worldly needs but shall also be a source of eternal bliss, for which man has been sent to this world. So when the real motive is the eternal life of the **Ākhirah**, nothing will stand in the way of accepting the truth. And whosoever settles for the pleasures of this temporary world, expecting any good from him will be in vain.

A brief sketch of **Ākhirah** has been drawn next. The valued assets for the Day of Judgement are virtuous deeds. When nothing else will avail, neither friendship nor money nor intercession, faith being the prerequisite for intercession. And a believer never prefers this world to the **Ākhirah**. If he commits a mistake, he seeks **Allah's** Forgiveness immediately and tries to make amends. But the non-believers are indeed the transgressors as they wish to impose their own desires upon the universe, which is impossible because the owner of the universe is **Allah**.

No one has the right to be worshipped save **Allah**. Total obedience is only for **Him**. **He** is Ever Living. **He** sustains the existence of everything in the entire universe and is **Himself** sustained or supported by no body. Neither sleep nor slumber affects **Him**. **He** is the Absolute Master. **He** is eternal; **His** existence having neither a beginning nor an end. **He** is in reality the Owner of the heavens and the earth and all that lies therein. So Majestic and Awe-inspiring is **He** that no one can dare to speak before **Him** or intercede for anyone without **His** permission. **His** Knowledge is perfect, complete, all embracing and **He** knows the hidden and the manifest. None of **His** creatures can encompass **His** Knowledge save what **He** Himself grants. The best of anyone's knowledge is what **He** blesses; none knows anything beyond that. **His** Throne or Seat of Majesty, is vaster than the universe. **He** holds the heavens and the earth and runs their system smoothly; nothing seems to burden **Him** as **He** is the Supreme Being, the Most Magnificent!

The word Kursī (Throne) must not be given human interpretation as **He** is above any concept of space and time. The real essence and the state of these revelations

is beyond human intellect. However, it is clearly established that the 'Arsh and the Throne are two glorious entities, much larger than the heavens and the earth.

Ibn Kathīr quotes a Companion, Abū Ẓar Ghaffarī^{RAU} that he once inquired from the Holy Prophet^{SAW} what Kursī is and how could it be described? The Holy Prophet^{SAW} is reported to have said: I swear by **Allah**, Who owns my very life that the seven heavens and the earth compared to it are like the loop of a ring in a vast plain. And in another report the Kursī is like a ring in a vast plain, in comparison to 'Arsh.

In this sacred Āyah, **His** Attributes are expressed in such a unique manner, that even a pagan can understand that all Grandeur, Magnificence and Absolute rule and authority can only be attributed to the perfect Master.

It is popularly known as Āyat al Kursī and its manifold grace is mentioned in many sayings of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, who recommended its recitation after every obligatory Ṣalāt in order to guard against the whispers of Satan and for the attainment of **Allah**'s Mercy and Compassion.

There is no coercion in religion ... And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

Now there is no occasion for employing coercion in the matter of embracing Islām. The miracles of the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and the revelation of the Book have established the Truth and enlightened the path of life. Now every individual has the right to accept the Truth or reject it. In case of rejection he will not be allowed to create mischief or unrest in the world. Just as snakes or scorpions are killed in order to protect the creations, the believers must wage Jihād against the non-believers unless they agree to pay the prescribed tax and live in submission to Islamic law as law-abiding citizens. However, the right to accept Islām, which is a matter of conviction, will certainly be given to every individual, and there will be no coercion whatsoever.

A common misinterpretation of this Āyah at the Government level is that no one shall be asked about practising Islām. He may or may not offer Ṣalāt or fast during the month of Ramadhān. This is totally wrong and a misconception. No coercion is to be applied in embracing Islām. But once a person becomes Muslim, it is obligatory to abide by all the tenets of Islām and it is the responsibility of the ruler to punish the defaulters as enjoined by the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. Otherwise the ruler will become an accomplice and will be accountable along with each and every wrongdoer on the Day of Judgement.

Whenever a person renounces Satan, i.e. the devils from Jinn as well as from humans, it means that he gives up hope in them and starts having faith in **Allah**. Whoever makes **Allah** the centre of all his hopes holds on to a very strong cord,

which will never break. In simple words, he will always be successful. **Allah** indeed listens to everyone and is well aware of their secrets and intentions.

Allah is the friend of those who believe...therein shall they abide forever.

Allah is a friend of Muslims and supports them. When they concede to **His** Greatness **He** pulls them out of the quagmire of evil and shows them the light of Islām. As a result their Qulub are enlightened, their vision is broadened and they are blessed with clarity and purity of thought. Indeed **Allah** opens up the avenues of guidance unto such believers. And those who deny **His** Magnificence or associate their hopes with others are entrusted to the devils, which may either be from human beings or the Jinn. These devils allure them away from the light of Islām and guidance, into the darkness of disbelief and evil. Such misguided people shall dwell in Hell forever.

It must be remembered that no one shall be coerced into accepting Islām, but once a Muslim he will be made to practise it. Now if he turns a renegade he will be declared a rebel, for which the penalty is death. Yet those who do not embrace Islām, shall not be left without any check and balance. It is obligatory on every Muslim to fight against any non-believer who wishes to impose or has imposed his own ways of life on **Allah's** land. And during this Jihād the harmless amongst them, such as the old, the women, the children or the handicapped, will not be bothered. In short, it is the duty of all Muslims to eradicate evil and exploitation from **Allah's** land and establish peace and tranquillity.

Section 35

258. Have you not seen him, who argued with Ibrahīm about his **Rabb**, because **Allah** had given him kingship? Ibrahīm said, "My **Rabb** is **He Who** gives life and causes death." He said, "I give life and cause death." Ibrahīm said, "**Allah** brings the sun from the East, you bring it from the West." Thereupon the non-believer was dumbfounded. **Allah** does not guide the wrongdoers.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ
أَنَاءَاتِهِ اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّي
الَّذِي يُحْيِي، وَيُمِيتُ قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِي، وَأُمِيتُ
قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ
مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي
كَفَرُ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٥٨﴾

259. Or such as the one who passed by a town that had fallen on its roofs, completely in ruins. He said, "How will **Allah** bring it back to life after

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا
قَالَ أَنِّي يُحْيِي، هَذِهِ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ

its death?" Thereupon **Allah** caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him up and said, "How long have you remained thus?" He answered, "I have remained thus for a day or part of a day." **Allah** said, "No! You have remained so for a hundred years. Look at your food and your drink; they have not rotted; and look at your donkey. And that **We** may make you a sign unto the people. And look at the bones (of your donkey). How **We** put them together and clothe them with flesh. Then, when it became clear to him, he exclaimed, "I know that surely **Allah** has power over everything!"

مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ، قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتُ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالَ بَلْ لَبِثْتُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانْظُرْ إِلَى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ وَانْظُرْ إِلَى جِمَاركَ وَلِجَعْلِكَ ءَايَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَانْظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٦٩﴾

260. And recall when Ibrahīm said, "My **Rabb**! Show me how **You** give life to the dead?" **He** said, "Don't you believe?" He answered, "Yes! But to satisfy my heart." He said, "Take four birds as pets and place a part of them on every hill and then call them. They will come to you speeding. And know that surely **Allah** is Mighty, Wise."

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ ارْنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى قَالَ أُولَئِمُتُؤْمِنٌ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَئِن لَّا يَظْمِنَنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ أَجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٩﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Have you not seen him ...Allah does not guide the wrongdoers.

Faith cannot be imposed on anyone as it is a state, a feeling, which enters the heart by **Allah** 's will as a result of one's desire to turn to **Him**. If a heart is void of this desire altogether, no amount of effort or reasoning can bring about faith. Hence coercion is totally ruled out.

The example being presented here is of a person who argued with Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} over the Providence of **Allah** whereas it was **Allah Who** had given him the kingdom. In other words his own existence as well as the vast empire he ruled over was nothing but a manifestation of **His** Providence. What he really should have done was to be grateful to **Allah** but he opted for ingratitude and arrogance, and proclaimed himself as God saying, 'O people I am your **Rabb**, so do Sajdah before me'.

When Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} announced his Prophethood and broke all the idols, the king summoned him to the court and inquired as to which **Rabb** was he inviting the masses to? The king claimed that he was the **Rabb** of all and his Government was looking after the needs of each subject in his kingdom. Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} asserted that he invited the masses to the **Rabb Who** gave life and death, and was the Creator. Everyone has to experience death at a predestined time including those who falsely claim to be **Rabb**. The system of the universe is least affected by the birth or the death of such impostors. Had the king or others like him in the past been Rabbs, this universe would certainly not have survived without them. The real **Rabb** is the one **Who** controls life as well as death.

King Nimrūd obviously missed the point of Prophet Ibrāhīm's^{AS} argument altogether. He summoned two prisoners, released one and executed the other saying, "See I too can give life and death".

What a foolish argument it was! The king knew that the general public, who was to judge between the two, was primarily ignorant and would appreciate action instead of logic. But the Prophets^{AS} are blessed with clear signs from **Allah**. Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} reiterated that **Allah** is the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe. He has ordered the sun to rise from the East and to set in the West. If you are true in your claim, can you even for once alter this ordered course of **His** universe and make the sun to rise from the West? The king was flabbergasted. He knew very well that if he put the same question to Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}, the **Creator, Who** in reality makes the sun to rise from the East can also make it rise from the West on his request. And if this happens, all his subjects will accept the true faith immediately.

Totally defeated Nimrūd became furious and ordered that Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} be thrown into fire. According to a report this dialogue took place when Nimrūd had summoned Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} from the jail to condemn him to fire. He was thrown in the fire and Nimrūd, even after witnessing the transformation of fire into a beautiful garden, remained a non-believer. In fact **Allah** never blesses such remorseless sinners with guidance and faith. Is it not a great transgression to stuff one's heart with the lust for temporal grandeur while its actual function is to seek **Allah**? Such malefactors are never guided.

Or such as the one who passed by a town... Allah has power over everything!

Prophet 'Uzair's-^{AS} Experience

Yet another strange incident is that of a person who passed by a desolate city. He was Prophet 'Uzair-^{AS} (Ezra) and the city was Jerusalem which had been totally destroyed by a king named Bakht Naṣr (Nebuchadnezzar). When the Banī Isrā'īl crossed all limits of wickedness, Allah as a punishment, set on them Bakht Naṣr, an arch tyrant who rampaged the city, set ablaze all the copies of Torah, committed large scale genocide and took the survivors as prisoners. Prophet 'Uzair-^{AS} escaped to the wilderness; it is a Divine rule that whenever nations are inflicted with collective punishment, the noble amongst them are separated. After Bakht Naṣr had departed from the city after plunder, Prophet 'Uzair-^{AS} returned. He saw a completely destroyed city with no habitation, life, greenery, or trees, but only the rotten dead bodies, torn to pieces, scattered all over the ruins. Overwhelmed by the desolate sight, he exclaimed how could they be brought back to life from such a state of dilapidation. He did believe in Allah's Omnipotence, but was merely curious to know what would be the process of their resurrection. Beasts and scavengers had devoured the parts of their corpses. Some of the corpses had burnt to ashes and were blown away by the wind.

Pondering over the episode, he tied down his mount, laid aside some grape juice and figs etc. that he had collected from the jungle as food and stretched himself to rest. Allah let slumber overpower him, which was quite similar to death. Yet he did not actually die, because if a person returns miraculously from Barzakh, the rules of Shari'ah are no longer binding on him, whereas Prophet 'Uzair-^{AS} lived to perform his duty of inviting people to Allah. Neither did the Spirit leave his body, nor was he in any contact with the living. In fact, he remained in a suspended state between life and death.

Allah by His Omnipotence not only protected his body but also preserved his food. The lapse of one entire century could spoil nothing and Allah kept him and his provisions out of everyone's sight. No one spotted him or his food for a hundred years nor any dust gathered on them.

When Allah took him out of the slumber, he saw no change in himself or his dress. On one side a whole century had gone by and on the other it was as if only a moment had past. It was just like the Holy Prophet's-^{SAW} journey in the Night of Ascension. He went to Bait al Maqdas, on to the heavens and onwards, witnessed Paradise and Hell and returned to his still warm bed while the chain on the door was still in motion. The time stood by and the clock did not tick even once.

In the meantime Allah had emancipated the Banī Isrā'īl from the clutches of Bakht Naṣr after 70 years of captivity, who was killed and they returned to rebuild the city. In 30 years the city, duly rebuilt, flourished once again.

When Prophet 'Uzair^{AS} woke up, **Allah** inquired of his sojourn. He replied that he had rested for a day or so. **Allah** informed him that he had stayed a hundred years and because of **His** Omnipotence he did not even feel the duration. Likewise was his food preserved, unmolested by any living being or the weather. However, his mount was not given the Divine Protection in order to provide him with a visual demonstration. He was shown the reassembly of and how the missing particles of its flesh, whether devoured by the beasts and the birds or carried away by the wind, or washed away by the stormy waters were brought back to quicken the animal. These miracles were wrought in answer to his query as to how the Resurrection will take place and above all, his own self became an evidence of **Allah's** Omnipotence for others.

Hearing by the Dead

Our times have ushered in a debate whether or not the dead can hear. Those who do not believe in hearing by the dead refer to this incident and argue that Prophet 'Uzair^{AS} did not know anything about the time he had spent sleeping, therefore, those in Barzakh cannot hear anything. This argument is irrelevant because he neither experienced the natural death nor did he enter Barzakh nor did the episode progress to the extent of requital for his deeds. Regardless of whether the dead can hear or not, no inference can be drawn from this incident. The real issue is the denial of life after death, which was and still is, the reason for the non-believers' adherence to disbelief. This repudiation stems from the inability of human intellect to grasp the facts life after life.

In the case of Prophet 'Uzair^{AS}, **Allah** demonstrated **His** Omnipotence in many ways: He preserved the food and water in its original condition, concealed from the world; **He** also preserved his physical body, his garments and provisions and did not even let him feel the passage of a century. At the same time, his donkey died, decayed and scattered during the course of the century, **Allah** quickened in the presence of **His** Prophet^{AS} and said to him: "You are now a manifestation of **My** Omnipotence; see for yourself the desolate city that astonished you, flourishing once again!"

Now Prophet 'Uzair^{AS} went to the city and announced that he was **Allah's** Prophet. Many reports show that the people demanded evidence from him. The greatest evidence was that the Banī Israīl had been without a copy of Torah, for a hundred years, as Bakht Nasr burnt all. **Allah** put it in his Qalb and he dictated it to them. The whole incident was indeed a great miracle and a source of guidance. But what happened really? The Banī Israīl declared Prophet 'Uzair^{AS} as **Allah's** son, because they had perverted hearts and were incapable of receiving guidance. **Allah** deprived them of **His** cognition and nearness while Prophet 'Uzair^{AS} proclaimed with full conviction that **Allah** is Omnipotent and can do whatever **He** pleases.

And recall when Ibrāhīm said, ...Allah is Mighty, Wise."

Another strong evidence is the incident of Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS}, when he requested **Allah** to demonstrate how **He** would quicken the dead. **Allah** said: "Don't you believe in it." The Prophet^{AS} replied that he did believe, but wished to see it with his physical eyes so as to attain the highest level of conviction.

This is a world of cause and effect. Therefore, the means are of vital importance. So much so that **Allah Himself** creates the means and manifests the results as their product. Similarly seeing is more effective for attaining inner satisfaction and feelings than listening.

When Prophet Mūsā^{AS} heard about his nation's indulgence in the calf worship through revelation, he did not throw away the Tablets of Torah although aggrieved and annoyed. But as soon as he witnessed the wrongdoing of his people, he threw them away in disgust and pulled his brother Prophet Hārūn^{AS} by his beard. Similarly, Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} requested **Allah** that though he did believe and know through Revelation, but the effects peculiar to seeing with physical eyes would strengthen his faith to perfection. Therefore, he may be shown **Allah's Own** way of reviving the dead.

The Etiquette of Supplication

The Divine Court is the most exalted, and the applicant ought to be extremely cautious. Just see the example of Prophet ' Uzair^{AS}. He wanted to witness the Resurrection but the words he chose were of amazement as to how it would take place. **Allah** kept him in a state of slumber, neither dead nor alive in the literal sense, for a hundred years and then enabled him to witness the Resurrection.

Here Prophet Ibrāhīm's^{AS} style is different. He requested **Allah** to demonstrate to him how **He** gives life to the dead, and his wish was granted right away. Therefore, while presenting one's motive before **Allah**, extreme care and reverence has to be observed. So **Allah** directed Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} to take four birds and tame them as pets to an extent that they become attached with him and respond to his call immediately. Even here the employment of means was not ignored, and an affiliation with him was made a pre-requisite for the pets to respond to his call. Similarly faith cannot be attained without the development of an attachment with the Prophet^{AS}. It is impossible that a person is an antagonist to the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and yet can remain a Muslim. This enmity, may it be in the form of animosity towards him, his relatives or his followers, leads to disbelief.

The same is true for receiving spiritual beneficence from a Shaikh. Until and unless the seeker does not develop an attachment with him no spiritual beneficence can be drawn. Although enmity with the Aulia is not infidelity, for it is neither obligatory to believe in them nor can anyone be termed with certainty as

a Wali, yet Maulāna Thānvī^{RA} has rightly observed that the holder of such enmity usually dies a non-believer.

So Prophet Ibrāhīm^{AS} was directed to first tame the four birds, slaughter them and mince them together, scatter the flesh over different hillocks, then to call them and they would promptly come running to him. He did exactly what he was told and kept the birds' heads with him. He called for the birds one by one and its blood whether dropped on a rock or absorbed in the soil, or mixed with the blood of other birds would begin to collect together, followed by its flesh, bones and feathers. All reassembled under his direct observation and each body unit returned to its head and all became living birds once again. It must be absolutely clear that **Allah** is Mighty and can do anything **He** pleases. But at the same time **He** is also the Wisest, **Who** has predetermined the time for the occurrence of every event.

If only man contemplates how the ingredients of his body were scattered over the globe before he was born, he will realize that they would not possibly be more scattered after death! The food, the medicine, and whatever we eat are the various forms of four elements: clay, water, fire and air. Somewhere these elements are in the form of grains, rice, sugarcane, or spices; at others they assume the shape of greenery and fodder consumed by animals, and come back to us as milk, butter and meat. All this process is not just a coincidence but a thoroughly planned project with no element of chance. Each and every grain predestined by **Allah** for each individual is always heading towards its destiny, to an extent that after consumption by a person, if it is meant for his offspring, it is preserved in his loins. Similarly, out of the food consumed and digested by a mother, the portion destined for the unborn baby does not become a part of her body, but is passed on to the baby.

The matters of the Ākhirah are totally in **His** Control. He is fully capable of punishing or rewarding the scattered particles of a body even if these have become part of another body.

In this world although the physical body itself bears all responsibility but every pleasure and pain leaves an impact on the Spirit also. While in Barzakh this is reversed and each and every particle of the physical body, irrespective of its location, feels the impact. On the Day of Judgement and thereafter both the Spirit and the body would become equally sentient.

The non-believers' antagonism to **Allah**'s obedience is because of their denial of life after life, which is proved beyond any doubt in the above three incidents. Now the examples of those noble souls who spend in **Allah**'s cause; who believe and believe in life after life, and exert in the best possible manner for the betterment of their eternal lives, is being presented in the Section that follows.

261. The likeness of those who spend their possessions in the way of **Allah**, is that of a grain which grows seven ears and each ear has a hundred grains. And **Allah** grants manifold increase to whom **He** pleases. And **Allah** is Bountiful, Knowing.
262. Those who spend their possessions in the cause of **Allah**, and do not follow up their spending by reminders of generosity and hurt, their reward is with their **Rabb**, and on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.
263. A kind word and forgiveness are better than charity followed by hurt. And **Allah** is Self-Sufficing, Forbearing.
264. O you who believe! Do not annul your charity by reminders of your generosity and hurt, like the one who spends his wealth for show off and neither believes in **Allah** nor the Last Day. His likeness is that of a smooth rock with dust on it; heavy rain falls and leaves it bare. Such people shall have no power over their acts. And **Allah** guides not the non-believers.
265. And the likeness of those who spend their possessions seeking to please **Allah** and to strengthen their souls is that of a garden on height; a torrent falls on it and doubles its fruit yield, and if it does not receive heavy rain, even light moisture

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَتَتْ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ
سُبُلَةٍ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ
وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتَّبِعُونَ
مَآ أَنفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلَا أَذًى لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ
وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

﴿٦٣﴾ قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ صَدَقَةٍ
يَتَّبِعُهَا أَذًى وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٤﴾

يَتَّبِعُهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَبْطِلُوا صَدَقَتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ
وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ
وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ
صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تَرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ
صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ
مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيتًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ
جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَثَلَّثَ أَكْثَلَهَا
ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِيبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلَّ

suffices it. And **Allah** sees all that you do.

وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٦٦﴾

266. Would any of you like that he has a garden of date-palms and vines, with streams flowing underneath, for him are all kinds of fruit, and old age overtakes him while his children are weak, and a fiery whirlwind should hit it and all is burnt up? Thus **Allah** makes **His** **Āyāt** clear to you that you may reflect.

أَيُّدُ أَحَدِكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّن نَّجِيلٍ
أَعْنَابٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ
فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ
وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَّةٌ مُّعْتَقَةٌ فَأَصَابَهَا إِغْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ
فَأَحْتَرَقَتْ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٦٦﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

The likeness of those who spend...And Allah is Self-Sufficing, Forbearing.

A believer spending in **Allah**'s cause is like a farmer sowing a crop. Apparently he toils to prepare the field and sprinkles the hard earned grain over it. To an onlooker, unaware of the outcome, the whole effort may appear to be a waste of labour and grain. But the one who knows the results guards the field until the time when a single grain yields seven ears and each ear is so healthy that it yields a hundred grains. Thus the little amount of grain, which he had sown, becomes source of a large stock. But all this is possible when the soil is fertile, proper effort is exerted in its tillage, a superior quality of seed is used and sown at the right time and a good care is taken of the whole process.

Similarly, for charity the first prerequisite is faith, which means that one believes this world to be tilth of the **Ākhirah**. Then the seed is to be pure i.e. the wealth spent is earned through lawful and permissible means, because **Allah** accepts nothing unlawful. And this wealth must be spent on the deserving people in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Prophet ^{SAW} and must not be squandered away. In return, the Almighty may reward such people manifold as **He** is extremely Generous and Beneficent and is fully aware of the purity of the motives of **His** subjects. Therefore, the more you will strive for **Him**; the greater will **He** increase your rewards, for **He** is extremely Generous.

However, do guard against reiterating your favour and causing hurt to the recipient. He should not be humiliated or embarrassed by making public the favour. Those who thus safeguard their charity will certainly find their rewards

with **Allah**. They will neither feel sorry for what they have previously spent nor have any fears for the future.

If one does not have anything to give away in charity or he does not wish to spend, he should at least speak kindly to the needy. The kind words are also a form of charity and are indeed better than charity followed by insult and reproach. One should at least express his inability to help in gentle words. If the needy is insolent or importune, it should be overlooked. **Allah** is Independent of all wants, so anyone who spends does so for his own benefit and not to do **Him** any good. **He** is very Tolerant. He ignores your countless faults, and does not punish you at once. Now if a needy asks for help in **His** Name, he should not be scolded but spoken to graciously.

*O you who believe! ...And **Allah** guides not the non-believers.*

Those who believe in **Allah**, in the **Ākhirah** and in the tenets of **Dīn** must not ruin their charity by taunt or reproach to the beneficiary. It would amount to losing the tilth before any yield and the whole effort would go waste, leaving only anguish behind. It will be just like spending for show without faith in **Allah** and in the **Ākhirah**. Dissimulation vitiates faith and beliefs and does not befit a believer, who spends only for seeking **Allah**'s Pleasure.

While **Allah** is witnessing and is Aware of every action, why display before people to seek their applause? And if spending is only to gain popularity, it will be like cultivating a rock covered by a thin layer of soil, which shall be washed away by the first spell of rain leaving the rock bare, with no results. A non-believer wastes his charity altogether because he is devoid of faith in the **Ākhirah** and spends only for worldly gain or fame. **Allah** does not bless such ingrates even with the capacity to be guided, as they prefer fame over **His** Pleasure.

*And the likeness of those ... and **Allah** sees all that you do.*

And those who spend in **Allah**'s Cause purely to seek **His** Countenance with a devoted heart can be well compared to a garden on an elevated land. **Tafsīr-e-Mazhari** defines **Rabwah** as a piece of land astride a canal, which is neither too high to be irrigated nor low enough to allow stagnant water. Indeed it is a land evenly placed by the canal. Such land is always of superior quality. When it receives a considerably generous downpour it yields double the expected quantity of fruits. And even if there is no rain, a drizzle is enough to do the job. This example signifies that the intention should be pure for it is the land, the money spent should be lawful for it is the seed, the spending should be in line with **Sunnah** and the charity should be guarded against follow ups for expressing favours and dissimulation. Such charity is bound to attract **Allah**'s Mercy, **Who** will increase its reward manifold. **Allah** is well Aware of all your actions and nothing is out of **His** View.

Would any of you like ... that you may reflect.

Would anyone ever like to be in a situation whereby he owns orchards of grapes and date palms laden with fruit, with water channels flowing by, which he grew after a lifetime of hard work and labour. And then when he grows old and is unable to put in much effort, and has dependant women and children, a fiery whirlwind strikes his orchard setting it ablaze. Just imagine his ordeal! Similarly if someone rightfully spends in **Allah's** Cause, but a desire for display or fame creeps into his heart, after death when he will be in dire need of good acts, he will see the blooming orchard of his charity reduced to ashes by the fire of corrupted intention. How helpless and wistful he would be when there will be no hope for any help or assistance from any quarter, nor will there be an opportunity for atonement!

These illustrations are a Divine invitation for people to ponder over lest their worships are washed away unwittingly.

Section 37

267. O you who believe! Spend of the good things you have earned and of what **We** have brought forth for you from the earth; and do not give bad things, which you yourself would not accept without disdain. And know that **Allah** is Self-Sufficing, Praise-Worthy.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ
مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ
بِآخِذِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُغِشُّوا فِيهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ
غَفِيرٌ حَمِيدٌ ﴿٢٦٧﴾

268. Satan threatens you with poverty and counsels indecency, whereas **Allah** promises you His Forgiveness and bounty. And **Allah** is Bountiful, Knowing.

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُمْ
بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُمْ مَغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ
وَفَضْلًا وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٨﴾

269. He grants wisdom to whom **He** will. And whoever is granted wisdom, is indeed given ample benefit. But none takes heed except persons of understanding.

يُوْنِى الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَآءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ
الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا
وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٢٦٩﴾

270. And whatever you spend in charity or whatever you vow, be sure that **Allah** knows it. And the wrongdoers have no helpers.

وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِنْ نَفَقَةٍ أَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِنْ نَذْرٍ
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ
مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿٢٧٠﴾

271. If you do acts of charity openly, it is good. But if you give to the needy in secret, it will be better for you. And **He** will expiate some of your evil deeds. And **Allah** is Aware of what you do.
272. It is not for you to guide people, but **Allah** guides whom He will. And whatever of good you spend, it is for your own souls, provided you spend only to seek **Allah**'s Countenance. And whatever of good you spend, shall be repaid to you, and you shall not be treated unjustly.
273. Charity is for the poor, who are wholly engaged in **Allah**'s Cause, unable to go about the earth (for livelihood). The unknowing takes them for the affluent because of their modesty, you can recognize them by their mark: they do not beg from people importunately. And whatever of good you spend, **Allah** knows it well.

إِنْ تُبْدُوا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنِعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءَ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَيُكَفِّرُ عَنْكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٧١﴾

﴿٢٧٢﴾ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَا تُنْفِسْكُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا إِلَّا لِأَنْتَ فَعَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُؤَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٧٣﴾

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أُخْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَاقًا وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٧٣﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

O you who believe! ... And know that Allah is Self-Sufficing, Praise-Worthy.

Charity must be made out of one's own earnings. Whatever is spent must be legitimate, as acquisition of wealth through illegitimate means cannot be termed as earning. Rather those indulging in such unfair practices try to conceal the illegal sources of their wealth from others. Whatever is spent in **Allah**'s Way from a lawfully earned wealth must be good and proper, may it be grain, fruit or any other commodity. If someone gives away something obtained unlawfully, **Allah** will not accept it. According to **Hadith**, evil can be washed away by virtue, but an impurity cannot wash away another impurity. However, if a person owns commodities that

are inferior in quality he will have to give from what he has. Or if he owns some good quality, and some relatively defective things he can give from both. This spending includes all aspects of charity, whether mandatory or optional.

"And what we bring forth from the earth for you" means Zakāt of the land, termed as 'Usher. According to the Ḥanafī School of Thought, 'Usher is payable on every holding of the land. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} has decreed payment of one-tenth of the produce of the crop from the land served by rainfall and one-twentieth of the produce of land irrigated by canals. Al-An'ām (and pay what is due of them upon the harvest day 6:141) clearly enjoins 'Usher. The tax levied on land by an Islamic Government is termed as 'Usher and Kharāj. The former is not merely a tax but a fiscal worship and since a Muslim is obliged to worship he pays 'Usher from his land produce. Kharāj is a tax on a non-believer who is not obliged to worship, but being a dweller of the State he pays it to the State on his land produce. 'Usher is similar to Zakāt, the only difference is that the latter is payable after the lapse of one year while the former is payable on the day of harvest. If there is no produce there is no 'Usher, but Zakāt remains payable even if there is no profit from the liable holdings. Moreover Zakāt is obligatory only on Muslims and its expenditure on non-Muslims is not allowed. For further details Muftī Muḥammad Shafī's^{RA} Nizām al Arādhī may be consulted.

Always strive for perfection in all that you offer in **His** Name. You would yourself not like to accept something inferior; except in the case where you are at risk of a total loss and overlook quality to accept at least something rather than losing all. But **Allah** is in no need of your presents, which even you deem inferior. Remember that **He** is Perfect in **His** Being and in **His** Attributes; and all **His** Actions are worthy of high admiration.

Satan threatens you with poverty ... And Allah is Bountiful, Knowing.

Satan instils in your heart the fear that you will be reduced to poverty by your contributing to works of charity. You must not lend an ear to him. In fact he suggests immodesty. If you heed him, he would not stop at restraining you from charity but would also make you indulge in immorality. One of the reasons for the waywardness of youth today is that Zakāt has not been paid on the wealth inherited by them. As a result it is spent on lewdness and obscenity. This is the case with the wealth earned by lawful means where share of the poor is withheld by non payment of Zakāt, not to speak of the wealth generated through unlawful means altogether!

Allah promises forgiveness and rewards to those who spend in **His** Cause. The charity becomes a source of expiation for some of the misdeeds and may also bring fabulous rewards in the Ākhirah. It may also become the cause of affluence and abundance of provisions in this world. **Allah** is indeed Generous and knows the donors, their intentions and where they spend.

He grants wisdom... But none takes heed except persons of understanding.

The term al Hikmah (Wisdom) refers to the completion of a word or an action to perfection. This term has been frequently used in the Qurān and all explanations given by various commentators lead to the same meaning.

According to Tafsīr-e Mazharī this wisdom refers to useful and genuine knowledge that prompts action in accordance with **Allah's** approval. Apparently this knowledge is the domain of Prophets^{AS} to whom the entire mankind must turn for its attainment. It may well mean understanding the Dīn. To comprehend the Divine Injunctions, and know their blessings and benefits is the real worship, leading to salvation in both the worlds. **Allah** may give such wisdom to whomever **He** pleases, and surely such a person is blessed with ample good.

This shows that when **Allah** is pleased with someone **He** grants him the understanding of the Prophetic knowledge, and it is only then that magnificence of Islām truly permeates his heart. According to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, **Allah** gives the worldly affluence to both **His** enemies and friends alike while only the latter are blessed with Dīn; and only those who accept the truth are wise. Only those ponder over Divine Knowledge whose thinking is free of Satanic ideas; a feat possible only when the soul-at-evil is subjugated.

Tasawwuf Subjugates Evil Soul (Nafs-e Ammarah)

It is Taṣawwuf, which harnesses the evil soul, and all efforts are concentrated towards achieving this end. This is why it is imperative to attain spiritual beneficence from the Aulia and to undertake such exercises, which help subdue the evil inclinations of the soul.

And whatever you ...And the wrongdoers have no helpers.

And whatever people spend whether in obedience or in affront, rightfully or wrongfully, sincerely or in pretence, good or bad, is known to **Allah**. And the vows made to **Allah**, whether in the form of physical worship or charity, correctly or unlawfully are also known to **Him**. As for making a vow to do a certain act, it is necessary that the vow should be taken as obligatory, but the act should not be an obligation itself. The vow is to be undertaken purely for **Allah**. For example, Ṣalāt is obligatory and one cannot vow that he will offer Ṣalāt-al-Fajr or any other obligatory Ṣalāt, but he may vow to offer voluntary Ṣalāt.

All matters pertaining to vows, **Allah** knows their legitimacy, fulfilment and other details. He will requite whatever is deserved. And those who ignore the bounds laid down by **Allah** and are found guilty of irregularities and disobedience shall find no helper to rescue them from **His** Punishment.

If you do acts of charity openly... and you shall not be treated unjustly.

If alms are given publicly it is a good thing insofar as it sets an example for others. It is, however, difficult because it does involve a risk of dissimulation and sometimes, even vanity. It has a number of similar other complications. The easiest way is to give away the alms secretly for it would ensure the dignity of the recipient and at the same time protect the donor from any difficulty. The quantity of the donation will not be known publicly, which is an advantage. Even if there is no worldly benefit, **Allah** will make this charity a source of atonement for some of the misdeeds and will elevate the spiritual status of the donor. The atonement of sins is not confined to secret-alms giving only; it is also attained when giving away publicly. The real aim of spending is the expiation of sins and the attainment of **Allah's** nearness, **Who** is well Aware of all actions.

According to the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}, alms given secretly extinguish **Allah's** Wrath and a kind treatment to the kindred prolongs one's life. The commentators have collected many a Ḥadīth in this context. The voluntary alms can be given to both the Muslim as well as the non-believer. The donor must not withhold alms from a needy non-believer relative, waiting for him to embrace Islām, because guidance is purely **Allah's** Endowment and whoever will turn to **Him** will be blessed with it. It is not the Holy Prophet's^{-SAW} responsibility to impart guidance. **Allah** is **Rabb** of everyone and provides livelihood to all. So do not deprive the non-believers from voluntary alms as in any case you spend for your own good and you will be rewarded accordingly.

Now whether the beggar is a Muslim or a non-believer, he eats in the name of **Allah**. If the latter prostrates before someone else it is none of the donor's business. It is between him and **Allah**. You are not doing a favour to the beggar as your act of charity is not for him, but for your own redemption in both worlds. You seek to please **Allah** and strive to know **His** Grandeur. Your aims are high and your wish is indeed commendable. So be mindful that the ladder you use for reaching your goal should not be made of inferior material, nor should it be weakly supported. Therefore, spend in **Allah's** Way what is good and have trust in **Him**, for **He** will return it multiplied manifold and there will be no injustice.

It must be remembered that voluntary charity can be given to non-Muslims too, but the obligatory alms such as Zakāt, 'Usher etc. payable by the Muslims will only be spent on Muslims. Any payment on this account to the non-Muslims will be null and void. These obligatory alms are those, which have been enjoined on the Muslims and were collected by the State in the era of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. Jihād was declared against those who refused to pay Zakāt soon after his passing away, just as it was waged against impostors and apostates. The first Caliph Ḥadhrat Abū Bakr - Ṣiddīq^{-RA} himself led the army which fought for three days and nights against those who had refused to pay Zakāt, and Ḥadhrat 'Alī^{-RA} fought by his side. Zakāt and 'Usher were promptly collected during the times of all Caliphs

thereafter. Caliph 'Ali^{RAU} himself paid the Zakāt and as leader of the Muslims collected and spent it rightfully on the affairs of the State. How come Fiqh Jafferiah, which originated three hundred and fifty years after that time, denies it? It is indeed an enormity!

Charity is for the poor ... Allah knows it well.

Charity is for the poor who cannot spare time to earn their living because of pre-occupations in religious pursuits such as education or Jihād. They are so modest that they do not even ask for help and are content to the extent that people take them for the affluent. But they can be recognised by their pallid faces and ragged garments. They do not beg people and consider it below dignity. Starvation and poverty cannot detract them from their mission. They are the people, giving charity to whom is the most rewarding with Allah, Who is a well aware of all that is given in His way.

Section 38

274. Those who spend their possessions night and day, secretly and openly, shall have their reward with their Rabb. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِالْإِتِلِ وَالنَّهَارِ
سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ
وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

275. Those who devour usury, will not rise except like one whom Satan has made deranged with his touch. This is because they say, "Trade is like usury" while Allah has permitted trade and forbidden usury. Whoever desists after receiving the admonition from his Rabb, may keep his past gains, and his matter will be with Allah. But those who revert, will be the inmates of the Fire, therein they shall abide forever.

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا
يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَعْرِ
ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ
اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ
مِّنْ رَبِّهِ فَانْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ
وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا
خَالِدُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

276. Allah destroys usury and augments charity. And Allah does not love any ingrate sinner.

يَمْحَقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُزِيهِ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَاللَّهُ
لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

277. Surely those who believe and do good deeds, and establish Ṣalāt and

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ

give Zakāt, their reward shall be with their **Rabb**. And on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

278. O you who believe! Fear **Allah** and give up all usury due to you, if you are believers.

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ
مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾

279. But if you do not, then take a notice of war from **Allah** and His Messenger. And if you repent, then you shall be entitled to your principal sums. Do not wrong others, and you shall not be wronged.

إِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ
وَإِن تَتُوبُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ
لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

280. If the debtor is in difficulty, grant him respite till time of ease. But if you remit, it will be better for you; if you but knew.

وَإِن كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ وَأَن
تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

281. And fear the Day when you shall be brought back to **Allah**. Then every soul will be repaid in full what it has earned, and none shall be wronged.

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَدَّ
كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

Those who spend their possessions ... nor shall they grieve.

Those who spend in **Allah's** Ways in public or in private and are the first to answer any call for it without let or hindrance, indeed follow the most illustrious Companion and the first Caliph, Ḥadhrat Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq^{RAU}. The poet of the East 'Allama Iqbāl^{RAU} has exquisitely sketched his noble profile in a piece of Persian verse:

He kept our master at peace from foes
Of our valley of Sina, he was the sage;

His wealth was the rainfall that made the crops of the Ummah grow,
He was the second of the two, in the cave, in Badar and in the grave.

The acts of charity by the Companions^{RAU} and their sacrifices have adorned the history and amazed the heavens. A people the like of whom the sun did not witness before, nor can hope for it ever after. Immense rewards await them for their devotions. They shall neither fear any wrong nor have any regrets over their past, nor any reservations for the future. Their tomorrow would always be brighter than today.

So anyone who will spend in the Cause of **Allah** can hope for excellent rewards. Alms mean giving away wealth purely for seeking **Allah's** Pleasure and without any vested interests. Directly opposite to it is usury, which means taking someone's wealth without returning anything against it.

Those who devour usury... therein they shall abide forever.

Here the expression, "Those who devour usury" alludes to those who take it irrespective of how they utilize it, whether on food or clothing or construction of houses, etc. All forms fall in the category of "devouring", as the one who takes it is in complete possession of the usury money and can use it any way he likes. And there is no way it can ever be returned. On the Yaum al Qiyamah, such people will be standing as if Satan has rendered them lunatic by embracing them.

Influence of Satan and Jinn

This shows that due to the influence of Satan and Jinn, a person can lose senses or become a lunatic. The Qurān, Hadīth and repeated observations, prove this fact. Physicians also agree that one of the causes of epilepsy, lunacy or unconsciousness could be the influence of Jinn. It must also be remembered that the requital is directly related to the action. In this world the usurer is so callous that he neither bothers about **Allah's** Commandments nor the distress and the misery of the poor. When he will rise on the Day of Resurrection, he would be in a state of lunacy as if possessed by a Jinn. This is because when he was alive, he used to say that usury was the same as trading; because the aim of trading is to earn profit and increase the wealth and usury also increases wealth, so why was trading allowed and usury forbidden? But he forgets that **Allah**, the Sovereign Master has allowed the one and disallowed the other, as **He** knows what is good and what is bad for **His** creation than the creation knows itself. The first thing is that **Allah** is the

Ruler. When **He** decrees, the matter is decided and no one has the right to challenge or question **His** decision.

Secondly the person claiming usury to be lawful was merely relying on logical reasoning, while the decision is authoritative. **Allah** is not only the **Ruler** but also the **Rabb**, the **Creator** of the all systems of the world, aware of **His** creation, as well as of that, which is beneficial or harmful for them. So when **He** has declared usury as prohibited, it certainly has some pernicious aspects, whether we understand this partially or fail to comprehend it at all. It is possible for us to foresee our personal gain or loss to an extent, but the global effects of an act can only be known to the All-Knowing.

Anyone who after having received the Divine decision refrains from dealings involving usury and stops taking it retains whatever he has already taken. Apparently his penitence is accepted, though only **Allah**, the Reckoner, knows his inner intention. But if after repenting, he once again starts taking usury, this act will lead him into Hell, even if he believes it to be prohibited. However, a person who takes interest believing it to be prohibited will not be condemned to Hell forever. (**Allah** knows the best).

According to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, the flesh formed by prohibited food deserves to burn in Fire because it is a great sin. Ibn-e-Kathīr and Tafsīr-e-Mazharī have quoted Aḥādīth saying that usury involves seventy sins of which the least is committing adultery with one's mother. May **Allah** protect us! Such a sin will take a person to Hellfire and if he believes usury to be lawful, it is downright disbelief and he will be condemned to Hell forever. For details with regard to difference between trading and usury Tafsīr-e-Mazharī or Mu'ārif al-Qurān may be consulted.

***Allah** destroys usury and augments charity...does not love any ingrate sinner.*

Allah encourages charity and wipes out usury. He dislikes and is furious with the non-believers who believe usury to be lawful, and sinners indulging in such a major offence. Such characters earn **His** Wrath. It must be remembered that those dealing in usury, whether on giving or receiving end, as well as the one who scribes the contract, are equally guilty. Moreover a usurer does not achieve the motive for which he indulges in such transactions, as **Allah** declares that **He** abolishes usury.

It is a common sight that betting renders many millionaires broke within no time. Wealth is not acquired for its own sake; neither are gold and silver edible commodities. The real purpose of wealth is to acquire things of bodily comfort. A usurer seldom spends on his own comforts and even if he does, **Allah** denies him the peace of mind, the inner comfort. What is the use of palatial abodes where one

cannot sleep without taking tranquillizers? And lastly all the wealth amassed will be left behind and will surely invoke eternal torment in the Ākhirah.

Tafsīr-e-Mazharī quotes a Ḥadīth with reference to the Night of Ascension. The Holy Prophet ^{-SAW} witnessed some people lying on the way. They had transparent bellies as big as large cellars, infested by snakes. Then from a distance came the sound of people rushing. These unfortunate souls tried their best to remove themselves from the way but their bellies would not budge an inch and they were over-urn by a mob. Angel Jibrīl ^{-AS} identified these victims as usurers and the people over-running them as the hordes of Pharaoh who are brought to the fire every morning and evening. They scream while running: 'O **Allah**, let Yaum al Qiyamah never come!' According to another Ḥadīth the Holy Prophet ^{-SAW} witnessed some people in a canal of blood. They would struggle to the bank but an angel would stuff their mouths with stones and they would stumble back into it. Angel Jibrīl ^{-AS} said that they were usurers. Such dreadful punishments are being inflicted in Barzakh while much more awaits them in the Ākhirah.

As for the charity, **Allah** puts Barakah in the wealth of the donor. His heart is at peace and he experiences such pleasure in a shack, which a usurer yearns for in his palace. Charity will be increased a thousand times in the Ākhirah, to an extent that a date given in **Allah's** Way will grow to the size of mount Uḥad. People spending in **His** Way have never been seen broke; they are rather blessed with contentment. They live peaceful lives and their rewards in the Ākhirah are unimaginable. The highest reward, of course, is **Allah's** pleasure, which a usurer can never dream of!

Surely those who believe... And on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

The right and the only path leading to eternal bliss has been highlighted; it is to believe in **Allah** and to act righteously. Faith is consummated when one's conduct is governed by one's beliefs. All aspects of one's life, ethical as well as practical, must be controlled by the faith that one claims to have. And then one should exert all possible efforts in worships. He should establish Ṣalāt with full devotion and pay Zakāt promptly and must perform all the physical and the monetary acts of worship devotedly. For such people await great rewards with **Allah** and they shall neither fear nor grieve. They are the ones who are grateful to **Allah** for **His** Blessings and hope for more in the future.

O you who believe! Do not wrong others, and you shall not be wronged.

The believers are persuaded to fear **Allah** and never fail to seek **His** Pleasure. Because usury has been declared prohibited by **Him**, so they must waive off all that is left. If they are true to their word and believed from the core of their hearts, they will understand that there is no alternative but to obey. However, if they do not give up usury, their faith is a hoax and they must get ready for war with **Allah** and **His** Prophet ^{-SAW}! In other words, it is the duty of a Muslim ruler to forcibly

abolish usury, and to declare Jihād against those involved in its transactions if they are a strong group, until they submit.

The same rule applies to Ṣalāt, Fasting and Zakāt. Anyone who denies will be renegade, deserving death penalty. If they are a large group, it will be obligatory for the Muslim ruler to declare Jihād against them, until they submit or are slain. If a person neither denies nor fulfils these obligations, he will be a malefactor and will be imprisoned until he submits. If he dies without repentance, no funeral Ṣalāt will be offered for him and he will not be buried in a Muslim graveyard.

Those who repent are entitled to receive the principal amount. So neither be cruel to others by claiming more, nor withhold the payment of principal amount to anyone. It proves a point that if a usurer fails to repent, his principal amount will also be confiscated. If the creditor finds the debtor in dire straits, he must be patient and kind by giving him respite to return the principal amount until affluence. And if the debtor is a destitute then remit him the debt altogether for the sake of Allah. This would be a source of earning great reward, if only one could understand!

If the debtor is in difficulty ... and none shall be wronged.

According to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, those who grant the poor respite in the payment of debts, or waive it off completely for Allah's sake shall be under the shade of His 'Arsh on the Day when there will be no other shade. So it is best to prepare for that day and reserve a place of protection. That is the Day when every individual will be requited and no one shall be wronged. Each person would be judged in terms of his precepts and practices and the requital will be totally fair, without the slightest error.

Section 39

282. O you who believe! When you make a contract of debt for a stated time, record it in writing. And the scribe should write it down justly between you, and should not refuse to write. As Allah has taught him, so he should write. And let the debtor dictate and let him remain conscious of Allah, his Rabb, and not decrease anything. If the one who owes is witless or infirm or unable to dictate then let his guardian dictate justly. And call upon two of your men as witnesses.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ وَلْيَكْتُبَ بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ وَلَا يَأْبَ كَاتِبٌ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ فَلْيَكْتُبْ وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا يَبْخَسَ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا فَإِنْ كَانَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا أَوْ ضَعِيفًا أَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يُعْلِلَ هُوَ فليُمْلِلْ وَلِيُّهُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا

And if two be not men, then a man and two women who are mutually acceptable as witnesses, so that if one of them errs the other will remind her. And let the witnesses not refuse when they are called upon. And be not averse to write it down, be it small or big, with its terms. It is most equitable in the sight of **Allah**, and most reliable for evidence, and more likely to prevent doubts unless it be a spot transaction between you, for then there shall be no blame on you if you do not write it. And take witnesses when you make commercial contract. And neither the scribe nor the witness should suffer. And if you do (harm them), it would surely be wickedness on your part. So fear **Allah**; and it is **Allah Who** teaches you, And **Allah** knows everything.

شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ
فَرَجُلٌ وَأَمْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
أَنْ تَضِلَّ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا
الْأُخْرَىٰ وَلَا يَأْبَ الشُّهَدَاءُ إِذَا مَا دُعُوا وَلَا تَسْمَعُوا
أَنْ تَكْتُبُوهُ صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلِهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ
أَفْسَسُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَىٰ
أَلَّا تَرْتَابُوا إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً
تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ
أَلَّا تَكْتُبُوهَا وَأَشْهَدُوا إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ
وَلَا يُضَارَّ كَاتِبٌ وَلَا شَهِيدٌ وَإِنْ تَفَعَّلُوا فَإِنَّهُ
فُسُوقٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ
اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٨٣﴾

283. And if you are on a journey and do not find a scribe, let a pledge be taken; then if one of you entrusts the other, let the trustee discharge his trust and let him fear **Allah**, his **Rabb**. And do not withhold evidence, indeed whoever withholds it is surely sinful of heart. And **Allah** has knowledge of what you do.

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا فَرِهَنْ
مَقْبُوضَةً فَإِنْ أَمِنَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِي
أُؤْتِمِنَ أَمْنَتَهُ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا
الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ إِيَّمٌ قَلْبُهُ
وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٨٣﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

O you who believe..... and Allah knows everything.

In today's world of technical education and invention, information can be fed into computers and stored. But fourteen centuries ago it was only Islām, which taught human beings to document their financial transactions and dealings, as it is always the financial dealings that generate conflicts and threaten the peace of the entire society. Islām pioneered the method of documentation and witnessing in financial dealings to prevent any possible feuds as well as protect the rights of the parties. All methods of writing business contracts in practice today are only advanced forms of the original given by Islām. The basic content of these contracts is essentially the same; the advancement is only in the manner these are drawn.

The believers are directed to put into writing all deals of a debt. First of all, a proper contract deed must be drawn and secondly the duration of the debt is to be fixed, in which there should be no ambiguity. It is not correct to say that the debt will be returned at the time of the next harvest, but the exact date and month must be fixed. It is important that the scribe writes down the terms justly without being partial and should not jeopardise his own Ākhirah for the worldly benefit of any side. An educated person must not refuse to write the deeds as **Allah** has blessed him with the skills of reading and writing, and by helping **His** creation he can show his gratitude to **Him**. The debtor must dictate the wording of the contract deed and must fear **Allah** while doing so. He should not try to create any ambiguity or misunderstanding in the terms of contract. If the debtor is insane, senile due to old age, deaf and dumb, minor or a woman in veil, or in case of a foreigner not knowing the language of the country, the contract will be dictated by the guardian of such person, or a council who can be hired for this purpose. It must be remembered that this injunction is not obligatory and its omission is not a sin.

Until here, the matter was confined to writing. Now in order to prove the authenticity of the contract it should be testified by two adult male Muslims of unquestionable integrity, as a Fasiq is not acceptable as a witness in Islām. And if two men are not available, a man and two women may be called as witnesses, who must be acceptable to both parties. The reason for calling two women in place of one man is that if one forgets, the other would remind her. Besides, it is not proper for a lone woman to attend a congregation of men.

Women as Witness

Neither a single man suffices as a witness, nor only two women. Rather there should be one man and two women. The best course of action is, however, that the witness should be male. This Divine Injunction has been exactly adopted as Islamic Law of Evidence in our country. A certain class of women raised hue and cry over it and took out processions, which had to be dispersed by force. The

commotion still prevails. It is strange that they do not protest against their being women in the first place! Perhaps the women who roam the markets, dressed up like men with a masculine haircut, are practically protesting against it! On the other hand there are men who are weary of being masculine. They are seen in the streets, markets, clad in colourful feminine attire, with jewellery and makeup as if in protest against being created as men. All such behaviour is the result of ignorance, lack of knowledge about **His** Greatness and aversion towards Dīn.

Equality does not mean that men and women are intermingled, pruned and fashioned into beings equal in all respect. It actually means that both man and woman get their due rights, given to them on the basis of gender. **Allah** has preferred men as witnesses in the first place, and if there is no other alternative then two women may be called, but not one. The television programmes in order to convince the women presented the argument that it is tedious for them to go to the courts, therefore, for their own comfort men have been preferred. This is also true, but why not broadcast what **Allah** has said, that a woman by nature is weaker and less capable as compared to a man. And **He** commands to call two women so that if one forgets the other can remind her and together they give each other company.

Talking of capability, it must be clearly understood that the real knowledge is that of Prophethood, which is the fountainhead of all the knowledge for mankind. Although all the Prophets^{AS} were nursed by women, except Prophet Ādam^{AS} who was directly created from the clay, but never was the Prophethood conferred upon a woman. She has been spared this greatest burden of responsibility. Shall women protest against this too? According to Ḥadīth, nothing blinds a wise man more than the one lesser in wisdom and Dīn i.e. a woman. A woman listener enquired, "O Prophet^{SAW} of **Allah**! Are we weaker in both wisdom and Dīn?" The Holy Prophet^{SAW} replied that the evidence of two women against one man endorses the fact that women have lesser wisdom. And their incapability to offer Ṣalāt and fast during their menstruation periods every month shows a deficiency in their Dīn.

So now will our progressive ladies take out processions demanding that in future men should also bear children or the husband and wife should do it in turn, in order to maintain equality? This is utter nonsense! Equality means that a woman must carry out the duties entrusted to her and the rights she enjoys as a woman must be safeguarded. And a man must fulfil the duties assigned to him and should enjoy his rights.

The witnesses when called upon must not refuse to come without a valid excuse, as this is vital for upholding the truth and removal of the doubts. And do not hesitate to draw contract deeds, whether the matter is trivial or important and do write down the period agreed upon as this document and the witnesses are the best way of avoiding doubts.

In case of transactions concluded on the spot, like ready merchandise, there is no need for writing. However, it is better to call witnesses, lest one of the parties revokes the deal in future, causing a conflict. Neither the witnesses nor the scribe be inconvenienced in any way, as it is a great sin. **Allah** must be feared at all times. To cause any harm to the scribe or the witness is unlawful. If the scribe demands wages or the witness asks for travelling expenses for the purpose of attending the proceedings, they must be paid, as this is their right. Failure to do so amounts to harming them, which is not allowed and is a grave sin.

To sum it all up, Islām orders firstly to draw a contract deed of every transaction and to have witnesses over it. The scribe is ordered not to refuse writing when requested. And a Muslim must not refuse to give evidence when called upon to do so. And lastly it safeguards the rights of the scribe and the witnesses. They should neither be harmed financially, nor disgraced, nor made to visit the courts unnecessarily. All this is to help reduce conflicts and disputes and to ensure speedy justice.

Unfortunately the prevailing conditions are exactly opposite. The witness is seen with such suspicion by the Police Officer as if he is the real criminal. He is ordered to appear in the Police Station every now and then, only to be insulted and threatened. After that, he has to go round the Courts. Especially the civil suits can drive anyone to insanity. This is why every respectable citizen tries to avoid being a witness, making room for touts, who in fact control the justice as the Courts are forced to depend on them.

The Qurān has spelled everyone's rights and expects Muslims to fear **Allah**, as they believe in the Ākhirah when they shall return to **Him**. Moreover it is by **His** Magnanimity that they have been guided. They must also remember that **Allah** is well Aware of everything. The jurists have extracted twenty important injunctions from this Āyah. The whole issue has been discussed in detail in Tafsīr-e-Mazharī. The fear of **Allah** and the belief in the accountability in Ākhirah are vital, as any rule can be adhered to only if the heart is filled with faith. Failing this, every offence can be committed when nobody is watching.

And if you are on a journey...And Allah has knowledge of what you do.

If during journey one fails to find a scribe, it is allowed to take something in pledge or mortgage. But the trustee cannot derive any benefit from what has been pledged. If it yields any profit, it will belong to the real owner.

In our system it is customary to pledge land. If such land is cultivated, the share of the owner must either be deducted from his debt or given to him. Failure to do so would be unlawful. Every possible effort must be made to uphold mutual trust. The one in possession of the pledged property must return it at the promised time. Be mindful of **Allah**, **Who** provides you everything and do not engage in

misappropriation of any sort. And to possess information pertaining to any issue is also like a trust. Therefore, evidence must be given when required and not concealed under any circumstances. Anyone who conceals would be sinful at heart. Such concealment is not only a verbal misconduct but a sin that directly affects the heart. Just as the heart is polluted by sin, it is illuminated by piety. The heart indeed is the monarch while the limbs just carry out its instructions.

If the heart is acquainted with **Allah** and is engaged in **His Zikr**, when it contains the Personal Name of **Allah**, it never issues a command contradicting **His Injunctions**. When it does not give such orders, the limbs do not indulge in disobedience. This is why **Şūfī** saints target the heart and teach the seekers how to practise **Zikr-e-Qalbi**. Once the heart becomes enlightened with the Divine Lights, the entire body will turn to virtue. Mind eyes, ears, tongue, hands and feet are all pawns to this monarch and dare not act against its desires. This exactly is the crux of a **Ḥadīth** 'that a lump in human body is such that when it goes astray the entire body is misguided, and if it is reformed the entire body is reformed. Know that this lump is the heart.'

So whatever you do **Allah** is well Aware of it and requites accordingly. Reformation of human life is impossible without believing in this reality.

Section 40

284. To **Allah** belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth and whether you reveal what is in your souls or conceal it, **Allah** will call you to account for it; and then **He** will forgive whom **He** pleases and punish whom **He** will; and **Allah** has power over everything.

لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَإِنْ تُبْدُوْا مَا فِيْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوْ تَخْفَوْهُ يَحْصِبْكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ
فَيَغْفِرْ لِمَنْ يَّشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبْ مَنْ يَّشَاءُ
وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٢٨٤﴾

285. The Messenger believes in what is revealed to him from his **Rabb**, and so do the believers. They all believe in **Allah**, and **His** Angels, and **His** Books, and **His** Messengers, making no discrimination among **His** Messengers. And they say, "We hear and we obey. O our **Rabb**! Grant us **Your** Forgiveness, and to **You** is the return."

ءَاٰمَنَ الرَّسُوْلُ بِمَا اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّهِ
وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ كُلٌّ ؕ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ
وَرُسُلِهِ ۚ لَا تَفْرِقُوْا بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِنْ رُّسُلِهِ
وَقَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا غُفْرٰنَكَ رَبَّنَا
وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٢٨٥﴾

286. **Allah** does not burden a soul more than its capacity. It gets every good that it acquires and it suffers every ill that it earns. "Our **Rabb!** Do not take us to task if we forget or err. Our **Rabb!** Do not burden us, like those **You** burdened before us. Our **Rabb!** Do not impose upon us that for which we have no strength. And pardon us; and grant us forgiveness; and have Mercy on us, **You** are our Protector; grant us victory over the non-believers."

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إَصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

The Secrets of Revelation

To Allah belongs all that is in the heavens ...Allah has power over everything.

Verily to **Allah** belongs all that lies in the heavens and the earth. **He** is the real Owner. Man comes to this world for a limited period, and as a caliph and a trustee he has temporary authority over its resources. At last he departs and leaves behind the wealth and the property for succeeding generations. The expression "all that lies within the heavens and the earth" refers to the entire creation. Although the 'Urūsh and the Divine Throne are independent entities, and Qalb, Spirit, Simi, Khaffi, Akhfā, the vital organs of Spirit, all belong to **Allah** but the manner of expression here is such that it only mentions things in general knowledge of common man while referring to the entire universe including the Realm of Creation and the Realm of Command. However, some of the things about which the accomplished men also rarely know have not been mentioned. Now whether people conceal something in their hearts or display it, they will be accountable before **Allah**. **He** is the **Owner** and may forgive whomever **He** pleases, even a sinner, no matter how grave his sins are, except disbelief or polytheism that **He** has **Himself** vowed not to pardon. Since believers are being addressed here, the discussion shall be confined only to cardinal and minor sins. **Allah** may punish anyone he wills. **He**, the Predominant, may grip someone for even a minor offence. Scholars have discussed this topic at great length, but almost all arguments converge on Hadith, which means that the Ummah has been absolved of private evil thoughts. These private designs are furtive intentions about committing an offence. Whether or not the act is actually committed is a separate issue.

The thoughts about beliefs, worships and dealings, all originate from heart and become evident when acted upon. These thoughts will be accounted for even if they remain dormant. In fact the actions defined by **Allah** are of two types. Firstly, the ones performed physically by the limbs such as Ṣalāt, Fasting, Ḥajj, and Zakāt or mutual dealings. And secondly those related to the heart such as faith, disbelief or the moral virtues like patience, contentment, generosity etc., or the abject morals such as arrogance, avarice, malice, jealousy, mundane love etc. All will have to be answered for.

Purification of Qalb

How fortunate are those who attain the sanctification of Qalb initiated by the Holy Prophet^{SAW} and carried from heart to heart to the present day! The status of Companionship was reached only due to his company. A unique fire was sparked in their hearts, which they transferred to the Taba'in, who in turn passed this on to Taba' Taba'in. From that time onwards many a fortunate persons devoted their lives to the pursuit of this blessing and attained it. It elevated them to the spiritual heights where they not only considered wealth and riches to be worthless, but also became conscious of the fact that even their own beings and achievements in fact belonged to **Allah**. If ever they erred, which is quite possible even for people with enlightened hearts by virtue of being human, it grieved them so much and they cried with such humility that **Allah** turned their sins into virtue.

According to a saying of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, **Allah** will draw the believer close to **Him** and will cover him with **His** Mercy. He will then be told about his actions pertaining to various aspects of his worldly life, until he will begin to fear that he is doomed. **Allah** will then confide in him that just as **He** covered his faults in the world, **He** will do the same on that Day and he will be forgiven. And the non-believers will be denounced openly so as to disgrace them publicly. It will then be announced that from the followers of the Holy Prophet^{SAW}, seventy thousand souls will be admitted to Paradise without accountability and each one of them will take along seventy thousand more. **Allah** will further put three handfuls of believers into Paradise without reckoning. Tafsīr-e-Mazharī explains that these seventy thousand would be those who were not only accomplished themselves but had the capacity to train and raise a class of accomplished believers. They will be the ones who sincerely believed that everything belongs to **Allah** and that their own virtues were merely **Allah's** Favour, and were never proud.

The other groups will consist of those devotees who attained excellence from the Companions^{RAU} and continued to seek inner purification throughout their lives. The first group will consist of those who raise accomplished saints and the second one will comprise accomplished believers. The number in the 'handful' of the Almighty is only known to **Him** and may well include the whole of the two worlds. The author of Tafsīr-e-Mazharī says that the last three groups in fact denote three types of believers, who truly derived spiritual beneficence from the

accomplished Aulia; and then some of them excelled in worship, others laid down their lives fighting in the Cause of Allah and yet others who spent their wealth in His Way. Because of the accomplished Aulia these three categories of sincere believers will also be taken to Paradise without reckoning. Thereafter, the rest of mankind would be put to accountability.

The author of Tafsīr-e-Mazharī explains further that to follow the footsteps of Sūfī saints and to strive for inner purification through them is as important an obligation as reciting the Qurān and understanding it. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} said that he was leaving behind two blessings; one is the Qurān and the other Āl-e Rasūl or his descendants. They are the noble souls whose hearts are shining with the Prophetic lights, as Āl means true followers.

The Messenger believes in what victory over the non-believers.

These last two Āyāt of Al-Baqarah are extremely auspicious. The Holy Prophet^{SAW} is reported to have said that these were awarded to him from a Special Divine Treasure located beneath the 'Arsh. Therefore, every believer must learn and teach these to his family. Caliphs 'Umar Fārūq^{RAU} and 'Ali^{RAU} said that whoever had the slightest wisdom would never sleep without reciting these Āyāt. Besides, Al-Baqarah contains Divine Commandments pertaining to beliefs, mutual dealings, social systems, morals and worships, some in brief, others in detail. It concludes by persuading believers to believe in Allah and the Ākhirah and to seek His Mercy and steadfastness in Dīn.

Allah reveals that His Messenger^{SAW} believes in what has been revealed to him. This expression has a specific style. Instead of naming him, the word Messenger is used, in deference to his sublime status. The Qurān does not address the Holy Prophet^{SAW} by name but by his attributes such as 'O Prophet'! O the Mantled one! etc. and wherever his name is mentioned, it is not used for the purpose of addressing him but to identify his exalted personality, for example: "Muhammad is Allah's Messenger", or "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men."

Quran does not use the Expression 'O Muhammad'!

To say 'O Muhammad^{SAW}' is in fact impudent. When the Qurān shows the regard to avoid using this expression, why should an ordinary Muslim not do so? To address the Holy Prophet^{SAW} by name in high tone on a loudspeaker is a blatant violation of the Qurānic warning: "Raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet nor speak aloud to him" (49:2). The best thing is to recite the Darūd Sharīf about which the Holy Prophet^{SAW} said that it was the best in terms of reward. But even if any other is recited at one's own choice, it must be recited with an attentive heart and devotion while sitting. Darūd Sharīf can also be recited while on the move, observing the etiquette. It must be recited while being mindful that the angels assigned by Allah will present it to the Holy Prophet^{SAW}. I reiterate that the best salutations are the ones proved by Sunnah.

Just as the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} believes in the revelations so do all the Muslims, but here the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} has been mentioned separately. This is because although all Muslims commonly share beliefs, yet the status varies from individual to individual.

Levels of Faith

The faith of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} is based on direct observation and hearing whereas the rest of the Muslims believe in the unseen, and in that told by the Holy Prophet^{-SAW}. Likewise the faith of the Aulia who acquired Fanā fi Rasūl and power to observe the Holy Prophet's^{-SAW} Court is stronger and superior than that of those who merely believe in narratives. Next, a general definition of faith is given. It consists of belief in Revelation, Unity in Being and in Attributes; the Angels, the Divine Scriptures and the realities revealed therein and all the Prophets^{-AS} of **Allah** without any reservations; although obedience will be confined only to the Final Prophet^{-SAW} and the Last Book.

The Status of Companions^{-RAU}

The devotion and sincerity of the Companions^{-RAU} has been applauded. They heard and readily submitted to **His** Will and Purpose, seeking **His** Forgiveness and firmly believing in returning to **Him**. Praise be to **Allah**! **His** Pleasure had become the sole purpose of their lives and nothing else mattered to them. Qadhi Thanā Ullah Panī Pattī^{-RAU} writes that this Āyah directly eulogises the Companions^{-RAU}. Though all the believers till the end of time will share in this praise but only by virtue of following in their footsteps. Whoever fails to obey them cannot be accepted even as a true believer, let alone a seeker of Divine Pleasure.

Then the Āyah explains that Islām is the natural Dīn and a great Favour of **Allah**. It teaches the best method of doing things, which a human being had to do anyway for his earthly existence, and then gives these activities the status of worship.

Man is Responsible for Voluntary Actions

Another great Divine Favour is that a person will not be held accountable for what is beyond his control. Praise be to **Allah**! In other words there will be no reckoning for such thoughts and feelings that intrude on one's mind, and also forgiven are the actions taken unintentionally. For example, if the tremulous hand of a person accidentally harms someone, he will not be held accountable. However, each person is responsible for his voluntary actions, whether overt or covert. He will reap whatever he sows and will be rewarded for virtue and punished for evil. Indeed every action is based on intentions and will.

The Sūrah concludes with a comprehensive supplication: 'O' **Allah**! Do not call us to account for the mistakes we make as human beings,' for innocence is only the realm of Prophets^{-AS} 'and bless us with the capability to repent. And spare us the burdens, the trials and the tribulations of our predecessors,' whereby

punishment was awarded immediately on a mistake and faces were disfigured; or the condition of self-slaughter for atonement was laid as in case of Bani Israil. To seek **Allah's** refuge against such misfortunes, the prayer continues: 'O **Allah!** Also spare us the burdens, which we have no strength to bear; forgive us; ignore our misdeeds; redeem us and have Mercy on us. **You** are the Saviour, so grant us victory over the non-believers!

This is a point to ponder for those Muslims who seek friendship with the non-believers and are so impressed by them that they adopt their lifestyle, appearance, attire and eating habits, and consider themselves to be progressive by behaving like them. At the same time, these impostors are sarcastic about the exalted appearance of the Holy Prophet^{-SAW} and disdainfully brand his followers as primitive.