

AL-MAWĀHIB AR-RABBĀNIYAH

Reflections on Some Qur'anic Verses
and the Subtle Meanings thereof

المواهب الربانية من آيات القرانية

Abdur-Rahmân Nâsir as-Sâ'di



الهار العالمية للكتاب الإسلامي



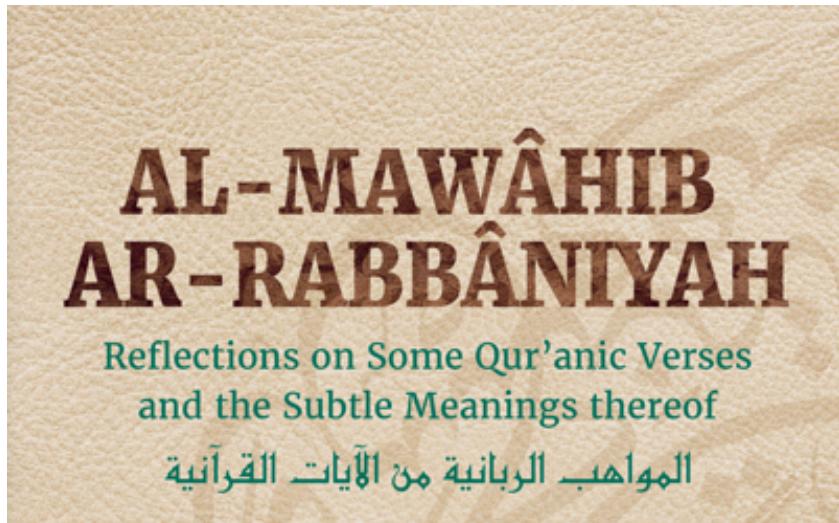
IN THE NAME OF
ALLAH
THE ALL-COMPASSIONATE, ALL-MERCIFUL



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Abdur-Rahmân Nâsir as-Sa‘di

Translated by

Nasiruddin al-Khattab

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الدار العالمية للكتاب الإسلامي

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Pronunciation and Transliteration Chart

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
أ	short 'a', as in <i>cat</i>	a
إ — ى	longer 'a', as in <i>cab</i> (not as in <i>cake</i>)	â
ب	/b/ as in <i>bell</i> , <i>rubber</i> and <i>tab</i>	b
ت	/t/ as in <i>tap</i> , <i>mustard</i> and <i>sit</i>	t
ة	takes the sound of the preceding diacritical mark sometimes ending in h (when in pausal form): ah, ih or ooh; or atu(n), ati(n) or ata(n) when uninterrupted	h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)
ث	/th/ as in <i>thing</i> , <i>maths</i> and <i>wealth</i>	th
ج	/j/ as in <i>jam</i> , <i>ajar</i> and <i>age</i>	j
ح	a 'harsher' sound than the English initial /h/, and may occur medially and in word-final position as well	h
	as in <i>Bach</i> (in German); may occur initially and medially	kh

خ	as well	
د	/d/ as in <i>do, muddy</i> and <i>red</i>	d
ذ	as in <i>this, father</i> and <i>smooth</i>	dh
ر	/r/ as in <i>raw, arid</i> and <i>war</i> ; may also be a rolled 'r', as pronounced in Spanish	r
ز	/z/ as in <i>zoo, easy</i> and <i>gaze</i>	z
س	/s/ as in <i>so, messy</i> and <i>grass</i>	s
ش	as in <i>ship, ashes</i> and <i>rush</i>	sh
ص	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /sw/ or /s/ farther back in the mouth	ṣ
ض	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /d/ farther back in the mouth	ḍ
ط	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /t/ farther back in the mouth	ṭ
ظ	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing 'the' farther back in the mouth	dh
ع	no close equivalent in English: a guttural sound in the back of the throat	‘
غ	no close equivalent in English, but may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like the French /r/ in 'rouge'	gh
ف	/f/ as in <i>fill, effort</i> and <i>muff</i>	f
	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated	q

ڧ

by pronouncing it as /k/ farther back in the mouth

ڸ

/k/ as in *king, buckle* and *tack*

k

ڸ

/l/ as in *lap, halo*; in the word Allah, it becomes
velarized as in *ball*

l

ڸ

/m/ as in *men, simple* and *ram*

m

ڽ

/n/ as in *net, ant* and *can*

n

ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ

/h/ as in *hat*; unlike /h/ in English, in Arabic /h/ is
pronounced in medial and word-final positions as well

h

ـ

as in *wet* and *away*

w

و

long ‘u’, as in *boot* and *too*

oo

ي

as in *yard* and *mayo*

y

ي

long ‘e’, as in *eat, beef* and *see*

ee

ـ

glottal stop: may be closely approximated by pronouncing

it like ‘t’ in the Cockney English pronunciation of *butter*:

bu’er, or the stop sound in *uh-oh!*

’

(omitted in initial
position)

Diphthongs

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
أُو، َوْ	long 'o', as in <i>owe, boat</i> and <i>go</i>	au, aw
أَيْ، َيْ	long 'a', as in <i>aid, rain</i> and <i>say</i>	ay, ai, ei

Diacritical marks (*tashkeel*)

Name of mark	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
ُ	very short 'a' or schwa (unstressed vowel)	a
fathah		
ُ	shorter version of ee or schwa (unstressed vowel)	i
ُ	shorter version of oo	u
ُ	shorter version of oo	u
ُ	a doubled consonant is stressed in the word, and the length of the sound is also doubled	double letter
ُ	no vowel sound between consonants or at the end of a word	absence of vowel
sukoon		

Arabic honorific symbols

(□) <i>Subhānahu wa Ta ‘ālā</i>	The Exalted
(ﷺ) <i>salla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam</i>	Blessings and peace be upon him
(□) <i>‘alayhi as-salām</i>	May peace be upon him
(□) <i>raḍiya Allāhu ‘anhu</i>	May Allah be pleased with him
(□) <i>raḍiya Allāhu ‘anhā</i>	May Allah be pleased with her
(□) <i>raḍiya Allāhu ‘anhumā</i>	May Allah be pleased with both of them
(□) <i>raḍiya Allāhu ‘anhūm</i>	May Allah be pleased with all of them
(□) <i>raḍiya Allāhu ‘anhunna</i>	May Allah be pleased with all of them (females only)

Hadith grade terms in this book

Sound: *saheeh*

Reliable: *hasan*

Weak: *da‘eef*

Odd: *ghareeb*

Authentic: includes sound, reliable, or any grade in between

Acceptable: *sakat ‘anhu*; the grader of the hadith did not comment on it, meaning that he found nothing unacceptable in it

About the Word *Lord*

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is ‘master’ or ‘ruler’, and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: ‘the lord of the mansion’ or ‘Lord So-and-So’ (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God — Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital L may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah — not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

The Editor

Publisher's Note

All praises and thanks belong to Allah alone, the One, the Almighty, and the All-Merciful. Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, the last of His messengers and prophets, and his family, his Companions, and all those who follow in his footsteps until the end of time.

Shaykh Abdur-Rahmân Nâsir as-Sa‘di’s books always contain sublime reminders and practical advice for the readers. In this excellent treatise, he reflects on some Qur’anic verses and derives useful lessons that can be implemented in daily life. For those who are only starting to read the Qur’ân with understanding, this book can be an excellent resource. Those who have already read the tafseer of the Qur’ân can use it to refresh their concepts and understanding.

May Allah accept the efforts of all those who contributed to the production of this book, and may it be acceptable to Him, *âmeen*.

Muhammad Abdul Mohsin Al-Tuwaijri
Managing Director
International Islamic Publishing House
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Introduction

Praise be to Allah (*Subhānahu wa Ta‘ālā* – Glorified and Exalted is He), Who blessed His slaves with His clear Book, and may Allah send blessings and peace upon the one who said:

«Allah raises some in status by means of this Book and He lowers others by means of it.»^{1,2}

This book is a precious legacy written by the devoted scholar Abdur-Rahmān Nāsir as-Sa‘di (may Allah have mercy on him), who died in 1376 AH, in which he wrote down some of his reflections on the Book of Allah, based on his contemplative reading of the Qur‘an, completing it on 28 Ramadan 1347 AH,³ which was approximately three years after he had completed his *Tafseer*.⁴ In this book – despite its brevity – the author gives some very useful commentary on some verses, highlighting some subtle meanings that he did not mention elsewhere. In fact, after studying some of the observations that he makes in this book, and comparing them with his *Tafseer* and with the summary thereof, which is entitled *Tayseer al-Lateef al-Mannān*, we may note that most of what is mentioned in this book is not found in the other two books mentioned,⁵ which are the closest of his books to the topic under discussion here, in which as-Sa‘di eloquently discusses his observations and highlights the subtle meanings of some verses.

In this book, as-Sa‘di presents a lesson to seekers of knowledge, highlighting the fact that the way of the scholar is to constantly learn and teach, and contemplate and reflect upon the texts of the Qur‘an and Hadith, for the pursuit of knowledge never stops

so long as one lives, as the leading scholars (may Allah have mercy on them) said: We remain with the ink pot until we are taken to our graves,⁶ and we seek knowledge until death, if Allah wills.⁷

This book differs from the author's *Tafseer* and the summary thereof in several ways:

- i. It is among the last of his writings on Qur'anic exegesis (*tafseer*) and contemplation of the Book of Allah (□).⁸
- ii. It is filled with advice on issues having to do with conduct and refinement of character, as was the author's wont. He was a devoted scholar and great teacher who often began by teaching people simple issues of knowledge before discussing complex issues, leading them to the path of the Qur'an and Sunnah. One of the things that may stand out most prominently in this book is the author's amazing discussion of the name of Allah al-Lateef, which is something that you will not find in any of his other books.
- iii. In this book, the author highlights what he thinks is the soundest view regarding some controversial issues of *fiqh*.
- iv. As writing a commentary on the entire Qur'an is not something that is possible for everyone, a book such as this gives an example to be followed by scholars in writing and compiling their reflections on some verses of the Qur'an, especially when that reflection may offer guidance on ways to deal with newly-arisen issues that previous scholars never had to deal with, so that people might increase in faith and certainty that the Qur'an guides to that which is best in every time and place, and that being connected to the Qur'an and to the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) is the way to salvation for this Ummah.

My preparation of the book

1. I made a copy of the book, then I cross-referenced it with the edition of an anonymous press that was produced under the supervision of Sa'd ad-Da'jani and sponsored by some good people.⁹ I did my best to correct the mistakes that had occurred in the text, whether in the verses quoted or otherwise.
2. I supplied references for the verses quoted by the author.

3. I checked the hadiths and mentioned the main sources for them, and explained in brief – as is appropriate to the style of the book and the way in which the author narrated the hadiths – the status of the hadiths if they came from sources other than *as-Saheehayn*.
4. I numbered the topics so as to make it easier to refer back to them even in different editions that may be produced in the future.
5. I added punctuation according to modern standards.
6. I added indices of verses and hadiths to help the reader to benefit more from this book. These include the following:
 - Index of verses quoted
 - Index of hadiths quoted
 - Index of divine names on which the author comments
 - Index of *fiqhi* views and the shaykh's view on the most correct thereof
 - Subject index
 - Table of Contents

I chose not to include the biography of al-'Allâmah as-Sa'îdi (may Allah have mercy on him), because his biography is so well known and is often repeated in his other books.

Thus I have done my best to ensure that the book is free of errors. Whatever I got right is from Allah alone, for He is the Most Generous, the Giver; whatever shortcomings there are in the book are from me, and I seek Allah's forgiveness for that.

Finally, I give thanks to Allah (□), as befits His perfect majesty and abundant blessings, for having enabled me to edit and correct this book. Next, I thank Ustâdh Musâ'id as-Sa'îdi, who gave me this book¹⁰ to edit and publish in the best shape that is pleasing to Allah first of all, then to the author. I also thank Brother Sameer ibn 'Ali Âl Ghiyâth, who helped me with the editing and cross-referencing of this book.

Thanks are also due to the Tadabbor Study Centre, which undertook the task of printing this book and distributing it to the Muslims, among their other efforts to publish

anything that has a connection to this great act of worship, namely reflecting (*tadabbur*) upon the Qur'an.

O Allah, shower Your mercy upon Your slave Abdur-Rahmân Nâsir as-Sa‘di and grant him the best of rewards on behalf of his Ummah; guide his offspring and keep them steadfast, and bless them and their wealth and children; and cause this book to be of benefit. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

Omar Ibn Abdullah Al Muqbil

Member of Sharia Faculty – Qassim University

Member of the International Organization for
Reflection on the Holy Qur'an (International
Association of Tadabbur Al-Quran)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of Allah,
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and blessings and peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad (*ṣalla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* – blessings and peace be upon him) and his family and Companions (*raḍiya Allāhu ‘anhum* – may Allah be pleased with all of them). These are some insights with which Allah blessed me during this blessed month; we ask Him to bestow more of His generosity. Âmeen.

Section 1

1.

﴿فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ، لِلْجَنِينِ﴾ (سورة الصافات: ١٠٣) 

﴿So when they had both submitted to the command of Allah, and Ibrâheem had laid his son face down on the ground.﴾ (*as-Sâffât* 37: 103)¹¹

The phrase ﴿when they had both submitted to the command of Allah﴾ indicates that they were determined to submit to His command and their determination was based on sincerity and compliance. But determination may falter, hence the action is mentioned immediately after that: ﴿and Ibrâheem had laid his son face down on the ground﴾. Thus determination and action are mentioned together, but the result of that action did not materialise – which is the actual slaughter – for Allah (ﷻ) tells us that He ransomed him with a tremendous sacrifice (37: 107).

2.

﴿...فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّهُ مِنْ أَيَّامِ أُخْرَى...﴾

(سورة البقرة: ١٨٤)

﴿...but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, he should fast the same number of other days...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 184)

This indicates that what matters is the number of days, not how long or short they are, or how hot or cold, or whether the fasts should be made up sooner or later, consecutively or separately. This is confirmed in the following verse:

﴿...يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٨٥)

﴿...Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 185)

3.

﴿...أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٨٤)

﴿...or on a journey...﴾ (*al-Baqarah* 2: 184)

*T*his includes those who stay for a few days in a town or in the wilderness before their journey has ended, because they are still en route (to their final destinations), even though they are not actually on the road.

4.

﴿... يَوْدُ الْمُجْرِمُ لَوْ يَفْتَدِي مِنْ عَذَابٍ يَوْمَذِي بَنِيهِ ﴾ (سورة المعارج: ١١)

﴿...The evildoer will wish that he could ransom himself from the punishment of that day, by offering his children.﴾ (*al-Ma ‘ârij* 70: 11)

This implies that one who is not an evildoer will not wish for that, because he will have already ransomed himself in this world from the punishment of that day, by fearing Allah and believing. Rather on that day the greatest terror will not grieve him, and he will have the hope of being gathered with the righteous among his parents, children and loved ones in the gardens of bliss.

5.

﴿وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْنَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ﴾ (سورة المعارج: ٣٢)

﴿Those who are faithful to their trusts and pledges.﴾ (*al-Ma’ârij* 70: 32)

*T*hat is, they are faithful to them and abide by them, striving their utmost to uphold their trusts and pledges with perfect commitment, keeping away from anything that could undermine them. Similarly, Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِشَهَادَاتِهِمْ قَائِمُونَ﴾ (سورة المعارج: ٣٣)

﴿Who are upright in their testimonies.﴾ (*al-Ma’ârij* 70: 33)

6.

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الْمُمْدُّثُونَ ﴾ قُرْفَانَدِر (سورة المدثر: ١-٢)

﴿O you who are covered with your cloak, arise and warn.﴾ (al-Muddath-thir 74: 1-2)

Here Allah highlights the situation of His Messenger (ﷺ) and how he attained a high level of perfection, and how He completed His blessings upon him. He also highlights the difference between the beginning of his Prophethood, when he was greatly alarmed by the first instance of revelation and wrapped himself in his cloak because of the intensity of what had happened to him, and the end of his mission when Allah caused him to attain perfection in all his affairs. Hence He commanded him to perfect himself and to perfect others, and showed him how to achieve that, which was to begin the mission with which Allah sent him in an energetic manner that reflected his veneration of his Lord and the seriousness that he attached to obeying His commands. Allah also commanded him to purify his deeds (by devoting them sincerely to Allah alone) and his garment, and to keep away from all evil and indecency, and to base all his deeds on sincerity. This refers to sincerity in all things, even in giving. Hence Allah says:

﴿وَلَا تَمْنُنْ تَشْكِثُر﴾ (سورة المدثر: ٦)

﴿Give not out of a desire for gain.﴾ (al-Muddath-thir 74: 6)

Then Allah guided him to that which could help him in all his affairs, namely patience for the sake of Allah, as He says:

﴿وَلِرَبِّكَ فَاصْبِر﴾ (سورة المدثر: ٧)

﴿And for the sake of your Lord, be patient.﴾ (al-Muddath-thir 74: 7)

Then He guaranteed to protect him from his enemies and to keep His promise of punishment for the disbelievers, especially the most stubborn and hostile of them, so as to complete His blessing.

﴿ وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَرْبَصْنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُونٍ ... ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٢٨)

﴿Divorced women should wait concerning themselves for three menstrual cycles...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 228)

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَدْرُوْنَ أَزْوَاجًا يَرْبَصُنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا ... ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٣٤)

﴿If any of you die and leave widows behind, they should refrain from marrying again for four months and ten days...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 234)

The waiting referred to here is the 'iddah. But what is the point of saying ﴿concerning themselves﴾ when it could have been sufficient to say that women should wait ﴿for three menstrual cycles﴾ or ﴿for four months and ten days﴾? In fact, the word ﴿concerning themselves﴾ is highly significant, for the timeframe stipulated for waiting is intended for the purpose of taking care of the rights of the husband and his child (if the woman is pregnant), and it is also aimed at establishing whether there is a pregnancy. During this time, it is essential that the woman should stay away from men and should remain as if she is still connected to her first husband; she should not receive proposals or adorn herself for suitors, and she should not take any steps to establish connections with any man other than her husband. This is indicated by the words:

﴿ ... فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجْلَهُنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ... ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٣٤)

﴿... When they have reached the end of their waiting period, there is no blame on you for what they do with themselves, according to what is reasonable...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 234)

This refers to beautifying themselves and adorning themselves, but that should be done on a reasonable basis, with no wanton display. This is also indicated by another verse:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَقَّنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذْرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا وَصِيَّةً لِأَزْوَاجِهِمْ مَتَّعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ إِخْرَاجٌ ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٤٠)

﴿Those of you who die and leave widows behind should bequeath for their widows a year's maintenance without them having to leave [their marital homes]...﴾ (*al-Baqarah* 2: 240)

In this instance, women are not instructed to wait concerning themselves; rather a bequest is to be made so that the woman will have maintenance for one year after the death of her husband, so as to console her. In this case, the women do not have to leave their homes; after they do leave their homes (after one year), they may adorn themselves on a reasonable basis. But before that, as the heirs are offering her consolation for the sake of her husband, during that period she should be reasonable and not adorn herself. This highlights the fact that the first verse (v. 234) does not abrogate this verse (v. 240); rather the first verse refers to a binding waiting period, whereas this verse is a bequest of maintenance but is not binding. And Allah knows best.

Having faith and seeking reward with Allah reduces the impact of calamity and helps one to bear it with patience

This is indicated by the verse in which Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿وَلَا تَهْنُوْ فِي أَبْتِغَاءِ الْقَوْمِ إِن تَكُونُوا تَالِمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُونَ كَمَا تَأْلَمُونَ وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٠٤) ﴿١٠٤﴾

﴿Do not weaken in pursuit of the enemy. If you are suffering hardships, they are also suffering hardships; but you hope for something from Allah that they cannot hope for. And Allah is All-Knowing, Most Wise.﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 104)

So let your patience be greater, and thus your calamity will be less. By the same token, lack of faith makes hardship more difficult to bear and causes one to panic, as is indicated by the verse in which Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ إِمَانُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقَالُوا لَا يَخْوِنُنَّهُمْ إِذَا ضَرَبُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ كَانُوا عُزَّى لَوْ كَانُوا عِنْدَنَا مَا مَاتُوا وَمَا قُتِلُوا لِيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ حَسْرَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ... ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٥٦) ﴿١٥٦﴾

﴿O you who believe, do not be like those who disbelieve, who say of their brethren, when they are travelling through the earth or go forth on a military campaign: If they had stayed with us, they would not have died, or been slain, for Allah will make such thoughts a source of anguish in their hearts...﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 156)

Other verses that support this view are:

﴿مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَن تَنْبَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴾ (٢٢) لِكَيْلَاتَأْسُوا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا أَتَكُمْ ...

﴿No calamity befalls the earth or your own selves but it is already written in a Book before We make it happen. Verily, that is easy for Allah. [Know this] so that you do not grieve for what passes you by, nor exult over what He gives you...﴾ (al-Hadeed 57: 22-23)

﴿...وَمَن يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهُ...﴾ (سورة التغابن: ١١) ١١

﴿...Whoever believes in Allah, He will guide his heart aright...﴾ (at-Taghâbun 64: 11)

– and other verses.

Allah has prescribed the religion, acts of worship, and commands and prohibitions, so as to establish His remembrance (*dhikr*)

Hence He states that acts of worship stem from remembrance of Him, as He says:

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى ﴾ ١٤ ﴿ وَذَكَرَ أَسْمَارَبِهِ فَصَلَّى ﴾ ١٥ ﴿ (سُورَةُ الْأَعْلَى: ١٤-١٥) ﴾

﴿He will indeed attain true success who purifies himself and reflects upon the sublime names of his Lord, so he prays.﴾ (*al-A 'lâ* 87: 14-15)

This verse indicates that prayer stems from remembering Allah (*dhikr*) and is caused by it. By the same token, Allah has ordained prayer in order to establish His remembrance, as He says:

﴿... وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴾ ١٤ ﴿ (سُورَةُ طَه: ١٤) ﴾

﴿...and establish prayer to remember Me.﴾ (*Tâ Hâ* 20: 14)

And He says with regard to refraining from sins and seeking forgiveness for them:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ ... ﴾ ١٣٥ ﴿ (سُورَةُ آلِ عِمَرَانَ: ١٣٥) ﴾

﴿And those who, if they do something shameful or wrong themselves, remember Allah and ask for forgiveness for their sins...﴾ (*Al 'Imrân* 3: 135)

Thus seeking forgiveness also stems from remembering Allah. This indicates that remembering Allah is the main characteristic of the perfect believer; it becomes second nature to him. Because of it he does what is enjoined and refrains from what is forbidden, and that stems from veneration of Allah (□) and remembrance of Him; remembrance of Allah is the most important and greatest objective to be sought in all acts of worship.

Some aspects of remembering Allah

﴿...إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ...﴾ (سورة العنكبوت: ٤٥)

﴿...for verily prayer keeps [one] away from obscenity and wickedness. And indeed your remembering Allah [in prayer] is of greater merit [than other acts of worship]...﴾
(al-‘Ankaboot 29: 45)

﴿...إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهَبُنَّ الْسَّيِّئَاتِ ذَلِكَ ذِكْرُى لِلَّذِكَرِينَ﴾ (سورة هود: ١١٤)

﴿...Verily, good deeds erase bad deeds. This is a reminder for those who pay heed.﴾
(Hood 11: 114)

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَآخْتِلَافِ الَّيلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَذَّكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَى جُنُوبِهِمْ...﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٩١-١٩٠)

﴿Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, there are indeed signs for people of understanding, people who remember Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides...﴾ (Al ‘Imrân 3: 190-191)

Everyone who does an act of worship is in a state of remembering Allah, and whoever keeps away from that which Allah has prohibited is in a state of remembering Allah. This is the purpose for which Allah created creation and prescribed laws, and it is the purpose for which He granted all blessings, hidden and visible, which help one to attain that. We ask Him to help us to remember Him, give thanks to Him and worship Him properly, and to make us among the men and women who remember Allah much. Ameen.

Section 2

11.

The one whom Allah praises for being firmly grounded in knowledge

*H*e is the one who is well versed in beneficial knowledge that purifies the soul. Hence Allah described those who are firmly grounded in knowledge as believing in both the definitive and the ambiguous verses,¹² and interpreting the ambiguous verses in the light of those that are definitive. Thus they believe in both, and interpret the religious texts in an appropriate manner, knowing that they all come from Allah and are all true. If they think that there appears to be a contradiction between one text and another, they assume that they must have misunderstood the text, and they affirm that all the verses speak of truth and cannot contradict one another, because they all come from Allah; if they had been from anyone other than Allah, they would surely have found therein many contradictions (*cf.* 4: 82). They constantly beseech Allah, asking Him to make their hearts steadfast, and cause them to follow the straight path and not drift away from it. They acknowledge the blessing that Allah has bestowed upon them, for He guided them, and His guidance is a great blessing, and He granted them proper understanding.

One of the ways in which Allah describes them is by saying that they follow the truth wherever it leads them, and they seek facts wherever they may be. Hence Allah describes those of the People of the Book who are firmly grounded in knowledge as believing in what Allah revealed to all of His Prophets, and whims and desires do not cause them to reject some of the Prophets or some of the truth. Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿لَكِنَ الَّذِينَ حُكِمَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ...﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٦٢)

﴿But those among them who are firmly grounded in knowledge, and the believers, believe in what has been sent down to you [O Muhammad], and what was sent down before you...﴾ (*an-Nisâ'* 4: 162)

12.

If someone is determined not to accept the truth, no reminder or exhortation will benefit him

Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿لَهُنْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّ تَشْيَعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَسْحُورًا ﴾ (سورة الإسراء: ٤٧)

﴿We know best what they are listening for when they listen to you, and what they say when they converse in private, when the wrongdoers say: [If you were to follow Muhammad] you would be following none but a man who is bewitched.﴾ (al-Isrâ' 17: 47)

Hence Allah refers to this idea in the context of discussing the reason why the disbelievers do not believe and follow the truth, for if a person develops such a frame of mind, then he becomes like those of whom Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ حَقَّتْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ٩٦ وَلَوْ جَاءَهُمْ كُلُّ إِعْلَمٍ حَتَّىٰ يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ٩٧﴾ (سورة يونس: ٩٦-٩٧)

﴿Verily, those against whom the decree of your Lord is fulfilled will not believe, even if every sign were to come to them, until they see [for themselves] the painful punishment.﴾ (Yoonus 10: 96-97)

Allah (ﷺ) tells us that the one who could benefit from reminders is the one who seeks the truth and is fair-minded, for once he sees the truth, he will follow it. And Allah knows best.

When some of the Companions were killed as martyrs in Allah's cause...

Allah revealed to the Muslims the words, "Tell our brethren that we have met our Lord, and He is pleased with us and we are pleased with Him." They recited these words (as part of the revelation) for a while, then that was abrogated when Allah revealed the following words instead:

﴿وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًاٌ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ ﴾١٦٩ فَرِحِينَ بِمَا أَتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبِشُرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوْبَهُمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْرَنُونَ ﴾١٧٠ يَسْتَبِشُرُونَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيغُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾١٧١﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٦٩-١٧١)

﴿Do not think of those who are slain in Allah's cause as dead. Nay, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision, rejoicing in what Allah has bestowed upon them out of His bounty, sharing glad tidings that for those who have yet to join them, of those whom they left behind, they will have no fear, nor will they grieve. Rejoicing in the favours and bounties of Allah, and at the awareness that Allah will not cause the reward of the believers to be lost.﴾ (Al 'Imrān 3: 169-171)

In that there is great wisdom, for it is entirely appropriate that Allah should tell their brethren, companions and loved ones about them and what happened to them, so that they might rejoice and be reassured and comforted, and go forth to strive in jihad. As this is a constant ruling that is applicable to everyone who is killed in Allah's cause until the Day of Resurrection, and as the eloquence and greatness of the Qur'an dictates that it should speak in a concise and general manner, discussing basic principles, Allah revealed these verses, which are general and clear in meaning, in which there is great wisdom and great blessing from Allah.

Similarly, another example of words that were recited (as part of Revelation, and then abrogated) were the words, "If an old man and an old woman commit adultery, then

stone them both..." Then this wording was abrogated, and the Lawgiver prescribed stoning for those who are married, because that (namely being married) is the criterion for application of this penalty; it is not being old that makes this penalty applicable. Rather mentioning old age serves to highlight the abhorrent nature of this shameful deed on the part of one who has reached such an age and commits this evil deed. This was by way of preparing the believers at that time to accept this ruling, which they found to be a very tough punishment for the offence of adultery, which was something to which they had been accustomed during the *jâhiliyah*. Hence the Lawgiver did not want to shock them by prescribing the ruling of stoning and making it general all at once; rather it was introduced first in the case of old men and old women, whose desire is typically very low and they no longer have the motive to commit such an evil action unless they are people of an evil and corrupt nature. Then once the people had begun to understand the evil of adultery, the Lawgiver introduced the general ruling. And Allah knows best.

﴿...يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُهُ أَيْنَدِي رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيمَانُهُ الَّذِي تَكُونُ عَامَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا خَيْرًا ...﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ١٥٨) 

﴿...On the day when some of the signs of your Lord come, no good will it do to a soul to believe then, if it did not believe before or earn some good through its faith...﴾ (*al-An 'âm* 6: 158)

The Prophet ﷺ explained that this refers to the rising of the sun from the west. The *saheeh* hadiths indicate that the first of the portents of the Hour will be the rising of the sun from the west, and this verse indicates that when any of the portents of the Hour appear – at which time belief and faith will be a matter of compulsion – belief will be of no benefit, because faith is only of benefit when it is by choice and is based on what is unseen. But when some of the signs and portents appear, belief will be based on what is seen and will be a matter of compulsion; therefore it will be of no benefit. This verse refers to the reason why belief will not be accepted (which is the appearance of one of the portents of the Hour), and the hadiths speak of the order in which the portents of the Hour will appear. And Allah knows best.

15.

Bequests

Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿... مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصَىٰ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ...﴾ (سورة النساء: ١١)

﴿...[The distribution in all cases is] after the payment of bequests and debts...﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 11)

﴿... مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصَىٰ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ...﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٢)

﴿...after payment of bequests and debts...﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 12)

The phrase appears twice in this verse. In all cases, debt is referred to in general terms. With regard to bequests, it is stipulated that the bequest should have been made by the deceased. This indicates that payment of debts takes precedence over the rights of the heirs and others, regardless of any other consideration, whether the deceased left instructions for the payment of his debts or not, and whether the debt was something owed to Allah or to people, and whether it was documented or not. With regard to bequests, Allah stipulated that the deceased should have left instructions to that effect; if the deceased did not leave instructions regarding bequests, then the heirs are not obliged to give anything from the estate except in the case of debt. It is also essential to ascertain whether the bequest was made; if it is found out that the deceased said something when he was unconscious and unaware of what he was saying, then he is not to be regarded as having made a bequest.

The verses also indicate that the dying person has the right to make a bequest, and the Sunnah puts a limitation on bequests, which can only be one-third or less of the person's wealth and can only be made to someone other than an heir. In fact the verses speak of the division of the estate and the shares of the heirs, and the passage ends with the words:

﴿ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَمَن يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلُهُ جَنَّتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَانِهَرٌ خَلِيلِينَ فِيهَا وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴾ ١٣ وَمَن يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَهُ يُدْخِلُهُ نَارًا خَلِيلًا فِيهَا وَلَهُ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴾ ١٤ ﴾

(سورة النساء: ١٣-١٤)

﴿ These are the limits [set by] Allah. Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, [Allah] will admit him to gardens through which rivers flow, to abide therein forever, and that is the supreme triumph. But whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger and transgresses His limits, [Allah] will admit him to a fire, to abide therein forever. And his will be a humiliating punishment.﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 13-14)

This indicates that making a bequest to an heir is overstepping the mark.

16.

Allah does not withhold anything from His slave but He opens a door through which he will attain something more beneficial in an easier and more appropriate manner

Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿وَلَا تَنْمِنُوا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ، بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا أَكَتَ تَسْبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا أَكْسَبْنَ وَسَعَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴾ (سورة النساء: ٣٢)

﴿Do not covet the bounties which Allah has bestowed more abundantly on some of you than on others. Men will have the reward for what they earn, and women will have the reward for what they earn. Ask Allah of His bounty. Verily, Allah has knowledge of all things.﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 32)

Allah forbids us to covet the bounties that He has bestowed more abundantly upon some people than others. He tells us that everyone who strives, man or woman, will have the reward of what he or she earns. Thus He urges both men and women to strive for lawful earnings, and forbids them to covet that which is of no benefit. He has opened to them the doors of His bounty and generosity, and has called them to ask for that both implicitly (by their actions) and explicitly (by their words). Allah tells them that His knowledge and wisdom are perfect, and part of His wisdom is that what is with Him cannot be attained except through obedience to Him, and sublime goals cannot be attained except by working hard and striving, and His help is to be sought to attain all that is good.

﴿وَلَا تَمْدَنَ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الَّتِي أَنْفَقْنَاهُمْ فِيهِ﴾

﴿وَرَزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى﴾ (سورة طه: ١٣١)

﴿Do not look longingly at the good things We have given some among them to enjoy, the splendour of the life of this world, so that We may test them thereby. The provision of your Lord is better and more lasting.﴾ (Tâ Hâ 20: 131)

This is a reminder that people should have little interest in this world, and that the life of ease and luxury that He has granted to some people is not because they are dear to Him; rather it is a trial and test, to see which of them will be best in deed and more mature in his thinking. For the one who is of mature thinking is the one who gives precedence to what is precious and lasting over what is worthless and transient. Hence Allah mentions ﴿the provision of your Lord﴾, which is what He has prepared for the obedient who did not join those who led a life of ease and luxury, and were not deceived by the beauty of this life and its transient joys; rather they looked at the reality of things, and when the ignorant focused on outward appearances, they realised what matters and how great is the difference in variation between various matters. The provision that Allah grants to these people is better and more lasting, and more perfect in all ways. Moreover, it is lasting and will never vanish.

As for that which is granted to the people of this world, it is limited to the life of this world; it will pass quickly and will all come to an end. Hence Allah forbade His Messenger (ﷺ) to look longingly at what these people have been given to enjoy. Looking longingly means coveting such things, not merely glancing at them; rather it means looking with desire. Hence Allah did not say, “...do not look at the good things We have given some among them to enjoy...” Looking longingly implies admiring and coveting a thing. It is like the verse in which Allah says:

﴿وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْفَدْوَةِ وَالْعِشِّيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الَّتِي أَنْتَ نَاهِيٌّ ...﴾ (سورة الكهف: ٢٨)

﴿Content yourself with [the company of] those who call upon their Lord every morning and afternoon, seeking [to see, in the hereafter] His Countenance,¹³ and do not turn your eyes away from them, desiring the adornment of the life of this world...﴾ (al-Kahf 18: 28)

This verse explains what is meant in the first verse, and confirms that the type of looking that is forbidden is that which is accompanied by desire for the adornment of the life of this world. A similar example is the passage in which Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿وَلَقَدْ أَتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِنَ الْمَثَافِ وَالْقُرْءَانَ الْعَظِيمَ ﴿٨٧﴾ لَا تَمْدَنَ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨-٨٧﴾ (سورة الحجر: ٨٨-٨٧)

﴿We have given you the seven oft-repeated verses and the Glorious Qur'an. Do not look longingly at the good things We have given some among them to enjoy, nor grieve over them, but lower your wing [in humility and gentleness] to the believers.﴾ (al-Hijr 15: 87-88)

Here Allah (ﷻ) points out (to His Prophet [ﷺ]) that he should find joy in what Allah has given him of the seven oft-repeated verses and the Glorious Qur'an, thus reminding him of these favours and that the blessings, favour and mercy of Allah are what one should find joy and happiness in, for that is better than what the people of this world accumulate and enjoy. Rather those who should be looked at with admiration and be envied are the believers, who are not deceived by that which deceived those who turn away. Hence Allah says: ﴿but lower your wing [in humility and gentleness] to the believers﴾.

The reason why Allah delayed referring to the slain one and mentioned it after referring to Moosâ's instructing them to sacrifice the cow

The reason why Allah delayed referring to the slain one and mentioned it after referring to Moosâ's instructing them to sacrifice the cow in the story of Moosâ and the Children of Israel is because the context has to do with highlighting the bad deeds of the Israelites and describing some of their conduct to confirm that. Had mention been made of the slain person in the beginning, before Moosâ's instructions to sacrifice the cow, then it would have been reduced to a single narrative, and one story would have become mixed with the other. Therefore the two stories were separated in order to condemn those people and highlight their bad deeds in both stories. Hence each story begins with the word *idh* (translated below as ﴿[remember] when﴾), which serves to highlight and depict the situation that they were in. Allah says:

﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذَبَّحُ أَبْقَرَةً ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٦٧)

﴿And [remember] when Moosâ said to his people: Allah commands you to sacrifice a cow...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 67)

Then He says:

﴿وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَأَدَارْتُمْ فِيهَا ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٧٢)

﴿And [remember] when you killed a man and disputed among yourselves concerning [the crime]...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 72)

And so that what follows it would be based on it, He says in the next verse:

﴿فَقُلْنَا أَضْرِبُوهُ بِعَصْبَرَهَا ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٧٣)

﴿So We said: Strike the [body] with a piece of the [sacrificed cow]...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 73)

And Allah knows best.

Similar to that is what Allah mentions in the story of Maryam, when He praises her for what was bestowed upon her and her mother of blessings both apparent and hidden. He mentions her situation and perfection first of all, and describes how He caused her to be under the care of Zakariyâ, so that she would have a good upbringing and education, and would learn good manners. Allah mentions her striving as she remained in her chamber, and how He answered her mother's prayer, and how He graciously accepted her and caused her to grow in a good manner (3: 37), before mentioning how the Israelites disputed concerning her and cast lots (to decide who should be her guardian – 3: 44), so as to draw attention to the fact that each aspect is to be highlighted separately, and that when they disputed concerning her, that was a kind of praise and indication of her perfection. The story of her upbringing and worship is also a kind of praise and indicative of her perfection, and highlights how Allah made things easy for her.

What we learn from this is that referring to aims and goals is more important than referring to the means of attaining them.

19.

Remembering Allah (*dhikr*) makes up
for mistakes and shortcomings

The evidence for that is the verse in which Allah (ﷺ) says – after mentioning the fear prayer and how a Muslim could pray without focus of mind and so on:

﴿فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَى جُنُوبِكُمْ ...﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٠٣)

(١٠٣)

﴿When you have finished the prayer, remember Allah, standing, sitting, or lying down on your sides...﴾ (*an-Nisâ'* 4: 103)

That is to make up for your shortcomings and make your deeds complete.

Similarly, the proper way is to add the phrase *in shâ' Allâh* (if Allah wills) when saying what one will do in the future. So if one says, “I will surely do that tomorrow”, he should add the phrase “*in shâ' Allâh*”. Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَأْنٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَلِكَ غَدًا إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ وَإِذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيْتَ ...﴾ (سورة الكهف: ٢٣-٢٤)

﴿Never say of anything: I will surely do that tomorrow, without adding ‘if Allah wills’. And remember your Lord if you forget...﴾ (*al-Kahf* 18: 23-24)

So one should remember Allah (ﷺ) to make up for imperfections in words and deeds. And Allah knows best.

Based on that, the one who does an act of worship in an imperfect manner or falls short in the way he is instructed to do it, due to forgetfulness, can make up for that by remembering Allah (ﷺ) in order to compensate for his shortcomings.

20.

Some *fuqahâ'* use evidence to conclude that the husband only has to have intercourse with his wife every four months

They quote as evidence for that the verse in which Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿لِلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُونَ مِن نِسَاءِهِمْ تَرْبُصُ أَرْبَعَةُ أَشْهُرٍ ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٢٦)

﴿For those who take an oath of abstinence from their wives, there should be a [maximum] waiting period of four months...﴾ (*al-Baqarah* 2: 226)

But this requires further discussion. Rather what the verse means is that this stipulation is only for the man who took an oath of abstinence, because of his oath. As for the one who has not taken such an oath, the verse may in fact imply the opposite, and that he has no right to limit intercourse to once every four months; rather it should be based on what is reasonable, because it is one of the most important aspects of the kind treatment that is referred to in the verse in which Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿...وَعَاشُرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ...﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٩)

﴿...but live with them [wives] in kindness...﴾ (*an-Nisâ'* 4: 19)

If a husband takes such an oath, he may abstain for four months, and his wife cannot ask for more unless it becomes clear that his aim is to cause her harm, in which case he should be prevented from doing that.

Section 3

21.

Allah has prohibited marriage
to a *mushrik* (polytheist) woman
and giving one's daughter in
marriage to a *mushrik* man

*I*t may be understood from this, and from the reason that Allah gives for it, that one should choose righteous friends and companions, who invite unto paradise by their words and deeds, and one should avoid their opposites, namely evildoers who invite unto the fire by their words and deeds, even if the latter are people of status, wealth and renown, and even if the former are poor people who have no status and are not held in high esteem by others. That is because opting for eternal bliss is more appropriate for the wise man than attaining some transient gains that will be followed by sorrow and regret. So choosing good companions and friends is the way of people of understanding.

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يُرِكُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ بَلِ اللَّهُ يُرِكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا﴾

﴿سورة النساء: ٤٩﴾

﴿Have you not seen those who claim purity for themselves? Nay, Allah purifies whomever He wills. They will never be wronged even by as much as the thread in the groove of a date stone.﴾ (*an-Nisâ'* 4: 49)

If the reason why they claim purity for themselves and praise themselves is fear that they will not be appreciated and their status will not be recognised, then they should understand that it is Allah Who purifies whomever He wills among His creation, and the pure one is the one who is purified by keeping away from abhorrent deeds and by doing good deeds, for Allah (ﷻ) is Appreciative and Most Wise. If they were truly people of purity, then Allah would make that known, even if they do not try to show it, for He does not wrong anyone even by as much as the thread in the groove of the date stone. But He knows that their claims of purity and self-praise are based on falsehood, fabrication and lies. Hence He says:

﴿أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذَبَ وَكَفَى بِهِ إِثْمًا مُّبِينًا﴾ (سورة النساء: ٥٠)

﴿Look how they fabricate lies against Allah! This in itself is a flagrant sin.﴾ (*an-Nisâ'* 4: 50)

Shared goals and collective effort

Shared goals and collective effort are among the most significant means of achieving sublime aims, just as conflicting aims and dispute are among the causes of failure and missing out on attaining common interests. This is indicated in the passage in which Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيْتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتوْا وَإِذْ كُرُوا إِلَهُكُمْ نَفْلُحُونَ ﴾ ٤٥
 ﴿وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنْزَعُوا فَنْفَشُوا وَتَذَهَّبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَأَصْبِرُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴾ ٤٦﴾

(سورة الأنفال: ٤٥-٤٦)

﴿O you who believe, when you meet an [enemy] troop, stand firm and remember Allah much, so that you may triumph. And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute, lest you lose heart and your strength desert you. And be steadfast, for Allah is with those who are steadfast.﴾ (al-Anfāl 8: 45-46)

Although this has to do with fighting the enemy – which is one of the hardest and most difficult things to do – it applies even more to other matters.

A significant disavowal

Concerning the greatest disavowal – which was disavowal on the part of Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) of the polytheists – it is interesting to note that Allah commanded that it be announced on the greatest day of the Hajj. However, although Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) disavow all types of sins, the highest level of disavowal, which leads to complete separation with no hint of loyalty, is disavowal of every polytheist and disbeliever in Almighty Allah. Part of the believer's perfect loyalty to Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) is to be in complete agreement with this disavowal. Hence Soorat al-Kâfiroon, from beginning to end, speaks of this disavowal and enjoins perfect sincerity to Allah (ﷻ) in all that one does of religious duties.

﴿...لَا يَرْقِبُوْ فِيْكُمْ إِلَّا وَلَذَمَّةٌ...﴾ (سورة التوبه: ٨)

﴿...they will not respect the ties of kinship or the treaty with you...﴾
(*at-Tawbah* 9: 8)

In a subsequent verse, Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿لَا يَرْقِبُوْنَ فِيْ مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَلَذَمَّةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُوْنَ﴾ (سورة التوبه: ١٠)

﴿They do not respect the ties of kinship or treaties with regard to believers. It is they who are the transgressors.﴾ (*at-Tawbah* 9: 10)

This indicates that the reasons for the disbelievers' hostility towards the Companions (ﷺ) are of two types, specific and general. The specific reason is what exists between you and them of enmity and what results from that; the general reason is the Companions' faith. This enmity towards the Companions was solely because of their faith, because the disbelievers are enemies of faith and of everyone who has faith, for their only grievance against them was that they believed in Allah, the Almighty, the Praiseworthy (85: 8). This is the utmost level of enmity, therefore Allah stated that they, in particular, are guilty of transgression: ﴿It is they who are the transgressors﴾.

﴿ وَإِنْ نَكَثُوا أَيْمَنَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوهُمْ أَئِمَّةُ الْكُفَّارِ إِنَّهُمْ لَا يَمْنَأُنَّ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ ﴾ (١٢) (سورة التوبة):

(١٢)

﴿But if they break their oaths after making a treaty, and revile your religion, then fight the leaders of disbelief, whose oaths mean nothing to them, so that they may desist.﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 12)

The phrase ﴿the leaders of disbelief﴾ is used instead of the pronoun; it does not say ‘then fight them’. This serves to emphasise the importance of fighting them, because they have become deeply entrenched in disbelief. This verse indicates that by doing these deeds, a person will become one of the leaders of disbelief. These deeds are: breaking oaths and treaties, calling people to disbelief, and reviling the religion of Islam. This indicates that the leaders of faith are the opposite of these people; they adhere to the teachings of Islam, are faithful to their covenants, call people to Allah, defend the faith, and stand up to anything that opposes faith, whether apparent or hidden. They are the trustworthy ones, who hold a position of leadership and are faithful to their trusts. We ask Allah (ﷻ) for His bounty.

﴿...إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ...﴾ (سورة التوبة: ٢٨)

﴿...truly the polytheists are impure...﴾ (*at-Tawbah* 9: 28)

This indicates that the words:

﴿...وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِي لِلظَّاهِرِينَ...﴾ (سورة الحج: ٢٦)

﴿...and purify My House for those who circumambulate it...﴾ (*al-Hajj* 22: 26)

- are general in meaning, and indicate that it is to be purified of both tangible and intangible impurities.

﴿ يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَطْلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ يَكْرِزُونَ الْذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُم بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴾ (٣٤) (سورة التوبه: ٣٤)

﴿O you who believe, indeed many of the rabbis and monks devour people's wealth wrongfully and bar them from the path of Allah. And as for those who hoard up gold and silver, and do not spend it in the cause of Allah, give them the tidings of a painful punishment.﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 34)

*H*ere Allah mentions the type of wealth accumulation that is unlawful, and that those who devour people's wealth wrongfully are of two types:

The first type is those who acquire wealth unlawfully and take people's wealth wrongfully, seizing it by force, taking bribes and so on. This includes wealth that is to be given to those who are entitled to it and fulfil certain conditions, but those wrongdoers take it even though they do not fulfil those conditions. This includes money allocated for charity, endowments (*waqf*), *zakâh*, wealth given in expiation, maintenance and so on. The second type is those who withhold what is due from them, whether it is owed to Allah or to other people. In both cases they are devouring wealth unlawfully.

﴿يَوْمَ يُحْمَى عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارٍ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكَوَّنُ بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ
وَظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لِأَنفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ﴾

(سورة التوبة: ٣٥) 

﴿On the day when it [that hoarded wealth] will be heated in the fire of hell, and with it their foreheads, sides and backs will be branded. [It will be said to them:] This is what you hoarded up for yourselves; now taste what you used to hoard up.﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 35)

*T*he wording of the original Arabic indicates that, in addition to the heat of the fire of hell, tools such as bellows and the like will be used to make it even hotter, and thus exacerbate the torment.

The commentators (may Allah have mercy on them) discussed the reason why specific mention is made of branding their foreheads, sides and backs. That is because when a poor person came to ask for charity, one of them would tilt his face upwards; if the poor person asked again, he would turn aside from him; if the poor person persisted in asking, he would turn his back on him. So these three are singled out as a befitting punishment. But it occurred to me that there may be a more appropriate explanation, which is that branding these three places is harder to bear than the branding of others, and they include all four sides, namely front, back, right and left. These are the directions in which a person may move; as they withheld what was due from them completely, and refused to give it in any direction, they will be requited with the opposite of their aim. Their aim in withholding this wealth was to enjoy it and thus have a life of ease, and they feared losing it and did not want to suffer its loss if they spent it. This withholding was the direct cause of their suffering; if they had given it at the time when they were able to do so (in this world), they would have been safe from that branding (in the hereafter), and they would have attained reward thereby. This is indicated by the words at the end of the verse: ﴿This is what you hoarded up for yourselves; now taste what you used to hoard up﴾. It is also indicated by the words of the Prophet (ﷺ):

«Those who have the most will be those who have the least on the Day of Resurrection, except the one who does like this and like this and like this» (Bukhari and Muslim)

– in front of him and behind him and to his right and to his left.[14](#)

According to another version of the hadith:

«They will be the greatest losers, by the Lord of the Kaaba.»[15](#)

Part of their loss is that they will miss out on the reward that they could have attained by spending some of their wealth, for they could have been safe from the consequences of not spending it, such as the branding mentioned above.

﴿إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الْشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ ...﴾

(سورة التوبة: ٣٦)

﴿Verily, the number of months with Allah is twelve, as ordained by Allah...﴾ (*at-Tawbah* 9: 36)

This indicates that with regard to these well-known months, Allah instilled knowledge of them in people, and that is in accordance with His decree and His laws. Some people quote this as evidence for the idea that language is something that is instilled by Allah and is not something that people developed. And Allah knows best.

﴿... وَقَاتَلُوا الْمُسْرِكِينَ كَافَةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَةً﴾

﴿وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (سورة التوبه: ٣٦) (٣٦)

﴿...and fight the polytheists all together, as they fight you all together. And know that Allah is with those who fear Him.﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 36)

From this verse we learn several things:

- i. That it is obligatory to fight the polytheists, because in principle, anything that appears in the form of a command is to be taken as obligatory.
- ii. That it is obligatory upon all the believers. This is understood from the word ﴿fight﴾ and not from the words ﴿all together﴾, because ﴿all together﴾ refers to the polytheists, according to the correct view. This is indicated by the fact that here Allah is addressing all the believers when He says ﴿fight﴾. But this is a communal obligation (*fard kifayah*) that is required of those who are able to do it, because Allah (ﷻ) says elsewhere:

﴿... وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَةً...﴾ (سورة التوبه: ١٢٢) (١٢٢)

﴿It is not right for all the believers to go out together...﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 122)

﴿... لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرْجٌ...﴾ (سورة النور: ٦١) (٦١)

﴿There is no blame on the blind...﴾ (an-Noor 24: 61)

- iii. This fighting is directed at all polytheists, and is not limited to one group rather than another.
- iv. Those who are too arrogant to worship Allah – including all kinds of atheists and those who do not believe in the hereafter – are more deserving of being fought than the polytheists.
- v. Fighting them becomes obligatory when two conditions are met: if they are polytheists and if they are waging war (against the Muslims). If one of these two

conditions is absent, then they are not to be fought. A Muslim cannot be fought just because he commits some acts of wrongdoing or sins; rather the one who is to be fought is the one who spreads mischief in the land – such as those who take up arms against the authorities, the Kharijites and their ilk. Similarly, those polytheists who do not fight the Muslims are not to be fought, either because they are not people who could fight – such as women, children, old people, monks and the like – or because they have surrendered to the Muslim authorities and agreed to pay the *jizyah*. We may also conclude from this that the *jizyah* may be collected from any polytheist who agrees to pay it, even if he is not one of the People of the Book, because of this general meaning of the verse.

- vi. This verse also points out that one should have sincere intentions when striving in jihad, and that the polytheists should be fought – if they are fought – for the sake of Allah, and because they have a characteristic that Allah despises, namely *shirk*. So your motive for fighting them should be to hate what your Lord hates and regard as enemies those whom He regards as enemies, so that His word may become supreme.
- vii. The believers are urged to fight the polytheists, because the polytheists are fighting all the believers; their evil nature opposes anyone who meets the description of being a believer, and they oppose him and fight him just because he is a believer; so why do you – O believers – not fight those who disbelieve in what has come to you of the truth, and they stubbornly reject it and fight it? So you should be as one in your standing up to them and strive hard in fighting them.
- viii. You should strive to attain piety and mindfulness of Allah, so that you might be granted the help of Allah, and so that He will be with you and take care of you.
- ix. There are verses in the Qur'an which speak of Allah being with people. Some of these verses speak in a general sense, which includes all people, righteous and evildoers alike, as in the verse in which Allah (□) says:

﴿... مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ تَحْوَىٰ ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرُ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعْهُمْ أَنَّمَا كَانُواْ ...﴾ (سورة المجادلة: 7)

﴿...There is no private conversation among three but He is their fourth, or among five but He is their sixth, or among fewer or more than that, but He is with them,¹⁶

wherever they may be... ﴿al-Mujâdilah 58: 7﴾

And there are other verses which speak of Him being with people in a specific sense, especially for the one who does what Allah likes him to do of believing, doing righteous deeds, being patient and steadfast, and being mindful of Him, such as the verses in which He says:

﴿... وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾ (سورة العنكبوت: ٦٩) ٦٩

﴿...for verily Allah is with the doers of good.﴾ (al-‘Ankaboot 29: 69)

﴿... إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٥٣) ١٥٣

﴿...for Allah is with those who are patient.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 153)

﴿... وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ١٩) ١٩

﴿...for verily Allah is with the believers.﴾ (al-Anfâl 8: 19)

What is meant by His being with them is that He helps them, supports them and is close to them.

x. This verse points out means of attaining victory over the enemy, which includes being united in fighting them, avoiding disputes, being sincere to Allah (□) and feeling strong enmity that prompts one to do one's utmost in fighting them. That includes preparing weapons and mounts, and all kinds of force, as well as having certain faith that Allah is with the believers and attaining the highest level of piety. When all these means are combined, then victory becomes inevitable, but if any of these factors are lacking, then victory will be less likely. Thus it is known that the teachings of Islam are perfect in all aspects, and offer guidelines to help one attain the best in this world and the hereafter. And Allah is the source of strength.

﴿إِنَّمَا الْسَّيِّءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفَّارِ يُضَلُّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُحِلُّونَهُ عَامًا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا لِيُوَاطِئُوا عِدَّةَ مَا حَرَمَ اللَّهُ فَيُحِلُّوا مَا حَرَمَ اللَّهُ...﴾

(سورة التوبة: ٣٧) 

﴿Verily, the postponing of sacred months is but another act of disbelief, because of which those who disbelieve are led further astray. They regard it as profane one year and as sacred the next, so as to match the number of months that Allah has made sacred, thus making lawful what Allah has forbidden...﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 37)

This indicates that it is forbidden to try to find loopholes by changing the religion of Allah, waiving obligations and permitting what is unlawful by reaching such conclusions in a way that appears to be permissible, the reason being that Allah (ﷻ) criticised those who postponed the sacred months, and described this as another act of disbelief on their part. They used to bring a month forward or postpone it, and they would replace a sacred month with an ordinary month, or vice versa. They would agree on a number of months that they would call sacred, in which they would refrain from that which they refrained in the regular sacred months. So they changed the months and their names, and they connected what is unlawful and what is permissible to these new names and this new setup, and not to the real months. This is the essence of cheating and trickery. And Allah knows best.

The one who calls to Allah and to His religion has a way and method of reaching his goals, of which he has two

The first goal is calling people to the truth, in the right way, for the sake of Allah. If these three elements are combined, meaning that he is calling in the right way, with wisdom and beautiful preaching, presenting his argument in a proper and gentle manner, and he is calling to the truth – which is the path of Allah (□) that leads the one who follows it to paradise – and his call is sincerely for the sake of Allah (□), seeking thereby His pleasure, then he will undoubtedly attain one of two goals, namely the reward of those who call people to Allah and the reward of the heirs of the Messengers, commensurate with the efforts he makes in this regard. The second goal is attaining results, which is that people are guided and follow the path of Allah to which he calls them. This may or may not happen, so let the caller strive to perfect his method of calling as mentioned above, and let him be confident of attaining reward. If he does not attain the second goal, which is to guide people, or he encounters opposition from them, or they harm him verbally or physically, let him be patient and seek reward with Allah. That does not mean that he should give up what benefits him, which is striving to call people in the best way, and he should not feel distressed by that so that he loses resolve and feels sad. Rather he should strive hard to do his best, no matter how people react to or oppose him.

This is referred to in the verse in which Allah (□) says:

﴿فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَى إِلَيْكَ وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ صَدِّرَكَ أَنْ يَقُولُوا لَوْلَا أُنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنزٌ أَوْ جَاءَهُ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴾ (سورة هود: ١٢) ١٥

﴿Beware lest you omit some of that which is revealed to you, and feel distressed thereby, for fear that they will say: Why is not some treasure sent down to him, or why does an angel not come with him? Rather you are but a warner; Allah is in charge of all things.﴾ (Hood 11: 12)

Here Allah instructs His Prophet (ﷺ) to call with energy and strive hard, trying to do it in the most perfect manner and avoiding any shortcomings; he should not be distressed by their harm, for this is his task that is expected of him, and he must do it. As for the guidance and requital of people, that is in the Hand of Allah, Who is in charge of all things.

﴿وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْرَبَّهُمْ مُّنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا أَذَاقَهُمْ مِّنْهُ رَحْمَةً إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَرْبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ﴾ (سورة الروم: ٣٣)

﴿When misfortune befalls people, they call upon their Lord [alone], turning to Him in repentance. Then when He grants them relief by His mercy, some of them ascribe partners to their Lord.﴾ (*ar-Room* 30: 33)

*I*n this and similar verses, we see confirmation of this idea in the context of the fundamental teachings of Islam, which is that most people, when misfortune befalls them, turn to Allah and no one else, because they know that He is the only One Who could relieve them of distress, and because they are forced by necessity to turn to Him. But when that necessity is no longer there, they go back to their shirk (ascription of partners to Allah). This idea is also confirmed in the minor issues of religion, for in general you will find that people are heedless and persist in that which Allah dislikes, turning away from remembering their Lord and calling upon Him. But if calamity befalls them, they turn to the Lord, beseeching Him and praying that He will relieve them of this calamity. So they turn to Him and repent, then when Allah relieves them of hardship and distress, they go back to heedlessness, wandering blindly in transgression, and they forget the time when they turned to Him, as if it never happened.

This attitude is one of the main causes of deviation and is the worst attitude that a person could develop, only acknowledging his Lord at the time of need. This is one of the branches of shirk, and whoever is like this, his attitude bears some resemblance to that of the polytheists.

As for the perfect believer who acknowledges his Lord at times of ease and times of hardship, he is the true slave of Allah, and he is the one for whom the consequences will be good and he will attain eternal happiness. He is the one who will be saved from distress if it befalls him. Allah (ﷺ) says, after noting that in the case of Dhun-Noon, because of his worship at the time of ease, Allah was with him at the time of hardship:

﴿فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ ﴾١٤٣ ﴿لَلَّيْلَثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمٍ يُبَعَّثُونَ ﴾١٤٤﴾ (سورة الصافات: ١٤٣-١٤٤)

﴿Were it not for the fact that he was one of those who glorified Allah a great deal, he would have remained in its belly until the Day of Resurrection.﴾ (as-Sâffât 37: 143-144)

﴿فَأَسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَبَخَّيَّنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمَّ وَكَذَّلَكَ ثُجِّي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾٨٨﴾ (سورة الأنبياء: ٨٨)

﴿So We answered his prayer and delivered him from his distress; thus do We deliver the believers.﴾ (al-Anbiyâ' 21: 88)

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Acknowledge Allah at times of ease; He will be with you at times of hardship.»¹⁷

A similar meaning is found in the verse in which Allah speaks of those affluent people who reject the call of the Messengers, as He says:

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتَرَفِّهَا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَفِرْنَا﴾ (سورة سباء: ٣٤)

(٣٤)

﴿We never sent any warner to a city but its affluent ones said: Verily, we disbelieve in that with which you have been sent.﴾ (Saba' 34: 34)

Here Allah tells us that the reason for their rejection of the call was their affluence, which means indulging in the delights and pleasures of this world, focusing completely on that and going to extremes in choosing the best food, drink and means of transportation. Extravagance in such things leads to the development of evil characteristics and attitudes, which prevent a person from hastening to submit to Allah's commands and to respond to the one who calls people to Allah. As this attitude is mentioned in the context of the fundamentals of religion, it is also mentioned in the context of religious teachings and minor issues. How often affluence prevents a person from doing acts of worship; how often it prevents one from doing righteous deeds that bring one closer to Allah; and how often it is a cause of falling into that which is prohibited. For affluence and going to extremes in pursuing a life of luxury and ease turn man into something that is more akin to cattle that have no aspiration except the joy of eating and drinking. It also causes him to slacken and makes him lazy, with the result

that he finds acts of worship burdensome, and it causes him to be focused completely on physical desires and material gains. How often does a person with such an attitude end up focusing on the accumulation of wealth, without caring whether he is acquiring it by lawful means. How often such a person develops an attitude of conceit, arrogance, showing off, pride, self-admiration and frequently mixing with bad company.

In conclusion, affluence and extravagance are far more harmful than what we have mentioned here. Therefore the individual must be moderate in his food, drink, clothing, accommodation and other essential needs; he should not aspire for anything except what he needs or use more than he needs. He should accustom himself to that and train himself to develop good attitudes, so that he can keep away from many troubles and evils that result from affluence and living a life of luxury. Hence when the Muslims conquered vast territories at the time of ‘Umar (*radiya Allâhu ‘anhu* – may Allah be pleased with him) and wealth increased greatly, ‘Umar (□) emphatically forbade the Muslims to pursue a life of luxury; he instructed them to live a rough life and to adhere to moderation, which is in people’s best interests in this life and the hereafter. And Allah is the source of strength.

﴿فَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ مَا ذَرَ رَحْمَتِ اللَّهِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتِي وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾ (سورة الروم: ٥٠)

﴿Look then at the effects of Allah's mercy, how He gives life to the earth after its death; verily it is He [the Giver of life to the dead earth] Who will give life to the dead, for He has power over all things.﴾ (ar-Room 30: 50)

When the earth is barren and desolate, devoid of vegetation, Allah sends down rain upon it, so it stirs and swells, and brings forth beautiful plants of every kind, in which there are all kinds of benefits. Allah (ﷺ) has made this one of the greatest signs of His abundant mercy and perfect might; it is also a sign that He will give life to the dead so that He may requite them. This is the likeness of the heart that is devoid of knowledge or goodness; when Allah sends down upon it the rain of revelation, it stirs and brings forth all beautiful types of beneficial and abundant knowledge, much goodness, righteous conduct, kindness, love of Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ); sincerity of deeds both visible and hidden, which are done sincerely for the sake of Allah alone; fear, hope, beseeching and humility before Allah; all kinds of acts of worship; sincerity to Allah, to His Messenger (ﷺ), to His Book, and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk; other kinds of knowledge and deeds both visible and hidden; and divine blessings such as no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and have never crossed the mind of man. These blessings are far greater than the entire earth, for Allah's mercy is vast, His generosity is immense, and His gifts are varied. His is the utmost power and glory, and He will give life to the dead so that He may requite them. With Him in the hereafter are good things and bounties that no one knows except Him. Allah tells us that the revelation brings life to the heart just as the rain brings life to the earth, and that hearts that are devoid of goodness are like bad land, as He says:

﴿وَالْبَلَدُ الْطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي خُبِثَ لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكِيدًا كَذَلِكَ نُصْرِفُ الْأَيَّتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٥٨)

﴿The good land brings forth its vegetation abundantly, by its Lord's leave, but bad land brings forth only poor and scant vegetation. Thus do We make the revelations elaborately clear for people who give thanks.﴾ (*al-A'râf* 7: 58)

A person's intention determines
the status of his deed

If a person does well in worshipping his Lord, and resolves to do difficult righteous deeds, Allah will make things easy for him. Perhaps his fears will be replaced with feelings of safety and security, and his trials will be replaced with rewards; perhaps as a result of that he will attain good in this world and the hereafter. This is indicated by the passage in which Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿أَلَّذِينَ أَسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقُوا أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴾
 ﴿أَلَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَأَخْشَوْهُمْ فَرَأَدُهُمْ إِيمَنًا وَقَالُوا حَسِبْنَا
 اللَّهَ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ ﴾
 ﴿فَانْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمْسِسْهُمْ سُوءٌ وَاتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ
 وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٧٢-١٧٤) ﴿١٧٣﴾

﴿Of those who answered the call of Allah and the Messenger, even after sustaining injuries, those who do good and fear Allah will have an immense reward – those to whom people said: The people have gathered against you, so fear them. But it [only] increased them in faith. They said: Allah is Sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs. And they returned with grace and bounty from Allah, and no harm touched them, for they pursued the pleasure of Allah. And Allah is the Possessor of abundant grace.﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 172-174)

No one should think that all this bounty is too much. This passage also indicates that Allah may cause His slave to go through times of fear and hardship, so as to train him to put his trust in his Lord, be sincere to Him, and beseech Him, thus increasing him in faith and certainty, as He says:

﴿أَلَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَأَخْشَوْهُمْ فَرَأَدُهُمْ إِيمَنًا وَقَالُوا حَسِبْنَا
 اللَّهَ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٧٣) ﴿١٧٤﴾

﴿Those to whom people said: The people have gathered against you, so fear them. But it [only] increased them in faith. They said: Allah is Sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs.﴾ (*Al 'Imrān* 3: 173)

﴿ وَأَنذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَن يُحْشَرُوا إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَلِئِنْ
وَلَا شَفِيعٌ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْقُونَ ﴾ (٥١) (سورة الأنعام: ٥١)

﴿ Warn hereby those who fear being gathered to their Lord, when they will have no protector or intercessor to deliver them from [the punishment of] Allah, so that they may become pious. ﴾ (al-An 'âm 6: 51)

This fear is not a shortcoming on their part, as some thought, and interpreted fear as referring to knowledge. Rather there is an additional, subtle meaning. Knowledge is of two types, one of which does not lead to action, and instead becomes proof against the one who knows it, which is knowledge that is not beneficial; the other type does lead to action, which is the knowledge of the believers that Allah will resurrect them and requite them for their deeds. This knowledge created fear in them, so that they fear standing before their Lord and they benefit from the warning of the Messengers, understanding that they will have no ally or intercessor before Allah who could protect them from His punishment. These are the ones whom Allah instructed His Messenger ﷺ to warn, because they would appreciate the warning and comply with the message. As for those who turn away, remain heedless and stubbornly persist in turning away, no exhortation or reminder can benefit them, because they have nothing in their hearts that would cause them to respond to the warning. This is what the verse is referring to. And Allah is Most Generous.

Section 4

The strong resolve for which Allah
praises the elite of His creation

As in the verse:

﴿فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُولُو الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ...﴾ (سورة الأحقاف: ٣٥) (٣٥)

﴿So be patient, as the Messengers of strong resolve were patient...﴾ (al-Ahqâf 46: 35)

This refers to their strong will and resolve to continue complying with the commands of Allah, and their aspiration that never faltered or wavered in seeking the pleasure of Allah, doing righteous deeds, and striving their utmost not to fall short in their duties towards Allah. Hence Allah rebuked Adam (ﷺ) for not persisting in adherence to His command and for being deceived by his enemy when he ate from the tree from which Allah had instructed him to refrain from eating. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَلَقَدْ عَهَدْنَا إِلَيْنَاهُ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلِ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ يَنْجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا﴾ (سورة طه: ١١٥) (١١٥)

﴿Indeed, We gave a command to Adam before, but he forgot, and We found him lacking in firm resolve.﴾ (Tâ Hâ 20: 115)

Loss of drive and unintended shortcomings are contrary to the proper level of resolve, hence no one attains a high level of resolve except those who attain the most sublime virtues. Shortcomings (in adhering to the divine commands) only occur due to one of two things: either the person has not resolved to adhere to the path of guidance, or he is not able to be steadfast and persist in keeping up his resolve. Hence the supplication of the Prophet (ﷺ):

«O Allah, I ask You for steadfastness in adhering to Your command and resolve in following the path of guidance»¹⁸

– is one of the most beneficial of supplications and one of the most concise in asking for all kinds of goodness. Whomever Allah helps to have the intention of following the path of guidance, to have firm resolve in doing so, and to remain steadfast and persist in that, has attained the greatest blessing. In this regard, people vary according to the extent to

which they adhere to these two things. It is sufficient for people of virtue that they should have the resolve to follow the path of guidance, and that will be reflected in their efforts to attain knowledge and act upon it. If a person begins to slacken and develops shortcomings in that regard, then he should go back to the basics and try to deal with the problem by means of dhikr (remembering Allah) and *istighfâr* (seeking Allah's forgiveness). Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَتَقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَّيْفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَنِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُّبَصِّرُونَ﴾

(سورة الأعراف: ٢٠١)

﴿Verily, those who fear Allah, when an evil suggestion comes to them from Shaytân, remember and immediately begin to see clearly.﴾ (*al-A'râf* 7: 201)

That is, they remember the shortcomings they have developed because of the Shaytân, which have led to their loss, so they begin to see clearly and thus hasten to deal with these shortcomings by renewing their resolve to adhere to the straight path. We ask Allah (ﷺ) to make us among them, by His grace. Âmeen.

﴿ يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَقْسَحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَأَفْسِحُوا يَفْسَحَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ أُنْشُرُوا فَأَنْشُرُوا يَرْفَعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَيْرٌ ﴾ (سورة المجادلة: ١١) ﴿ ١١ ﴾

﴿O you who believe, when you are told to make room in your gatherings, then make room; Allah will grant you abundance.¹⁹ And when you are told to rise,²⁰ then rise; Allah will raise in status those of you who believe and [especially] those who have been given knowledge. And Allah is well aware of all that you do.﴾ (al-Mujâdilah 58: 11)

This verse highlights the virtue of following the etiquette that is prescribed in Islamic teachings, and tells us that doing so will increase one in status before Allah, even if one thinks that it undermines his position. For nothing could undermine a person's position except failing to follow the etiquette that Allah has prescribed when He said: ﴿Allah will raise in status those of you who believe and [especially] those who have been given knowledge﴾. He did not say “He will raise you” so as to highlight the virtue of faith and knowledge in general terms, and to highlight the fact that through them one may attain high status in this world and the hereafter. This indicates that one of the fruits of having knowledge and faith is that one will hasten to comply with the command of Allah, and that this and similar etiquette only benefit the one who adheres to it; he attains reward thereby if it is based on knowledge and faith, which means that it should be sincerely for the sake of Allah, and not for any other purpose.

﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ عَمِّلُوا مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ ۚ وَأَتَقْرَأُوا لِفَتْحَنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَأَلَّا يَرْجِعُوا ۚ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٩٦)

﴿If only the people of the cities had believed and feared Allah, We would indeed have opened up for them blessings from heaven and earth...﴾ (*al-A'râf* 7: 96)

This verse is explained in another verse:

﴿...لَا كَلُؤُمٌ فَوْقَهُمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ ...﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٦٦)

﴿...they would surely have been given provision from above them and from beneath their feet...﴾ (*al-Mâ'idah* 5: 66)

The sky is the source of water that causes provision to grow, and the earth is the place where that provision grows.

Section 5

﴿ يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ يُبَيِّثُونَ مَا لَا يَرْضَى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطًا ﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٠٨) ﴿١٦٨﴾

﴿They seek to hide from people but they do not seek to hide from Allah, for He is with them [by His knowledge] when they make plans to say things that are not pleasing to Him. Verily, Allah encompasses [with His knowledge] all that they do.﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 108)

Allah criticised them for two reasons: for committing sin and for persisting in sin. There is also a third reason for criticism; Allah criticised them for the plans they made, because the word translated here as planning implies plotting at night to undermine the truth and deceive the people of truth, by means of the words that they spread, which incur the wrath of Allah and are not pleasing to Him. These words include the unlawful things that they say and their persisting in that. They say words of sin and transgression, and their planning to say that and their persisting therein constitute a further sin. This is more eloquent than saying, “He is with them [by His knowledge] when they say words that are not pleasing to Him.” The individual should repent to Allah from committing sins and persisting in them, for just as doing it is a sin, persisting in it and intending to do it whenever one has the opportunity is another sin. The individual should plan to do and say that which is pleasing to Allah (□), and he should do whatever he can of good, and intend to do good for which the time has not yet come and that he is not yet able to do. Thus he will become one of those who seek the good pleasure of Allah, of whom Allah says:

﴿ أَفَمِنْ أَتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ كَمْنَ بَاءَ بِسَخَطِيْرِ مِنَ اللَّهِ ... ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٦٢) ﴿١٦٢﴾

﴿Is the one who seeks the good pleasure of Allah like the one who incurs the wrath of Allah...?﴾ (آل 'Imrân 3: 162)

– and he will be guided in all his affairs.

﴿... قَدْ جَاءَكُم مِّنْ أَنَّا نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴾١٥ يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ، سُبْلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلْمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صَرَاطِ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴾١٦﴾ (سورة المائدة: ١٥-١٦)

﴿...There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book, with which Allah guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of the depths of darkness to the light, by His leave, and guides them to a straight path.﴾ (al-Mâ'idah 5: 15-16)

﴿وَإِن يَنْفَرُّ قَاتِلًا مِّنْ سَعَتِهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ وَسِعًا حَكِيمًا﴾

(١٣٠) سورة النساء

﴿But if they separate, Allah will compensate both out of His abundance, for Allah is All-Encompassing, Most Wise.﴾ (*an-Nisâ’ 4: 130*)

This verse teaches us a great lesson, which is that the individual should rely on Allah, hope for His generosity and kindness, and take whatever measures are permissible. If one door closes, through which Allah had decreed that he should have provision, he should not panic because of that, or despair of the bounty of Allah. He should realise that all means of provision are connected to the Creator of those means and causes, so he should have hope that the One Who closed this door of provision for him will open another door of provision that is wider and better than the first door.

This act of worship (relying on Allah) is one of the best of the acts of worship that are connected to the heart (that is, thoughts and feelings), for by doing so he will attain trust in Allah, the care of Allah, reassurance and peace of mind. For this woman was married to a husband who spent on her and took care of her maintenance, so if separation occurs and she thinks that she will have no more maintenance and no one to take care of her needs, then she should turn to Allah and trust His generosity and promise that He will compensate her, as He says: ﴿Allah will compensate both out of His abundance﴾. He did not say “He will compensate her”, even though the context may suggest that, lest anyone think that this promise is only for her. Rather the promise is for her and for him, for Allah is Most Generous, but what He gives is in accordance with His wisdom, and His wisdom dictates that if a person loses hope in people’s help and in all measures that he may take, and instead puts his hope in the generosity of his Lord, trusts His promise and hopes for His kindness, then Allah will suffice him and make him independent of means. Allah will guide those who have purity of heart and hope for what is with their Lord.

Section 6

What is appropriate for one who aspires to get something that he is not able to get

Or it is not possible in his case, and he is sad because he is not able to get it, is to console himself by thinking of what Allah has bestowed upon him and the divine blessings that he is enjoying that other people do not have. Hence when Moosâ (ﷺ) aspired to see Allah (ﷻ), and asked Him to grant him that, Allah told him that this was not going to happen for him in this world, for such a thing is impossible, and He consoled him by reminding him of some of the blessings that He had bestowed upon him:

﴿... يَمْوَسَّ إِنِّي أَصْطَلَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ بِرِسَالَتِي وَبِكَلْمَيْ فَخُذْ مَا أَتَيْتُكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ الْشَّاكِرِينَ ﴾ (الْأَعْرَاف: ١٤٤)

﴿...O Moosâ, I have chosen you above others, by giving you My messages and speaking to you. Hold fast to what I have given you, and be among those who are grateful.﴾ (al-A'râf 7: 144)

Similarly, Allah pointed out to His Messenger (ﷺ) and His believing slaves:

﴿... أَوْ جَاءُوكُمْ حَصِرَّتْ صُدُورُهُمْ أَنْ يُقْتَلُوكُمْ أَوْ يُقْتَلُوا قَوْمُهُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَسَلَطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقَتَلُوكُمْ ... ﴾ (سورة النساء: ٩٠)

﴿...or come to you with their hearts feeling discomfort at the prospect of fighting either you or their own people. If Allah had willed, He could have given them resolve and they would have fought you...﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 90)

Thinking about this situation – as the verse refers to some of the disbelievers refraining from fighting the believers and making peace with them – in contrast to what the situation could have been – which is that if Allah had so willed, He could have given them resolve and they would have fought the believers – is something that made the situation bearable. Although those people were not lending a hand to the believers,

at the same time they were not helping their enemies against them. Similarly, we are enjoined to look at those who are less well off in terms of wealth, status, well-being and so on, and not to look at those who are better off, because the one who thinks in such terms will not think little of the blessings that Allah bestows upon him. By the same token, if he is afflicted by a calamity, let him praise Allah that it was not worse than it is, and let him give thanks to Allah that it affects his health or his wealth, and does not affect his religious commitment. The one who has this outlook will find peace of mind and will be at ease with himself; he will be patient and grateful.

﴿ يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّىٰ تَسْتَأْنِسُوا ... ﴾

(سورة النور: ٢٧) 

﴿O you who believe, do not enter houses other than your own until you have asked permission...﴾ (*an-Noor* 24: 27)

*T*he reason why Allah prescribed asking permission is to put people at ease and avoid scaring them. It also indicates that the way in which permission is granted and sought depends on custom, but it may be said that asking permission includes speaking appropriate words or doing what is customary. And Allah knows best.

﴿ وَلَا يَأْتِي أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةُ أَنْ يُؤْتِي أُولَى الْقُرْبَى وَالْمَسْكِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَيَعْفُوا وَلَيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تَحْبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ﴾

﴿ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴾ (سورة النور: ٢٢)

﴿ Let not those among you who are people of virtue and wealth swear to cease giving [aid] to their kinsfolk, the needy and those who have migrated in Allah's cause. Rather let them pardon and overlook. Do you not like for Allah to forgive you? For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. ﴾ (an-Noor 24: 22)

Even though this verse was revealed concerning Abu Bakr as-Şiddeeq (□), when he swore that he would not spend on (his relative) Mistah when the latter went along with those who fabricated and spread the slander (*al-ift*), the wording is very general in meaning. This proves that the Qur'an was revealed to guide all people, and that it is addressed to those of this Ummah concerning whom it was not revealed, as well as those among whom it was revealed, those who were the direct reasons for revelation, and others. Something similar may be said about all the verses that were revealed concerning specific issues, but the wording is such that it is as if it is giving general guidelines. Thus we may know that although learning the original reasons for the revelation of verses is useful, there is something else that is even more useful and important: reflecting on the wording of the verses, whether in general or specific terms, pondering the context of the verses, striving to work out the intended meaning, and putting it into practice are all more important and reflect the ultimate goal. This is what Allah has prescribed for people as a way of worship, and it is what leads to increase in knowledge and faith. What confirms that learning the reasons for revelation is not as important as learning the meaning that Allah intended in these verses is the fact that understanding the meanings of the Qur'an is not dependent upon knowing the reason for revelation of a verse. Hence you will find the commentators giving many different views with regard to the reason for revelation, and in most cases it is very difficult to know which view is correct. Moreover, when it comes to those who study the reasons for revelation, you will find that their knowledge of the interpretation of the Qur'an

(tafseer) is not as it should be. I am not saying that researching the reasons for revelation is of no benefit; indeed it is of benefit and perfect understanding of a verse may depend on it. Rather what I am saying is that studying and reflecting on the wording and intended meaning is more important. Nevertheless, if a person finds out that the reason for revelation of some verses is connected to some incident that happened, he should not focus all of his attention on that only; rather he should bear in mind what we have discussed above, and realise that the minor incident concerning which the verse was revealed forms only part of the intended meaning and is simply one element of it. Thus the intended meaning is like a framework in which are many elements, one of which is the incident which was the cause of revelation. And Allah is the One Whose help we seek in all matters, the One Who we hope will grant relief from every hardship and help with every difficulty.

Whatever good people go through
brings benefits to them in particular
and to others in general

This is part of the blessing that Allah has granted to them and part of the blessing that He brings about through them, and it is part of their sincerity towards other people. Hence, when Sulaymân (‘alayhi as-salâm – peace be upon him) saw the throne of the queen of Saba’ (Sheba) set before him – having been brought with great speed – he said:

﴿... هَذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّيِّ لِيَبْلُوْنِي أَشْكُرُهُمْ أَكْفُرُ وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّيَ غَنِيٌّ﴾
﴿كَرِيمٌ﴾ (سورة النمل: ٤٠)

﴿...This is a favour from my Lord, to test whether I will be grateful or ungrateful. Whoever is grateful, his gratitude is to his own benefit, and whoever is ungrateful, then surely Allah is self-sufficient, most generous.﴾ (an-Naml 27: 40)

Do you not see how he acknowledged the favour of Allah, gave thanks for that, affirmed Allah’s wisdom, and spoke of Allah’s generosity and self-sufficiency? The implicit meaning of these words of his is to urge people to do these things, hence he spoke in general terms: ﴿Whoever is grateful...﴾ and ﴿whoever is ungrateful...﴾. If you examine all the stories of the Prophets and their followers and heirs, you will see that whatever they went through, they benefitted from it themselves and Allah caused others to benefit from it too because of them. We ask Allah (ﷻ) to bless for us whatever He has bestowed upon us of both spiritual and worldly blessings, for the blessing of Allah is never-ending and there is no limit to His generosity. A little, if Allah blesses it, will become much, and nothing can be little when it comes to the blessings of our Lord! To Him be praise and thanks of all kinds for His multifaceted perfection; to Him be thanks for what He bestows upon people of blessings and gifts, much praise in hearts and words and deeds, much good and blessed praise.

Proving the view of an opponent
to be wrong may be done by
invalidating the evidence that he
cites to support his argument

Or it may be done by invalidating what he thinks the evidence proves, or by invalidating the view itself that his opponent is trying to prove, and demonstrating that it is flawed. Or it may be done by proving sound the opposite of what one's opponent says and the opposite of the evidence he is citing. That is because when there are two opposing arguments, once one of them is proven to be correct, the other is automatically proven to be false. These matters were summed up in the words of Yoosuf (ﷺ), when he was arguing to prove the soundness of *tawheed* and the invalidity of shirk:

﴿يَصْرِحُ بِي السِّجْنِ إِنَّ رَبَّيْ بُ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ اللَّهُ الْوَحِيدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴾٢٩﴿ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَإِبْرَاهِيمُ كُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَنٍ إِنَّ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمْرٌ إِلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الْدِينُ الْقِيمُ وَلَنِكَنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾٣٠﴾ (سورة يوسف: ٢٩-٣٠)

(٤٠-٣٩)

﴿O my two fellow prisoners, which is better: many different gods or Allah, the One, the Subjugator? All that you worship besides Him is no more than names you have named, you and your forefathers, for which Allah has not sent down any authority. All power belongs to Allah alone, and He has ordained that you should worship none but Him. This is the right religion, but most people do not realize.﴾ (Yoosuf 12: 39-40)

He demonstrated that shirk is false, and depicted its abhorrent nature both on rational grounds and on the basis of religious texts, noting that those that are claimed to be gods other than Allah are many and varied, each group claiming that its view is sound whilst all others are false. But in fact there is no difference between them, for the polytheist is like a slave belonging to several partners who are at odds with one another (cf. 39: 29). Those that are worshipped besides Allah have no divine characteristics; they have no perfection for which they would deserve to be worshipped, and they cannot

take any actions so as to benefit or harm people, and thus deserve to be the focus of fear or hope. Rather they are mere names, behind which there is no reality, and, moreover, Allah has not sent down any authority for worshipping them. So in all the sound evidence there is nothing to indicate that it is valid to worship them; rather all the evidence and proof is agreed that worshipping them is false and invalid, and that worship should only be for Allah alone, Who is unique in His oneness and absolute perfection in all aspects; nothing is like unto Him, and He has no equal and nothing even approaches equality with Him. He is the Subjugator of all things, and all creatures are under His control; their forelocks are in the Hand of Allah. The One, the Subjugator, is the One Who is deserving of love, submission and humility before His greatness and might.

﴿... وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي الْسَّبِيلَ﴾ (سورة الأحزاب: ٤)

﴿...But Allah speaks the truth and He guides to the [right] path.﴾ (*al-Ahzâb* 33: 4)

This verse refers to all branches of sound knowledge, for knowledge either deals with beneficial matters or sets out sound guidelines. The most beneficial matters that knowledge discusses are truthfulness, justice, fairness and righteousness, both inward and outward; and the best of guidelines are those which guide to the path that enables one to attain the most sublime goals and high levels of faith. Adhering to the Qur'an and Sunnah guarantees attainment of both issues in the most perfect, complete and clear way; anything else is false and leads to misguidance, for what can there be beyond truth but misguidance? What can there be beyond guidance to the straight path but guidance to the path that leads to hell?

﴿وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جَنَّتَكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا﴾ (سورة الفرقان: ٣٣)

﴿Whenever they come to you [O Muhammad] with an argument, We reveal to you the truth and the best explanation.﴾ (*al-Furqân* 25: 33)

Guidance versus misguidance

If you say that Allah states in more than one place that He does not guide people who are given to wrongdoing, and He does not guide people who are given to wickedness, or people who are given to disbelief, or evildoers, and the like, then how come we see that many wrongdoers, wicked people, disbelievers and evildoers were guided, even though His word is true and never differs from what happens in reality? The answer is that those whom He said He does not guide are those who are doomed and bound to be punished. When the punishment becomes due and is confirmed, and the decree of Allah becomes inevitable, this is what cannot be changed. Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ﴾ (سورة غافر: ٦)

﴿Thus the decree of your Lord has become inevitable against those who disbelieved, that they will be inhabitants of the fire.﴾ (Ghâfir 40: 6)

﴿كَذَلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ (سورة يونس: ٣٣)

﴿Thus the decree of your Lord against the wicked is fulfilled; hence they will not believe.﴾ (Yoonus 10: 33)

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ حَقَّتْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ١٦﴾ وَلَوْجَاءَهُمْ كُلُّ إِعْلَمٍ حَتَّىٰ يَرَوُا
الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ﴾ (سورة يونس: ٩٧-٩٦)

﴿Verily, those against whom the decree of your Lord is fulfilled will not believe, even if every sign were to come to them, until they see [for themselves] the painful punishment.﴾ (Yoonus 10: 96-97)

And there are other verses that point to the same meaning. These are the people for whom the wisdom of Allah (ﷺ) has dictated that they will not be guided, because they are not fit to be guided and guidance is not appropriate for them. If Allah had seen any good in them He would have made them hear, but even if He had made them hear, they would have turned away in aversion (cf. 8: 23). They are the ones who realised that the

path they were following would lead to doom and destruction, yet they chose it over the path of guidance. In the case of those for whom Allah has decreed good, Allah (ﷺ) will guide them, no matter what they did in the past, for He guided many of the leading disbelievers who waged war against Him and His Messenger (ﷺ) and His Books, and they became guided, and Allah is All-Knowing, Most Wise. Those of whom He tells us that He will not guide them are those who are doomed and bound to be punished; those whom He guides are those for whom He has decreed good. So when He says that He will not guide the evildoers, this refers to one specific type of evildoer; as for those who are to be guided, they are of a different type. Therefore there is no contradiction, praise be to Allah.

Striving to ward off false accusations, shame and disgrace from oneself is not wrong

Rather this is a characteristic of people of dignity. Hence when he was in prison, Yoosuf (ﷺ) did not immediately respond to the king's envoy, when he came and summoned him to come out of prison and present himself before the king, because he wanted his innocence of what he had been accused of to be clearly established before he came out of prison.

﴿ ... فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ الرَّسُولُ قَالَ أَرْجِعْ إِلَيْ رَبِّكَ فَسَعَلَهُ مَا بِالنِّسْوَةِ الَّتِي قَطَعْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ ... ﴾

(سورة يوسف: ٥٠)

﴿...But when the messenger came to him, Yoosuf said: Go back to your master and ask him: What about the women who cut their hands?...﴾ (Yoosuf 12: 50)

﴿وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ ...﴾ (سورة الفرقان: ٥٨)

﴿Put your trust in the Ever-Living Who never dies...﴾ (*al-Furqân* 25: 58)

Putting trust in Allah is essential for well-being in one's deeds, words and all situations; by means of it a person may attain the highest level of perfection in those things. Therefore Allah enjoined him to put his trust in and rely on the One Who is Ever-Living in the most perfect sense. If he manages to put his trust in the Ever-Living Who never dies, Allah will cause all his affairs to flourish, and He will guarantee well-being and perfection in all his affairs. This concept will bring a great deal of benefit, if he bears it in mind and instils it in his heart. We ask Allah to enable us to attain that level of trust which will bring life to our hearts, rectify our words and deeds, and set all our spiritual and worldly affairs straight; we ask Him not to leave us to our own selves or to anyone else for even the blink of an eye or even less than that, for He is Most Generous and Kind.

﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الْذِكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَفِظُونَ﴾ (سورة الحجر: ٩)

﴿Verily, it is We Who have sent down the Reminder [the Qur'an], and verily it is We Who will preserve it.﴾ (al-Hijr 15: 9)

*F*rom this verse we may learn a number of things:

- i. That the Qur'an is the word of Allah and is not created; and that Allah (□) is exalted above His creation. This is what we understand from the words ﴿[We] have sent down the Reminder﴾. Jibreel brought it down from Allah, the Almighty, All-Knowing; the fact that it was brought down from Allah indicates that Allah is exalted, and the fact that it came from Him indicates that it is the word of Allah, for speech (words) is an attribute of the speaker.
- ii. The majestic nature and high status of the Qur'an. In this verse, Allah (□) tells us that it is He Who took care of sending it down and preserving it, and He did not leave that to any of His creation.
- iii. The Qur'an contains everything that people need of guidance with regard to all worldly and religious affairs, and with regard to their well-being, both outward and inward. What is meant by ﴿the Reminder﴾ (*adh-dhikr*) is that it is a reminder for people that alerts them to all that they need of guidance, and points out to them all that will benefit them and is in their best interests. And that is indeed the case, for it contains teachings and guidelines with regard to religious and worldly affairs in the most perfect and comprehensive manner, to the extent that if people pay heed to its reminders and follow its guidance, all their affairs will be in the best shape, and all evil and harm will be warded off from them. Hence Allah often urges people in the Qur'an to seek guidance from it concerning any issue they face, and to ponder and reflect upon its beneficial meanings. What results from that reflection is the following:
- iv. Whoever adheres to the Qur'an and heeds its reminders, that will cause him to be elevated in status, honour, pride, renown and praise. This is the meaning of the verse:

﴿وَإِنَّهُ لَذِكْرُكَ وَلِقَوْمِكَ ...﴾ (سورة الزُّخْرُف: ٤٤)

﴿Verily, it [the Qur'an] is an honour [dhikr] for you and your people...﴾ (az-Zukhruf 43: 44)

In other words, it is honour and renown for those who pay heed to it and adhere to it.

- v. Paying heed to anything else is of no benefit and will be of no avail to the one who does that, because as it is established and confirmed that the Qur'an contains all that is needed of reminders that would bring benefit to the individual in all his affairs, it is known that anything that contradicts it and differs from it will have the opposite effect. Hence the word adh-dhikr (in *al-Hijr* 15: 9) appears in the definite form, because it is the reminder that brings all benefits.
- vi. The Qur'an brought that which is in accordance with sound reasoning and sound human nature. There is nothing in it that is contrary to or contradicts that which is tangible, or that is opposite to sound reasoning, or contrary to justice, fairness, balance and truth, because Allah called it a reminder, and the reminder is that which reminds people of what is already innate and instilled in their sound reasoning of truth, encouragement to do good and discouragement to commit evil. Thus it is a reminder to them of that which they already know in general terms, but of which they were not aware of many of the details. Therefore by means of the Qur'an, people of sound reason will increase in reason and be enlightened by it, and their nature will flourish. Shaykh al-Islâm Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) discussed this idea in his book *Muwâfaqat al-'Aql aš-Šareeh li-Naql aš-Šaheeh* (Harmony between sound reason and sound texts).²¹
- vii. Allah guaranteed to preserve the Qur'an as it was revealed, so no devil can get near it and change it, adding to it or subtracting from it, and it cannot be mixed with anything else. Rather it was brought down by one who was strong and trustworthy, namely Jibreel, to the heart of the Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ), who was pure of heart and mind, the most perfect of all human hearts. And Allah guaranteed to His Messenger (ﷺ) that he would recite it and its meaning would be clear, as He said:

﴿فَإِذَا قَرَأَنَّهُ فَاتَّبَعَ قُرْءَانَهُ، ١٨﴾ (سورة القيامة: ١٨-١٩) شَمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ،

﴿So when We recite it [through Jibreel], follow its recitation attentively. Then it is incumbent upon Us to make its meanings clear.﴾ (*al-Qiyâmah* 75: 18-19)

Allah also guaranteed to preserve it after it was revealed; thus Allah (ﷺ) perfected it and perfected by means of it His favour to His slaves, and He entrusted it to this Ummah and to its scholars of various specialities. So the best and purest in character of every generation – to whom Allah guaranteed that if they reached consensus on any matter, that would be infallible (because they cannot agree upon something that is wrong) – learned its words and meanings as something fresh and new, with no change or alteration. If anyone wants to add something to it or take something away from it, Allah will motivate some people to defend it and protect it; this is part of His preserving it, and this is supported by the following:

- viii. This is proof of its truthfulness, the truthfulness of what it contains and the truthfulness of the one who brought it, namely Muhammad (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) has told us that He is the One Who revealed it, and that He is the One Who will preserve it, and it has happened as He said. This has become a sign and proof of its truthfulness and of the soundness of what is mentioned in it, as reality testifies to that.

Important note on *du‘â’* (supplication)

Du‘â’ is the essence and core of worship, because it is indicative of utter need of Allah and submission and humility before Him, and because it has a great impact on one’s spiritual well-being and makes one aspire to that which is with Allah. Therefore the best of *du‘â’* is that which brings greater benefit to the individual, is more sound than any other, and includes all goodness. That is the type of supplication that we find in the Qur’ān, where Allah tells us of the *du‘â’*s offered by His Prophets and Messengers, and His chosen slaves, which the leader of the Messengers used to choose over other supplications. As one of the conditions and etiquettes of supplication is to have presence of mind and focus on the meaning of the words recited, I wanted to highlight some of the meanings of the supplications mentioned in the Qur’ān, so as to make it easy to bear those meanings in mind and increase the benefit of the *du‘â’*.

The best and most essential of the supplications mentioned in the Qur’ān is the words:

﴿ أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (١) صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَيْرَ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا أَصْنَالَيْنَ ﴾
(سورة الفاتحة: ٦-٧)

﴿Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom You have blessed; not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.﴾ (*al-Fātihah* 1: 6-7)

That is: Teach us, O Lord; inspire us and enable us to follow the straight path, the path of those whom Allah has blessed of the Prophets, the *siddeequeen* (the strong and true in faith), the martyrs and the righteous. This includes knowledge of that which Allah and His Messenger ﷺ love, loving it and doing it in the most perfect manner. It also includes knowledge of what Allah and His Messenger ﷺ hate and what incurs divine wrath, and keeping away from it completely. What this means is that the one who offers this supplication is asking Allah ﷺ to guide him to the straight path, which involves knowing the truth and acting upon it, and keeping away from the path of those who have incurred divine wrath, who came to know the truth but rejected it, and keeping away

from the path of those who have gone astray, who are oblivious to the path of truth and never knew it.

One of the most comprehensive and beneficial of supplications is the du‘â’ of people with high aspirations, to whom Allah grants the best of both this world and the hereafter. Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا إِنَّا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةٌ وَقَنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٠١)

﴿But there are others who say: Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the hereafter, and protect us from the torment of the fire.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 201)

The supplication begins with the words ﴿Our Lord﴾, which implies that they bear in mind both Allah’s care in a general sense, which refers to His creating them and managing their affairs, and enabling them to attain what is essential for their physical well-being, and His care in a specific sense, which is granted to the elite of His creation, of whom He takes care, shows kindness to them, rectifies their spiritual and worldly affairs, and shows mercy to them, bringing them forth from the depths of darkness into the light. Saying ﴿Our Lord﴾ is an expression of their need for their Lord, and that they cannot take care of themselves in a comprehensive manner. They have no one except their Lord to take care of them and rectify their affairs. Hence most of the du‘â’s in the Qur’ân begin with the word Rabbanâ (our Lord), beseeching Allah by virtue of His Lordship, because that is the greatest of means by which a person may attain what he seeks and ward off what he dislikes.

﴿good in this world﴾ refers to beneficial knowledge, righteous deeds, peace of mind, physical well-being, and wholesome, lawful provision – which includes food, drink, clothing, marriage, shelter and so on. This phrase encompasses well-being in all aspects, and this is a prayer for protection from anything that could detract from or undermine one’s well-being.

﴿good in the hereafter﴾ refers to everything that Allah has prepared for His close friends in paradise, such as no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and it has not crossed the mind of any human. Because what is good in this world and the hereafter in the most perfect and complete sense means seeking protection from the punishment of the fire and from that which leads to it, namely sin and acts of disobedience, they said: ﴿and protect

us from the torment of the fire﴿. Thus this supplication is asking for every good and praiseworthy goal, and seeking to ward off all evils and punishment. Hence the Prophet ﷺ used to recite this du‘â’ a great deal.

Another supplication is that which appears at the end of Soorat al-Baqarah, which Allah told us on the lips of His Messenger ﷺ that He accepts this supplication from the believers when they recite it:

﴿... رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِن نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَلْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ وَأَعْفُ عَنَّا وَأَغْفِرْنَا وَأَرْحَمْنَا أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٨٦)

﴿...Our Lord, do not hold us accountable if we forget or fall into error. Our Lord, do not lay on us a burden like that which You laid on those who came before us. Our Lord, do not lay on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Pardon us, forgive us and have mercy on us; You are our Protector, so help us against the disbelieving people.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 286)

Falling short in obeying the command of Allah may happen deliberately and knowingly, or it may be the result of forgetting or falling into error; in the latter case, it is not the result of some ailment in the heart or some ill intention. Therefore they ask their Lord not to hold them accountable for forgetting or falling into error, which is something that is applicable to all their words and deeds. Allah (ﷻ) said (in a hadith qudsi):

«I have granted that.» (Muslim)

Because some good deeds are hard, difficult and burdensome, and if people were obliged to do them they would most likely be unable to comply, they asked Allah (ﷻ) not to burden them with those deeds, and not to lay on them a burden greater than they had strength to bear, so as to make it easy for them to obey the command of their Lord, and to make religious duties easier for them. And Allah (ﷻ) said (in a hadith qudsi):

«I have granted that.» (Muslim)

Because there will inevitably be some shortcomings in adherence to the religious duties that Allah has prescribed for His slaves, either by doing what is prohibited or omitting what is enjoined – which could lead to bad consequences and punishment,

unless Allah forgives them and removes the burden of sin – they said: ﴿Pardon us [and], forgive us﴾. Thus by means of this supplication, all bad and evil things may be warded off. Then after that, they asked Allah for mercy, from which stems all that is good in this world and the hereafter. Because following the commands of Allah and adhering to them – by doing good and refraining from evil – cannot be achieved and perfected except with the help and support of Allah against the disbelieving enemies, namely the Shaytân and his troops, they said: ﴿You are our Protector, so help us against the disbelieving people﴾. And Allah (ﷺ) said (in a hadith qudsi):

«I have done that (that is, accepted this supplication).»

For Allah (ﷺ) takes care of His slave, guides him to the path of easing all his affairs, and wards off evil from him, for He is an excellent Protector and an excellent Helper.

Another supplication is the supplication of those who are well versed in knowledge, after Allah praised them for having perfect faith:

﴿رَبَّنَا لَا تُرْغِبْنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٨)

﴿Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate now after You have guided us, and bestow upon us mercy from Yourself; for You are the Bestower.﴾ (*Al 'Imrân 3: 8*)

They asked the Lord, and beseeched Him by virtue of His Lordship, to let them attain the best of means – which is following that which Allah loves and is pleased with, and remaining steadfast in that, not deviating from true guidance; and they asked Him to let them attain the best goals, which is attaining the mercy of Allah, by means of which one will attain the best in this world and the hereafter. They ended their supplication by beseeching their Lord by virtue of His name the Bestower (*al-Wahhâb*), which means one who gives much and is very generous. So they are saying, in effect: By virtue of Your generosity, O Bestower, we ask You to keep us steadfast and not let our hearts deviate, and to grant us from You mercy, because mercy that comes from Him cannot be estimated, and no one knows what it may bring of blessings and goodness except the One Who bestows it upon them. It seems that when they said:

﴿رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَبَّ فِيهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٩)

﴿Our Lord, You will gather all people on the day of which there is no doubt; for Allah does not break His promise.﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 9)

– they were beseeching their Lord by virtue of their belief in that day, and their belief in their Lord's promise and warning, for beseeching Allah by virtue of faith and by virtue of His blessing them with that faith, is one of the appropriate means of supplication. This completes and perfects their supplication.

Another supplication is the du‘â’ of the righteous for whom Allah has prepared paradise and all that is in it. They are the ones who say:

﴿... رَبَّنَا إِنَّا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٦) ١٦

﴿...Our Lord! We have indeed believed; forgive us, then, our sins, and protect us from the punishment of the fire.﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 16)

They beseeched Allah by virtue of His Lordship and care of them, and by virtue of their faith, to forgive them their sins and protect them from the punishment of the fire. If their sins are forgiven and Allah protects them from the punishment of the fire, then they will be spared from all evil and they will attain all that is good, because supplications sometimes take the form of concise words that include all that a person may seek, and sometimes they mention one type of need, and other needs are included by implication, as is the case with this supplication.

An example of a supplication that includes all needs mentioned one by one is the supplication of the people of understanding and the elite of creation, when they said, after reflecting upon all that is in Allah's dominion:

﴿...رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَنَطِلَا سُبْحَنَكَ فَقَنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴾ ١٩١ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ مَنْ تُدْخِلُ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْرَيْتُهُ وَمَا لِظَّالِمٍ مِّنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴾ ١٩٢ رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيَ يُنَادِي لِلإِيمَنِ أَنَّهُمْ أَمْنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَعَامَنَا رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِرْ عَنَّا سِيَّعَاتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ ﴾ ١٩٣ رَبَّنَا وَءَانَا مَا وَعَدْتَنَا عَلَى رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ﴾ ١٩٤﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٩١-١٩٤)

﴿...Our Lord, You have not created all this in vain. Glory be to You! Save us from the punishment of the fire. Our Lord, whomever You cause to enter the fire, You have surely brought to disgrace, and the wrongdoers will have no helpers. Our Lord! We have heard

a caller calling [us] to faith [saying]: Believe in the Lord, and we have believed. Our Lord, forgive us our sins, absolve us of our bad deeds, and cause us to die in the company of the righteous. Our Lord, grant us what You have promised to us through Your Messengers, and do not disgrace us on the Day of Resurrection, for You never break Your promise.﴿ (Al 'Imrân 3: 191-194)

Thus they beseech Allah – by virtue of His Lordship, and they repeat this beseeching, acknowledging the wisdom of Allah and the truthfulness of His promise and warning; by virtue of their belief in the Messengers of Allah when they called them to believe; and by virtue of the blessing that Allah bestowed upon them by causing them to hasten to believe in the Messengers – to protect them from the punishment of the fire; to forgive their major sins and absolve them of their minor misdemeanours, and thus ward off from them the greatest punishment, which is the punishment of the fire; to keep away from them all that could lead to evil, namely sins and bad deeds; to grant them provision and enable them to do righteous deeds, so that they might become thereby among the righteous slaves of Allah; to make them steadfast therein until they die in that state, so that they will be in the company of the righteous (in the hereafter); to grant them what He promised on the lips of His Messengers, which includes the blessings and goodness of this world, and the blessings and honour of the hereafter; and to honour them on the Day of Resurrection and not disgrace them. It is no wonder that those who recite this sublime du‘â’ – which does not omit anything good but they ask for it, and it does not omit anything bad but they seek protection from it – deserve to be called people of understanding, for this is a sign of their mature thinking, wisdom and smartness. We ask Allah to enable us to achieve what He enabled them to achieve, for He is Most Generous, Most Kind.

Another example is the supplication of the followers of the Prophets at times of hardship and trial:

﴿ وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَأَنْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴾ ١٤٧ فَعَانَهُمْ اللَّهُ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَحُسْنَ ثَوَابُ الْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

(سورة آل عمران: ١٤٧-١٤٨)

﴿All they said was: Our Lord, forgive us our sins and our excesses in our conduct, make firm our foothold and grant us victory against the disbelievers. So Allah gave

them reward in this world and the excellent reward of the hereafter. For Allah loves those who do good.﴿ (Al 'Imrān 3: 147-148)

This indicates that this is a supplication to which Allah responds, and that those who say it are doers of good. That is because they beseech Allah by virtue of His Lordship, thus they express their need of Him and ask Him to take care of them and rectify their affairs, and to forgive them their sins – which are acts of disobedience – and excesses in their conduct – which refers to overstepping the limits that Allah has set and forbidden us to transgress. Just as falling short in religious duties is blameworthy, the same applies to overstepping the limits. They also ask Allah to make their foothold firm and grant them patience, steadfastness and strength, which are essential for victory; and to grant them divine support, to help them prevail over the disbelievers. Thus they ask their Lord to remove the impediments to victory, namely sins and excesses, and to enable them to attain that which is essential to victory, which is composed of two elements: an internal element, which is steadfastness and patience on the battlefield, and an external element, which is divine help. It is possible that when they said ﴿and grant us victory against the disbelievers﴾, they were beseeching Allah by virtue of their fighting the disbelievers, as if they were saying: Our Lord, we believe in You and follow Your Messengers, and we are fighting Your enemies who disbelieve in You and in Your Messengers, so our taking them as enemies and fighting them is for Your sake and in Your cause, so grant us victory over them, because we belong to Your party and Your troops, and they are the troops of Your enemy, the accursed Shayṭān.

Another example is the supplication of the slaves of the Most Gracious, whom Allah describes as possessing every good characteristic, and has prepared for them lofty dwellings (in paradise). They have two supplications: a supplication that is answered for all of them, both those who attain the highest level and those who attain less than that; and a supplication that is answered for the elite among them, the leaders whose example is followed. Allah (□) says:

﴿ وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هُونَا وَإِذَا خَاطَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا ٦٣ ﴾
﴿ وَالَّذِينَ يَسْتُوْنَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيمًا ٦٤ ﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ إِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ٦٥ ﴾ (سورة الفرقان: ٦٣-٦٥)

﴿The true slaves of the Most Gracious are those who walk humbly and with dignity on the earth and, when the ignorant address them, they say words of peace; those who

spend the night prostrating and standing before their Lord; and who say: Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of hell, for verily its punishment is unrelenting. ﴿al-Furqân 25: 63-65﴾

They beseech Allah by virtue of His Lordship and care for them, and by virtue of their faith and their fear of His punishment, to protect them from the punishment of the fire. If Allah protects them from the punishment of the fire, this implies forgiveness of their sins, absolution of their misdeeds and admission to paradise. Allah (ﷺ) says of them:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّتِنَا قُرَّةً أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا الْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَاماً﴾

(سورة الفرقان: ٧٤) 

﴿And those who say: Our Lord, let our spouses and children be a source of joy for us, and make us good examples for those who fear You.﴾ (al-Furqân 25: 74)

Thus they beseech Allah by virtue of His Lordship to let their spouses, companions and children be a source of joy for them, which is when they are obedient to Allah and do that which pleases Him. This indicates that obedience to Allah is what brings them joy, and love of Him brings delight to their hearts. Their desire to obey Allah and love Him was so strong that they asked Allah (ﷺ) to let their companions attain that frame of mind, and this is by the grace of Allah to them, for if Allah were to rectify the condition of their companions, that would bring much blessing to them. Hence they regarded this as a great blessing from their Lord, which is why they asked for it, saying ﴿Our Lord, let our spouses and children be a source of joy for us﴾. As the highest level of human perfection is to be obedient to Allah and to be a companion of those who are obedient, they asked their Lord for the highest and most sublime level of perfection, which is to be a leader in religious commitment and to be an example for the righteous; this means making them devoted scholars, well-versed in knowledge and striving to acquire knowledge, teach it and call people to it. It also implies that they asked Allah to make their knowledge be sound, so that anyone who follows their example would become one of the righteous who fear Allah; and that they asked Him to enable them to do good deeds, both visible and hidden, so that they would become leaders of the righteous. The way to attain that is by adhering with patience to the righteous deeds that Allah loves, remaining steadfast in doing that, believing strongly in the Revelations of Allah and having perfect knowledge of them. Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدِونَ بِمَا أَمْرَنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا وَكَانُوا بِشَأْيَنَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾ (سورة الحجّ ٢٤)

السجدة: ٢٤

﴿We made some of them leaders, guiding people by Our command, because they were patient and steadfast, and they believed with certainty in Our revelations.﴾ (as-Sajdah 32: 24)

To sum up, they asked their Lord to let them attain perfection and help others to do likewise, to let them be guided and guide others. This is the highest status, hence Allah prepared for them the highest chambers in paradise:

﴿أُولَئِكَ يُجْزَوْنَ الْفُرْقَةَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَلَقَوْنَ فِيهَا تَحْيَةً وَسَلَامًا خَلِيلِنَّ فِيهَا حَسْنَتٌ مُسْتَقْرَأً وَمُقَامًا﴾ (سورة الفرقان: ٧٦-٧٥)

﴿Those are the ones who will be rewarded with high places in paradise for their patience and steadfastness; they will be met therein with greetings and salutations of peace. They will abide therein forever, an excellent halting place and an excellent abode.﴾ (al-Furqân 25: 75-76)

Another example is the supplication of Adam (ﷺ), when he repented to Allah and spoke these words, he and his wife:

﴿قَالَ رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَسِيرِينَ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٢٣)

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﴿They said: Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will certainly be among the losers.﴾ (al-A'râf 7: 23)

They beseeched Allah by virtue of His Lordship, and by admitting their wrongdoing and sin, to forgive them and relieve them of all that was difficult and hard for them, and to have mercy upon them and grant them all that is good for them; they acknowledged that they had no recourse or refuge from Him except with Him, and that if He did not have mercy on them and forgive them, then they would be losers in this world and the hereafter. So Allah accepted their supplication, and He forgave them and had mercy on them.

Another example is the words of Nooh when Allah rebuked him for asking that his disbelieving son be saved, for (that son) was not one of his family and this action was not appropriate.

﴿قَالَ رَبِّي إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَإِلَّا تَعْفِرْ لِي وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُنُّ مِنَ الْخَسِيرِينَ﴾ (الْخَسِيرِينَ ٤٧) (سورة هود: ٤٧)

﴿Nooh said: O my Lord, I seek refuge with You lest I ask of You that of which I have no knowledge. Unless You forgive me and have mercy on me, I will be among the losers.﴾ (Hood 11: 47)

He beseeched Allah by virtue of His Lordship and sought refuge with Him lest he ask of Him that of which he had no knowledge. What made him do that was his natural inclination to love his son, not the desire to seek the pleasure of Allah; he admitted that what he had done made it obligatory upon him to beseech Allah and seek His forgiveness, and that if his Lord did not forgive him and have mercy on him, he would be among the losers.

People are of two categories: winners, who are those on whom Allah bestows His forgiveness and mercy, and losers, who are those who miss out on forgiveness and mercy, which no one can attain except by the grace of Allah.

Another example is the supplication of Ibrâheem, the Close Friend of the Most Gracious, and his son Ismâ‘eel, when they were building the Kaaba:

﴿... رَبَّنَا نَقْبَلُ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٢٧﴾ رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْعِدْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٨﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٢٧-١٢٨)

﴿...Our Lord! Accept [this] from us, for You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. Our Lord! Make us both Muslims submitting to You, and of our descendants a nation that is Muslim, submitting to You; and teach us our rituals [of pilgrimage]; and accept our repentance, for You are the Acceptor of repentance, the Most Merciful.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 127-128)

They beseeched their Lord to accept their deed, and to let it be perfect in all aspects and be beneficial in various ways; they beseeched Him by virtue of His being the All-Hearing Who heard their words, and the All-Knowing Who knew all their

affairs. When they offered this supplication that their deeds be accepted, they asked Allah for the most sublime of gifts, which was that Allah bless them and whomever He willed among their progeny with submission to Allah both inwardly and outwardly, and with being enabled to do that which He loves and which pleases Him. They also asked Him to teach them how to carry on what they had started and to teach them their rituals (of pilgrimage) – in knowledge and deeds – and to accept their repentance, so that their affairs would be complete in all ways. And Allah answered this supplication completely; He blessed it and fulfilled their hopes, for Allah is the Possessor of abundant grace.

Another example is the supplication of Yoosuf (□):

﴿ رَبِّ قَدْ أَتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَمْتَنِي مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ فَاطِرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنْتَ وَلِيٌّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ تُوفِّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَالْحَقِيقِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴾ (سورة يوسف: ١٠١) (١١) ﴿

﴿ O my Lord, You have indeed given me some authority and taught me something of the interpretation of dreams. O Originator of the heavens and the earth, You are my Protector in this world and in the hereafter. Cause me to die as a Muslim [submitting to Your will], and join me with the righteous. ﴾ (Yoosuf 12: 101)

He beseeched Allah by virtue of His Lordship and the worldly blessings He had bestowed upon him, namely authority and everything connected to it, as well as the blessing of religious commitment, which included perfect knowledge, trust in Allah's care and devoting himself exclusively to Him, not worrying about anyone else – for Allah's care for someone in this world and the hereafter means that He makes him steadfast in Islam, both outwardly and inwardly, until he meets Him like that, then He will admit him among the elite of His righteous slaves.

Another example is the supplication of Sulaymân (□):

﴿ ...رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرَضَّهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴾ (سورة النمل: ١٩) (١٩) ﴿

﴿ ...O my Lord, inspire me to be constantly grateful for Your blessings that You have bestowed upon me and my parents, and to do righteous deeds with which You will be pleased, and include me, by Your mercy, among Your righteous slaves. ﴾ (an-Naml 27: 19)

He beseeched Allah by virtue of His Lordship and the blessings that He had bestowed upon him and his parents, to inspire and enable him to be grateful for those blessings by acknowledging them, loving Allah for these blessings, praising Him and remembering Him a great deal; to enable him to do righteous deeds that would please Him, which includes all righteous deeds, both outward and inward; and to include him, by His mercy, among His righteous slaves. This supplication is concise and includes the good of this world and the hereafter. Similar to this is the supplication of the one whom Allah causes to reach the age of maturity and perfection, which is forty years, and blesses him by enabling him to turn to Him, so he says:

﴿... رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرَضَهُ وَأَصْلِحَ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي ثُبُتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴾ (الْأَحْقَاف: ١٥)

﴿...O my Lord, inspire me to be constantly grateful for Your blessings that You have bestowed upon me and my parents, and to do righteous deeds with which You will be pleased; and establish righteousness among my offspring for me. Verily, I repent to You and verily I am one of those who submit to Allah [in Islam].﴾ (al-Ahqâf 46: 15)

So he beseeches his Lord by virtue of His Lordship and care of him, and by virtue of the blessings that He bestowed on him and his parents, and by virtue of his own commitment to keep away from what his Lord dislikes by repenting and doing what Allah loves of submitting; to enable him to give thanks, which stems from acknowledgement in the heart, submission and love for the One Who bestowed those blessings, and which includes praise of Allah in both general and specific terms; and to enable him to do what Allah loves and is pleased with; and to establish righteousness among his offspring for him. This is a kind of supplication in which a person asks Allah to rectify him and to rectify all his affairs for him, and to establish righteousness among his offspring both during his lifetime and after his death. It is appropriate for any person – especially when he reaches the age of forty – to persist in repeating this supplication with humility, in the hope that he will be included among those who are mentioned in the following verse:

﴿أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ تَنْهَى عَنْهُمْ أَحَسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَنَشَجَوْزُ عَنْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ فِي أَصْحَابِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَدَ الْمَسْدَقَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ﴾ (الْأَحْقَاف: ١٦)

﴿Such are the ones from whom We will accept their righteous deeds and overlook their bad deeds. They will be among the inhabitants of paradise – a true promise that has been given to them.﴾ (al-Ahqâf 46: 16)

Allah (□) tells us about Moosâ (□):

﴿فَسَقَى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ إِلَى الظَّلَلِ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ﴾ (سورة القصص: ٢٤)

(٢٤)

﴿So he watered [their flock] for them, then he withdrew into the shade and said: O my Lord, I am in need of whatever good You may bestow upon me.﴾ (al-Qâsâs 28: 24)

The phrase ﴿then he withdrew into the shade﴾ refers to him seeking to rest in that shade after working hard. In that situation he said, seeking provision: ﴿O my Lord, I am in need of whatever good You may bestow upon me﴾. In other words: I am in need of any goodness that You may cause to come to me and make available to me. This is asking of Allah by stating one's condition, and asking by stating one's condition may be more eloquent than stating explicitly what one wants. Moosâ continued to show his humility and need, praising his Lord, expressing his need of Him and putting his hope in Him alone, until Allah relieved his distress, for it is Allah Who is the Provider.

Another example is the supplication that Allah enjoined upon His Messenger (ﷺ) and His believing slaves, as He says:

﴿وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَغْفِرْ وَأَرْحَمْ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ﴾ (سورة المؤمنون: ١١٨)

﴿So say: My Lord, forgive and have mercy, for You are the best of those who show mercy.﴾ (al-Mu'minoon 23: 118)

This is beseeching Allah by virtue of His Lordship and His abundant mercy to grant good and ward off evil. It refers to forgiveness that wards off all harm, and mercy by means of which all good things are attained.

Another example is the verse in which Allah (□) says:

﴿وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صَدِيقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صَدِيقٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَنًا نَصِيرًا﴾

(سورة الإسراء: ٨٠)

﴿Say: My Lord, grant me a goodly entrance and a goodly exit, and grant me from You a supporting power.﴾ (al-Isrâ' 17: 80)

This is beseeching Allah by virtue of His Lordship to cause one's entrance and exit to be goodly; that is, to cause them to be righteous and sincerely for the sake of Allah, accompanied by seeking Allah's help and putting one's trust in Him, which implies that all the person's actions, both outward and inward, should be in obedience to Allah, doing what He loves and is pleased with, which is perfection in deeds. As for perfection in terms of knowledge, that is referred to by the request that Allah grant him from Him a supporting power, which is clear proof that will defeat opponents in argument, and strength with which to support the truth and suppress falsehood. The outcome of divine response to this supplication is the attainment of beneficial knowledge, doing righteous deeds and gaining power in the land.

Allah (ﷺ) said to His Messenger (ﷺ):

﴿...وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا﴾ (سورة طه: ١١٤) 

﴿...and say: O my Lord, increase me in knowledge.﴾ (Tâ Hâ 20: 114)

Knowledge is the noblest and most sublime of things, by means of which one may know all things. Therefore asking for knowledge and more of it is one of the best things that one may ask for.

One of the most concise of supplications and one of the best in wording is the du‘â’ of Moosâ (ﷺ) when he beseeched his Lord, saying:

﴿...أَنْتَ وَلِيْنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَأَرْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ﴾ (١٠٥) 
﴿...وَأَكْتُبْ لَنَا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدُّنَا إِلَيْكَ...﴾ (١٥٥-١٥٦) 

﴿...You are our Protector, so forgive us and have mercy on us, for You are the best of those who forgive. Ordain good for us in this world and in the hereafter, for we have indeed turned to You in repentance...﴾ (al-A'râf 7: 155-156)

Thus he beseeched his Protector, by virtue of His being the protector of His slaves and by virtue of His taking good care of him and His kindness to him, to grant His forgiveness and mercy. Similarly, he beseeched Him, by virtue of His perfect forgiveness and immense generosity, to grant forgiveness and mercy. This supplication

indicates that on the basis of that, one may attain the good of this world and the hereafter. For if forgiveness is attained, then all bad things, and all pain and suffering, will disappear; if mercy is attained, then all good things in this world and the hereafter will be attained. The words ﴿Ordain good for us in this world and in the hereafter﴾ are similar to the words in Soorat al-Baqarah:

﴿...رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَحَسَنَةٍ وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةٌ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٠١) 

﴿...Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the hereafter...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 201)

– with an added request, which is asking Allah to respond by virtue of the fact that He is the Protector, and by virtue of His perfect forgiveness, as well as seeking His forgiveness and mercy, which are two things by virtue of which all that is good in this world and the hereafter may be attained. Then he ended his supplication by beseeching his Lord by virtue of his turning to Him and humbling himself before His might, saying: ﴿for we have indeed turned to You in repentance﴾. In other words: we turn to You with all our concerns and in all our affairs, and we do not turn to anyone else, because we know that no one else could relieve distress or respond to one who is in dire straits except You, and we turn to You in our worship, both outwardly and inwardly.

Another example is the supplication of the People of the Cave, when they fled for the sake of Allah and their religious commitment. They said, turning to Him:

﴿...رَبَّنَا إِنَّا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةٌ وَهِيَ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشْدًا﴾ (سورة الكهف: ١٠) 

﴿...Our Lord, bestow upon us mercy from Yourself, and guide us through our ordeal.﴾ (al-Kahf 18: 10)

They beseeched Allah to bestow upon them mercy from Him, so that when it was granted to them, He would protect their religious commitment and guard them against temptation, enable them to attain what was good for them and guide them through their ordeal, meaning that He would make things easy for them and would guide them to that which was gentler and easier for them. Allah answered their supplication, bestowed His mercy upon them and protected their religious commitment and their physical well-being, granting them blessing (*barakah*) for themselves and for others through them.

Another example is the supplication of the bearers of the Throne and those around them, namely the angels who are close to Allah, when they pray for the believers:

﴿...رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَّحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا فَاغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهْمَ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمَ ﴾ ٧ رَبَّنَا وَأَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنَّتِ عَدِنِ الَّتِي وَعَدْتَهُمْ وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ أَبَاءِهِمْ وَأَرْوَاحِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّتِهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ٨ وَقِهْمُ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَمَنْ تَقَ السَّيِّئَاتِ يُوْمِنِدِ ٩ فَقَدْ رَحْمَتَهُ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴾ ٩-٧ (سورة غافر: ٩-٧)

﴿...Our Lord, You encompass all things in Your mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who repent and follow Your path, and protect them from the punishment of the blazing fire. Our Lord, and admit them to gardens of perpetual abode which You have promised them, and [admit] the righteous among their forebears, their spouses and their offspring. Verily, You are the Almighty, the Most Wise. And protect them from the evil consequences [of their sins], for whomever You protect from evil consequences on that day, You will indeed have bestowed mercy upon him, and that is the supreme triumph.﴾ (Ghâfir 40: 7-9)

This is a comprehensive supplication, with good wording and a good meaning. They beseech Allah (ﷻ) by virtue of His Lordship and the vastness of His knowledge and mercy, which includes His knowledge of the situation of the believers and the weakness that He created in them, and His mercy towards them – because He made faith the greatest means by virtue of which His mercy may be obtained – to forgive the believers who adhere to faith. They are the ones who repent from what Allah dislikes and follow His path by adhering to that which He loves and is pleased with. So He forgives their sins and protects them against the worst punishment, which is the punishment of the blazing fire, and He causes them to attain the great reward, which is admittance to gardens of perpetual abode which He promised them on the lips of His Messengers. The culmination of that is when He gives them the joy of being reunited with their righteous parents, spouses and offspring. They beseech Allah by virtue of His perfect might and wisdom, because that is appropriate to the context, for by His might and power, He protects them and prevents them from falling into sin, and He averts evil from them and enables them to attain different kinds of rewards. By His perfect wisdom, those who have these characteristics deserve that He should forgive them, have mercy on them, avert evil from them and enable them to attain reward. As they prayed to Him to forgive them the wrong actions that they did, they also asked Him to protect them from the evils of their own souls that were inclined towards evil, by making faith dear to them and fair-seeming in their hearts, and by making disbelief, wickedness and sin

hateful to them; and they asked Him to make them among the guided. Part of protection against evil is attaining the mercy of Allah. This is a great supplication uttered by one who had the greatest knowledge of Allah. Therefore Allah described the one who attains these things as having attained all sublime goals and being saved from all that is feared, as He says: ﴿and that is the supreme triumph﴾.

Another example is the supplication of those who follow the *Muhâjireen* and *Anṣâr* in guidance, of whom Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُوْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُوْنَ رَبَّنَا أَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلَا حَوْنَنَا أَلَّذِيْنَ سَبَقُوْنَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غَلَّا لِلَّذِيْنَ عَامَنُوْا بَنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفُ رَّحِيْم﴾ (سورة الحشر: ١٠)

﴿And those who come after them say: Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who believed before us, and do not let there be any ill feeling in our hearts towards those who believe. Our Lord, verily You are Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.﴾ (*al-Hashr* 59: 10)

They turn to their Lord and beseech Him by virtue of His Lordship and His having blessed them with faith, and by virtue of the vastness of His mercy and kindness, to forgive them and all of their brethren who believed before them; to reconcile the hearts of the believers by uniting them in faith and making them love one another; and to not let there be any ill feeling in their hearts towards anyone who has faith.

This supplication refers to attaining what is good for them and their brethren, and warding off evil from them and their brethren. Allah tells us that His Prophets beseeched Him to grant some specific requests and other, general requests, beseeching Him by virtue of His perfect names and attributes, and by virtue of what He bestowed upon them of faith and spiritual and worldly blessings, and by virtue of their weakness and great need of Him and their extreme need to turn to their Lord in all their affairs.

These supplications that Allah enjoined and urged people to recite, and praised those who recited them, are beneficial supplications and it is not appropriate to choose over them other supplications that may be in circulation among the people, the wording of which is made up and has no connection to these Qur'anic words.

The Qur'an guides us to the best of deeds and words, both outward and inward, including these supplications. There are also many prophetic supplications in the Sunnah which are in harmony with these Qur'anic supplications. We ask Allah to guide

us to the best of all things and to avert all evils from us, for He is Most Generous, Most Kind and Most Merciful.

Section 7

Ruling on the basis of knowledge
and what is right

When the ruler is enabled to rule on the basis of knowledge and what is right, not on the basis of ignorance and what is false, and he rules on the basis of justice and sincerity, not on the basis of injustice and whims and desires, then he is following the path of the Prophets. Allah (ﷺ) said to Dâwood (ﷺ):

﴿يَنْدَوْدِ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَى فِي ضِلَالٍ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ﴾ (سورة ص: ٢٦)

﴿[We said:] O Dâwood, verily We have made you a ruler in the land, so judge between the people in truth, and do not follow your desires, lest they lead you astray from the path of Allah. Verily, those who go astray from the path of Allah will have a severe punishment because they forgot the Day of Reckoning.﴾ (Sâd 38: 26)

﴿ وَيَنْجِيَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ أَتَقَوْا بِمَفَازِتِهِمْ لَا يَمْسُهُمُ الْسُّوءُ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴾

﴿ (سورة الزمر: ٦١) ﴾

﴿ But Allah will deliver those who fear Him, for they have attained salvation; no harm will touch them, nor will they grieve. ﴾ (az-Zumar 39: 61)

Allah has promised those who fear Him that they will not be punished with either a visible or hidden punishment. Towards the end of the soorah, He confirms that theirs will be bliss, both visible and hidden, as He says:

﴿ وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ أَتَقَوْا رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمْرًا حَقَّ إِذَا جَاءُوهَا وَفُتُحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتْهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طَبِيعَتْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَلِيلِينَ ﴾ (سورة الزمر: ٧٣)

﴿ Those who feared their Lord will be ushered to paradise in groups until, when they reach it, they will find its gates wide open, and its keepers will say to them: Peace be upon you; you have done well, so enter it, to abide herein forever. ﴾ (az-Zumar 39: 73)

Sincerity towards Allah is the greatest means of receiving divine help

...In all one's affairs, of being made steadfast, and of never being disturbed when going through troubles and hardship. Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرُكُمْ وَيُثْبِتُ أَقْدَامَكُمْ﴾ (سورة محمد: ٧)

﴿O you who believe, if you help Allah's cause, He will help you and steady your footsteps.﴾ (Muhammad 47: 7)

In other words, if your aim – in striving against the enemy – is to support the cause of Allah and make His word supreme, Allah will grant you His support against your enemies and will make you steadfast in battle. Victory is something tangible, and steadfastness is something intangible; by means of both, the believers may attain perfect well-being.

People often say: If Allah wills that something should happen, He will prepare the causes that lead to it

The evidence for that in the Qur'an is the verse in which Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿إِذْ يُرِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَنَامِكُمْ قَلِيلًا وَلَا أَرَيْكُمْ كَثِيرًا لَفَسْلُتُمْ وَلَنَتَرَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَلَا كَنَّ اللَّهَ سَلَّمَ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الْصُّدُورِ ﴾٤٣﴿ وَإِذْ يُرِيكُمُوهُمْ إِذْ الْتَّقِيَّةُ فِي أَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيلًا وَيُقْلِلُكُمْ فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا ﴾٤٤﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٤٣-٤٤)

﴿Remember [O Muhammad] when Allah showed them to you in your dream as few in number; if He had shown them to you as many, you [Muslims] would surely have lost heart and would have disputed about the matter. But Allah saved you, for He knows well what is in [your] hearts. And [remember] when you met, He showed them to you as few in your eyes, and He made you appear as few in their eyes too, so that Allah might bring about what was already decreed...﴾ (al-Anfâl 8: 43-44)

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَبِ مِنْ دِيْرِهِمْ لَا وَلِ الْحَشْرِ مَا ظَنَنْتُمْ
 أَنْ يَخْرُجُوْا وَظَنَنُوا أَنَّهُمْ مَانِعُهُمْ حُصُونُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَأَنَّهُمْ أَللَّهُ مِنْ حَيَّثُ لَمْ
 يَحْسِبُوْا وَقَدْ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبُ يُخْرِجُونَ بِيُوْتِهِمْ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَيْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
 فَاعْتَرُوا يَأْوِي الْأَبْصَرِ ﴾ (سورة الحشر: ٢)

﴿ It is He Who drove the disbelievers among the People of the Book from their homes at the time of the first banishment.²² You [O believers] did not think that they would leave, and they thought that their fortresses would protect them from Allah. But the decree of Allah came upon them from a direction they did not expect and He cast dread into their hearts. Their houses were destroyed by their own hands and the hands of the believers. So learn from this, O people of insight.﴾ (al-Hashr 59: 2)

*H*ow weak is faith in the hearts of the believers! You will find that they have now been overtaken by despair, and they think that the Westerners now will remain in the ascendancy, and that people of faith will no longer be able to rise up against them; they will inevitably be defeated and their enemies will inevitably prevail. The reason for that is that they think the causes of power and might are limited to that which is tangible; they look at things only in terms of what they can see and touch, and they do not go beyond that. It does not occur to them that beyond the tangible forces there are hidden forces that are stronger, and there is the divine power that no one could oppose or resist; there could be developments that lead to the defeat of the disbelieving powers, and the strength that they currently have could diminish; those who are strong could become weak and those who are weak could become strong; and there could be other factors that no one has thought of. The People of the Book (referred to in this verse), who had power and authority, deceived themselves, because they thought that their fortresses would protect them, and that they would be safe therein; the believers never thought that they could be expelled from the fortresses, until there came to the disbelievers that which they had never anticipated, and they were overtaken by

weakness and destruction from a direction they never expected – and this is what usually happens to disbelievers like them. The true believer is the one who thinks of the divine will and decree (predestination), and what Allah has of might and power, and he knows that the divine decree and power could not be opposed or resisted by the disbelievers' means of power, no matter how great they may be, and that the measures that the disbelievers take to attain power will attain results unless they are opposed by the decree of Allah and what He has already ordained. Once the divine decree comes to pass, nothing can stand in its way, but measures or causes are in accordance with the wisdom and commands of Allah, so He commanded the believers to prepare for their enemies by taking tangible and intangible measures. If they do what is enjoined, then the decree of Allah will come to their aid.

﴿وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُو الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ ...﴾

(سورة الحشر: ٩)

﴿And those who were already settled in the land [of Madinah] before them, and were sincere in faith, love the Muhâjiroon who came to them...﴾ (*al-Hashr 59: 9*)

What this means is that the people of faith may be in a situation where they are settled in some land, in the sense that they have the power to establish their religion in that land and are able to practice it themselves and call others to it; or they may be in a situation where they have faith, but they have no power to settle in the land and practice their religion freely. The Muslims only attained power after they migrated to Madinah and had a land that became an abode of Islam (*dâr Islâm*). Before that, however, even though they were believers, they were in a state of humiliation and small in number, controlled and suppressed (by the disbelievers), and fearing for their lives.

Deals are of two types

The first is a deal of which the outcome is the gardens of paradise, and various types of honour and delight. It is the deal of faith and jihad in Allah's cause. Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّ كُمْ عَلَى تَحْرِيقِ ثِجِيكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِ أَلِيمٍ ﴾ ٦١ ﴿ ثُوَمَنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَبَجْهَدِهِنَّ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ ٦٢ ﴿ سُورَةُ الصَّفَ ١٠-١١ ﴾

﴿O you who believe, shall I tell you about a deal that will save you from a painful punishment? Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and strive and fight, offering your wealth and your lives in the cause of Allah. That is better for you, if only you knew.﴾ (as-Saff 61: 10-11)

These are the true winners, for they are the ones who attained true faith in their hearts that manifested itself in righteous deeds. They strove to learn and attain knowledge of faith; to connect their emotions to their faith, such as loving Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), fearing Allah and putting their hope in Him; and to do visible deeds that were based on faith, such as physical and financial deeds, and deeds that combined both. They strove to remain steadfast in that, and they strove against the enemies of Allah by means of proof and evidence, and by means of physical fighting.

The second is a deal of which the outcome is loss and regrets of various kinds. This refers to deals that distract a person from religious duties and obeying Allah, and cause him to miss out on the profitable deal mentioned above. Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿وَإِذَا رَأَوْا بِحَرَّةً أَوْهُوا أَنفَضُوا إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَائِمًا قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَمِنَ الْبَرَّةِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّزِيقَنَ ﴾ ١١ ﴿ سُورَةُ الْجُمُعَةِ ١١ ﴾

﴿When they see some merchandise or distraction, they rush towards it and leave you standing there. Say: That which is with Allah is better than any distraction or merchandise. And Allah is the best of providers.﴾ (al-Jumu 'ah 62: 11)

How often in the Qur'an this deal is praised, people are urged to engage in it and those who do so are commended, whilst the other type of deal is condemned, people are warned against it and those who engage in it are criticised. If those who engage in the profitable deal become involved in other deals for the purpose of earning a living, that does not distract them from their first deal; rather it may help them in that, if they have the correct intention (*niyah*), avoid unlawful ways of earning, and are content to take just as much as they need. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا يَبْعَثُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكُوْفِ ...﴾ (سورة النور: ٣٧)

﴿By men who are not distracted by buying or selling from the remembrance of Allah, or from establishing prayer or giving zakâh...﴾ (an-Noor 24: 37)

He did not say that they do not engage in buying or selling; rather He tells us that when they engage in such activities, it does not distract them from their ultimate aim – which is remembrance of Allah, and it does not distract them from their religious duties. And Allah knows best.

Soorat Maryam

Soorat Maryam includes details of the immense blessings that Allah bestowed upon His Prophets. It speaks of the mercy of Allah towards His Prophets, chosen ones and beloved ones, and what He bestowed upon them in this world of spiritual and worldly blessings both visible and invisible, as well as what He honoured them with of great renown. He describes them in the best terms by referring to the best of their attributes, and mentions what He will honour them with in the hereafter of reward and immense grace. He also mentions His mercy towards His enemies, as He showed patience and forbearance towards them, and sent various signs to them in the hope that they would turn to Him, despite the seriousness of the sins and grave evils that they committed. Therefore in this soorah the divine name ar-Rahmân (the Most Gracious) is mentioned frequently, because the things mentioned above result from the impact of this name; He also mentions the word mercy (*rahmah*) frequently. We ask Him to include us, by His mercy, among His righteous slaves.

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِي جَعَلْنَاهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَاءً الْعَنْكُفُ فِيهِ وَالْبَادُ وَمَنْ يُرِدُ فِيهِ إِلَيْهِ الْحَادِمُ يُظْلَمُ إِنْ دِقَهُ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴾٢٥﴿ وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكَ بِي شَيْئاً وَطَهَّرْ بَيْتِي لِلطَّالِبِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكُعَ الْسُّجُودُ ﴾٢٦﴾ (سورة الحج: ٢٥-٢٦)

﴿As for those who disbelieve and bar [people] from the path of Allah and from the Sacred Mosque – which We have made for all people, residents and visitors alike – and any who intend to profane it by deliberate evildoing, We will cause them to taste a painful penalty. And [remember] when We showed to Ibrâheem the site of the [Sacred] House [saying]: Do not associate anything in worship with Me, and purify My House for those who circumambulate it, those who stand to pray, and those who bow and prostrate.﴾ (al-Hajj 22: 25-26)

*J*n this passage there is criticism of those who disbelieved and barred Allah's believing slaves from the Sacred Mosque; this criticism is on two counts:

Because they kept it to themselves and prevented others from reaching it, even though it is for all people;

And because the believers were more entitled to it than them. This was another cause of blame. They allowed those who were less entitled to it to enter it, and prevented those who were more entitled to it from doing so. Allah commanded Ibrâheem (ﷺ) to purify it for those who circumambulate it, those who stand to pray, and those who bow and prostrate, for they are most deserving of people to enter it, for they are the party of Allah and His close friends, and the polytheists were not His close friends. (al-Anfâl 8: 34)

﴿... إِنَّ أَوْلَيَاءَهُ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقُونَ ... ﴾٣٤﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٣٤)

﴿...Its rightful guardians can be none but those who fear Allah...﴾ (*al-Anfāl* 8: 34)

Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah, He would not have prescribed rulings for His slaves

*A*nd were it not for His grace and mercy, He would not have prescribed those rulings and explained them in detail. Were it not for His grace and mercy, and the fact that He is Accepting of repentance and Most Wise, He would not have clarified those rulings and made them very easy for people. Were it not for His grace and mercy, He would not have prescribed means of repenting and attaining forgiveness, and He would not have accepted the repentance of the penitent. Were it not for His grace and mercy, not one of them would ever have been purified, but Allah purifies whomever He wills, and Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing, as He has explained in Soorat an-Noor. (24: 21-22)

﴿وَأَنِكْحُوْا الْأَيْمَنَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِحَيْنَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَامَيْكُمْ إِنْ يَكُونُوْا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ وَسِعٌ عَلِيِّمٌ ﴾٣٢٠ وَلَيْسَتَعِفِفَ اللَّذِينَ لَا يَحِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّىٰ يُغْنِيْهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوْهُمْ إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا وَأَتُوْهُمْ مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي أَتَيْتُكُمْ وَلَا تُكْرِهُوْا فَشِتَّيْكُمْ عَلَى الْبِلْغَاءِ إِنْ أَرَدْنَ تَحْصِنَنَا لِتَبْتَغُوا عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ... ﴾٣٣٠

(سورة النور: ٣٢-٣٣)

﴿Arrange marriages for those among you who are single, and those who are righteous and fit for marriage among your male and female slaves. If they are poor, Allah will suffice them from His bounty, for Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing. Let those who do not have the means to marry keep themselves chaste until Allah suffices them from His bounty. If any of your slaves ask for a deed in writing [to enable them to earn their freedom in return for a certain sum], then write it for them, if you see any good in them,²³ and give them some of the wealth that Allah has given you. Do not force your slave girls into prostitution, if they want to remain chaste, seeking thereby some worldly gain...﴾ (an-Noor 24: 32-33)

*T*hese verses contain instructions to strive by permissible means to earn a living so as to enable oneself to get married and so on. Whoever cannot afford to get married should adhere to piety, fearing Allah (□), and refrain from what He has forbidden; he should wait for the bounty and provision of Allah, and wait until Allah makes him independent of means. This verse states that it is forbidden to seek provision by unlawful means: ﴿Do not force your slave girls into prostitution﴾. And Allah knows best.

Al-A'râf

The word al-A'râf (the Heights) refers to a place between paradise and hell which overlooks both; it is not a place of settlement; rather it is a place where people whose good and bad deeds are equal will remain for a while, as long as Allah wills, then they will enter paradise. There is divine wisdom behind that, some aspects of which are as follows:

- This place of halting is indicative of the perfect justice and wisdom of Allah, for which He is to be praised, as He has ordained that the causes of reward and causes of punishment will oppose and resist one another. Their good deeds will prevent them from entering hell, and their bad deeds will prevent them from entering paradise at that time, so that they will find themselves in the middle between the two realms, in a type of buffer zone or no man's land between the two places, so that the divine wisdom will become manifest first, then will be followed by grace from the Possessor of abundant grace, Who encompasses His creation on all sides and controls them, and the judgement concerning them is His. This highlights many of His praiseworthy attributes and the way in which He manages the affairs of His slaves, by means of which people come to know His perfection and the perfection of His names, attributes, wisdom, justice and grace.
- Their situation is among the signs of the vast mercy of Allah, and demonstrates that His mercy precedes His wrath and prevails over it, so that if there is a conflict between the causes for mercy and the causes for wrath, then it will definitely be the causes of mercy that prevail over the causes of wrath.

One of the indications of that is the fact that if a person has an atom's weight of faith, which is a cause for divine mercy, he will inevitably attain that mercy; even if he did something that could incur divine wrath, what takes precedence will still be that which is the cause of divine mercy.

- When Allah wills something, He brings about the causes that lead to it. When He decrees that they will enter paradise, He will create hope and aspiration in their hearts, and He will cause them to offer supplication asking Him to protect them

from the fire and not to put them with people who were given to wrongdoing. Supplication (du‘â’) combined with hope will never go unanswered.

- Allah has made the “people of the Heights (al-a‘râf)” a means of finding out the fate of people in both realms, what awaits the doomed of punishment and disgrace, and what awaits the people of paradise of delight and happiness. Hence Allah described how they will rebuke some men among the people of hell whom they will recognise by their marks (7: 48). We also learn other divine wisdom from this soorah that has to do with how Allah will judge humankind.

The words of Shu‘ayb (□):

﴿... وَمَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَن نَّعُودَ فِيهَا إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ...﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٨٩) 

﴿...There is no way we could return to it unless Allah our Lord so willed. Our Lord encompasses all things in His knowledge. In Allah we put our trust...﴾ (al-A‘rāf 7: 89)

Shu‘ayb (□) spoke these words:

﴿... وَمَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَن نَّعُودَ فِيهَا إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ...﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٨٩) 

﴿...There is no way we could return to it unless Allah our Lord so willed. Our Lord encompasses all things in His knowledge. In Allah we put our trust...﴾ (al-A‘rāf 7: 89)

– after having said:

﴿قَدِ افْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا إِنْ عُدْنَا فِي مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ إِذْ نَجَّنَا اللَّهُ مِنْهَا ...﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٨٩) 

﴿We would be guilty of fabricating lies against Allah if we were to return to your religion after Allah has saved us from it...﴾ (al-A‘rāf 7: 89)

This is among the greatest evidence of his perfect knowledge of his Lord. When he explained that it was not possible for them (the believers) to return to the religion of the disbelievers – because Allah had blessed him and instilled in him intense resentment towards their religion from which Allah had saved him, and he had rejoiced in being saved from it; if the believers were to go back to that religion after Allah had guided them, they would be guilty of fabricating grave lies against Allah, which would be impossible for a man of his calibre; this refusal was the result of what Allah had made available to him of means to protect him from that – he balanced that by saying “unless Allah so willed”, because he knew that his unwillingness to go back to their religion

was something that was based on human knowledge and assessment, and that the knowledge of Allah (ﷻ) encompasses all human knowledge. Humans may know something and may assess the consequences thereof on the basis of their knowledge of divine wisdom, yet despite that, Allah's decree always prevails; what they know may not turn out to be accurate, and what they predicted may not turn out to be the same. Hence Shu‘ayb said: ﴿unless Allah our Lord so willed﴾, and reaffirmed that by saying ﴿Our Lord encompasses all things in His knowledge﴾; then he turned to the greatest measure that a person may take to attain what is with Allah of the best in this world and the hereafter, and to ward off the evil of both, namely putting his trust in his Lord, and he said: ﴿In Allah we put our trust﴾. Then he explained his complete trust in Allah's promise to save him and those who followed him, and the doom of those who went against him, as he said:

﴿...رَبَّنَا أَفْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْفَتَحِينَ﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ٨٩) ﴿...Our Lord, judge between us and our people in truth, for You are the best of judges.﴾

(al-A‘râf 7: 89)

﴿أَمْ يَقُولُونَ يَهُهُ حِنْنَةً بَلْ جَاءَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَرِهُونَ ﴾ ﴿ وَلَوْ أَتَّبَعُ الْحَقَّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ الْسَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ بَلْ أَتَيْنَاهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُّعَرِّضُونَ ﴾ (سورة المؤمنون: ٧١-٧٠) ﴿٢٦﴾

﴿Or do they say that there is madness in him? Rather he has brought them the truth, but most of them are averse to the truth. If the truth had been in accordance with their desires, the heavens and the earth, and all those who are therein, would have been brought to ruin. In fact We have given them that which would bring them honour [that is, the Qur'an], but they turn away from that which would bring them honour.﴾ (al-Mu'minoon 23: 70-71)

These verses indicate that the disbelievers' opposition to the Messenger (ﷺ) was because of what he brought of truth, and that their real enmity is towards the truth itself; the truth is the real reason for their enmity, because truth is contrary to their whims and desires, and their whims and desires are so corrupt that it is not possible for the truth to be in accordance with what they desire, for truth is the basis of the well-being of the heavens and the earth and all who are in them. If the truth were in accordance with their whims and desires, the heavens and the earth, and all those who are therein, would have been brought to ruin. This indicates that truth calls for that which sound intellect and sound human reasoning testify is right and proper, fair and perfect, and it indicates that whoever goes against truth, it is because of his corrupt thinking and his deviation from his *fitrah* (sound human nature), and it is because he has chosen that which is harmful over that which is beneficial. Hence Allah says: ﴿In fact We have given them that which would bring them honour [that is, the Qur'an], but they turn away from that which would bring them honour﴾.

﴿يَعِيْهِ خُذِ الْكِتَبَ بِقُوَّةٍ...﴾ (سورة مريم: ١٢)

﴿O Yahyâ, hold fast to the Book [the Torah] with all your strength...﴾
(Maryam 19: 12)

Many of the commentators have stated that what this verse means is: “We blessed him [Zakariyâ] with Yahyâ and said: O Yahyâ, hold fast...” But there is no need for this interpretation, because the soorah previously states clearly that Allah blessed Zakariyâ with Yahyâ, in the verse:

﴿يَزَّكَ كَرِيَّا إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَمٍ أَسْمُهُ يَحْيَى...﴾ (سورة مريم: ٧)

﴿[It was said to him:] O Zakariyâ, We give you the glad tidings of a son. His name will be Yahyâ...﴾ (Maryam 19: 7)

If this were mentioned again after that, it would be unnecessary repetition.

﴿فَلَفَّ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفُ أَصَاغِرُهُمْ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهْوَاتِ فَسَوْفَ يُلْقَوْنَ غَيْرًا﴾

(سورة مریم: ۵۹) 

﴿But after them came generations who neglected prayer and pursued their desires. So they will meet with perdition.﴾ (Maryam 19: 59)

This verse mentions a twofold, severe punishment. They pursued their desires in the sense that they wanted them and they became all that they aspired for; they were controlled by their desires and became obedient to them. Hence Allah (ﷻ) says that they pursued them, and He did not say that they enjoyed or ate and the like, because there is nothing wrong with enjoying or eating per se; rather what is blameworthy is to pursue physical desires. So whatever they desired, they would do it, because that is what they would seek and pursue. It is well known that the *nafs* or human soul constantly prompts one to do evil; as this is its inherent nature, it is known that criticizing them for pursuing their desires includes all sins. Therefore Allah ordained this great punishment when He said: ﴿So they will meet with perdition﴾. This is in contrast to the believer who obeys Allah; although he may enjoy his desires, he does not pursue them and they do not become his main concern and focus; rather he enjoys them in a manner that is subordinate to something else, and he does not pursue them. The elite of the believers allow themselves to enjoy desires in a way that helps them to do acts of worship; thus their enjoyment of desires itself becomes an act of worship. By the same token, what is criticised is when a person pursues whims and desires in such a way that desire becomes something that controls his life, and he takes his desire as his god. Simply having some desires is not blameworthy, because everyone has desires; rather the believer is as Allah says:

﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَى ﴿٤١﴾ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى﴾ (سورة النازعات: ۴۱)

(41-40)

﴿But as for the one who feared standing before his Lord and restrained himself from base desires, verily paradise will be his abode.﴾ (an-Nâzi‘ât 79: 40-41)

﴿رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاعْبُدُهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِنْدَهُ هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيَّاً﴾

﴿٦٥﴾ (سورة مریم: ٦٥)

﴿Lord of the heavens and the earth and of all that is between them. So worship Him, and remain steadfast in worshipping Him. Do you know of anyone equal to Him?﴾ (Maryam 19: 65)

This verse refers to some important principles, namely: the oneness of divine Lordship (*tawheed ar-ruboobiyah*), and the fact that Allah (ﷺ) is the Lord, Creator, Provider and Controller of all; the oneness of divinity and worship (*tawheed al-ilâhiyah wal-‘ibâdah*), and the fact that worship is to be devoted to Allah alone; and the fact that His being the Lord (*Rabb*) dictates that one should worship Him alone and believe in Him as the only divinity. The wording of the original Arabic, translated here as “**So** worship Him”, implies the reason; in other words, because He is the Lord of all things, He is the only One Who is deserving of worship, so worship Him alone. Another important principle referred to here is remaining steadfast in worshipping Him, which means striving hard in worship and making oneself worship Him. That includes the most sublime type of steadfastness, which is being steadfast in doing obligatory and recommended deeds, and being steadfast in refraining from prohibited and discouraged deeds. That also includes steadfastness and patience at times of calamity, for being patient at such times – and not showing discontent, rather accepting Allah’s will – is one of the greatest acts of worship that are included in the words **﴿and remain steadfast in worshipping Him﴾**.

This verse also indicates that Allah (ﷺ) is perfect in His names and attributes, and great in His Majesty. There is none like unto Him, and He has no peer and no equal; rather He is unique in His absolute perfection in all aspects. This is among the greatest evidence that He is the One to Whom all worship, both outward and inward – emotional, physical and financial – should be directed, and to no one else. Worship should be solely for Him, because perfection, greatness, pride, might and majesty all belong solely to Him.

Another of these important principles is that association of others with Allah (shirk) is flawed according to both rational thinking and the religious texts. How can it be appropriate for a man of reason to regard an imperfect created being – who has no power to bring benefit or cause harm to himself or to anyone else, and has no power to cause death, give life or resurrect – as being equal to the One Who has no peer or equal, and no one is like unto Him in any way whatsoever? Can this be anything other than foolishness, misguidance and extreme ignorance which would bring harm from all angles? This verse indicates that the ugliness of shirk is something that is established on the basis of reason, and that the beauty of tawheed is established on the basis of reason also. Just as there is no equal to Allah, there is nothing better than worshipping Him and doing all good deeds sincerely for Him; there is nothing more beneficial, more proper and more beautiful than that.

It is well established, according to Islamic teachings, that worshipping Allah (□) in the proper way (*ihsân*) – which is the cause of all that is good in this world and the hereafter, and indeed is the means of attaining the highest ranks and most perfect reward – is, as the Prophet (ﷺ) described it:

«To worship Allah as if you see Him, for even though you cannot see Him, He sees you.»²⁴

– the more a person pays attention to that (worshipping Allah as if he sees Him), the more acts of worship he will do; in fact this is the most important issue. Hence the Prophet (ﷺ) instructed Mu‘âdh ibn Jabal to ask Allah (□) to help him to remember Him, give thanks to Him and worship Him properly. This is something that few people can achieve and attain a high level of perfection in that regard, because it is difficult for people. If a person obeys the command of his Lord by remaining steadfast, worshipping Him and disciplining himself to do acts of worship in the proper manner – especially the best and greatest act of worship, namely prayer, as Allah enjoined remaining steadfast with regard to prayer in particular, in the verse:

﴿وَأَمْرُ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَأَصْطَرَ عَلَيْهَا ...﴾ (سورة طه: ١٣٢)

﴿Enjoin your family [and your people] to establish prayer and remain steadfast therein...﴾ (*Tâ Hâ* 20: 132)

– his heart will be illuminated with faith and the light of guidance, and he will taste the sweetness of faith. Thus he will begin to love worshipping Allah and striving sincerely

for His sake, and he will know that this is the ultimate success and immense gain in which there is no loss. So he will make himself be patient and steadfast for a little while, so that he may attain rest and enjoy all kinds of pleasures for a longer time. This is the grace of Allah that He bestows upon whomever He wills, for Allah is Possessor of abundant grace.

Section 8

﴿كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ إِلَّا أَخْبَرَ الْيَمِينَ﴾ (سورة المدثر: ٣٨-٣٩) ﴿٣٩﴾

﴿[On the Day of Judgement,] every human being will be held in pledge for whatever [evil] he has wrought – except those who shall have attained righteousness.﴾ (*al-Muddath-thir* 74: 38-39)

That is, every soul will be held in pledge and detained because of its bad deeds, and in its detention it will be subject to punishment. That is because the requital will match the deed. Therefore just as sinners kept to themselves that which was due to Allah and to other people, so they did not pray, which is the greatest act of worship, in which a person shows devotion to his Creator; and they did not feed the poor or give them the dues that Allah obliged them to give, by giving a portion of their wealth to them; and they did not keep within the limits that Allah had prescribed, and they did not restrain themselves as prescribed in the religious texts – rather they gave themselves free rein to pursue all their corrupt aims and goals, so they indulged in vain discourse along with those who indulged therein (*cf.* 74: 45); and they did not believe in their Lord and His Messengers, despite the abundant signs – rather they disbelieved in the Last Day... For all these reasons, they will be detained in this terrible place of detention and admitted to the blaze. In contrast, because those who shall have attained righteousness kept within the limits that Allah had prescribed, believing in those teachings and putting them into practice, letting their tongues and physical faculties do acts of worship and seek the pleasure of Allah, Allah will set them free and release them from their pledge, so they will not be held in pledge on that day; rather they will be given free rein to enjoy whatever their hearts desire and whatever delights their eyes. Thus a person's actions in this world will either be a reason for him to be detained, or a reason for him to be released. In fact, the basic principle is that people will be detained and their deeds held in pledge, because they are inclined to wrongdoing and ignorance by nature, except those whom Allah saves from that and blesses them by enabling them to be patient and do righteous deeds. Therefore being held in pledge is the general rule, from which those who shall have attained righteousness will be exempted, as Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ إِلَّا أَخْبَرَ الْيَمِينَ﴾ (سورة المدثر: ٣٨-٣٩) ﴿٣٨﴾

﴿[On the Day of Judgement,] every human being will be held in pledge for whatever [evil] he has wrought – except those who shall have attained righteousness.﴾ (*al-Muddath-thir* 74: 38-39)

The closer a person becomes
to Allah, the more goodness and
happiness he will attain

The closer a person becomes to Allah – by believing in Him, attaining a high level of faith and knowledge of Him, loving Him, turning to Him and striving sincerely for His sake – the more goodness and happiness he will attain, different types of evil will be warded off from him, his fears will be dispelled, and difficult matters will be made easy for him. This is the meaning that Allah intended when He said to Moosâ:

﴿... يَمُوسَى لَا تَخَفْ إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ لَدَّيِ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴾ ﴿١٠﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُرَّ بَدَلَ حُسْنَا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ فَإِنِّي عَفُورٌ ﴾ ﴿١١﴾

﴿... يَمُوسَى لَا تَخَفْ إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ لَدَّيِ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴾ ﴿١٠﴾ (سورة النمل: ١١-١٠) ﴿١١﴾ رَحِيمٌ

﴿...O Moosâ, do not be afraid; the Messengers need have no fear in My presence. But whoever has done wrong, then after that substitutes good for evil, verily I am Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.﴾ (an-Naml 27: 10-11)

This is indicated by the fact that He said: ﴿[they] need have no fear in My presence﴾, and He did not say, “they need not fear Me”. In other words, no fear will be suffered by those whom I have blessed with the noblest and most perfect of statuses, which is that of the Messengers. And every believer has a share of that, commensurate with the extent to which he follows the Messengers. A further indication that what is meant here is this general, good meaning is the fact that the context clearly indicates that. The fear felt by Moosâ only happened when he saw his staff moving as if it were a snake; at that moment he felt afraid of the snake, which is a natural fear in humans. Therefore Allah (ﷻ) informed him that this was a place where he was close to Him, so it was not befitting that there should be any cause of fear there; rather it was a place of complete security. Hence Allah says elsewhere:

﴿... يَمُوسَى أَقِلْ وَلَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْأَمْنِينَ ﴾ ﴿٣١﴾ (سورة القصص: ٣١)

﴿...O Moosâ, come back, and do not be afraid, for you are quite safe.﴾ (al-Qasâs 28: 31)

This is also indicated by the words:

﴿إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنَاتِهِ بَعْدَ سُوءِ فَإِنِّي غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾ (سورة النمل: ١١)

﴿But whoever has done wrong, then after that substitutes good for evil, verily I am Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.﴾ (an-Naml 27: 11)

Thus the meaning is:

﴿الَّذِينَ إِمَّا مُّنْسِنُوا وَلَمْ يَلِمُّوْا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْآمَنُ وَهُمْ مُهَتَّدُونَ﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ٨٢)

(٨٢)

﴿It is those who believe and do not mix their faith with wrongdoing who will be truly safe, and it is they who are truly guided.﴾ (al-An 'âm 6: 82)

Hence if they wrong themselves, then turn back to their Lord and substitute good deeds for their bad deeds, they will go back to their original status, and Allah, the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, will remove from them that which resulted in wrongdoing and sin. And Allah knows best.

Following on from the above

Following on from the above, where Allah told us that He does not guide the wrongdoers, disbelievers and others of that ilk, even though there were some amongst those who met this description who were subsequently guided, our answer before was that when Allah says that they will not be guided, this is applicable to those who are doomed, and it is decreed that they are evildoers who belong to the people of hell, and that those who are guided are among those who are not like that. Now the matter has become clearer to me; with regard to that which was not clear on this issue, Allah has now made it clear – to Him be praise. I found the answer in the following verse:

﴿وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَاهُمْ دَآبَةً مِنَ الْأَرْضِ شُكْلَمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِعَيْنِنَا لَا يُوقَنُونَ﴾

(سورة النمل: ٨٢)

﴿When the time for the fulfilment of the warning comes, We will bring forth to them out of the earth a Beast that will tell them that humankind did not believe in Our signs.﴾ (an-Naml 27: 82)

This is in harmony with the preceding verses. Allah (ﷺ) said to His Messenger (ﷺ), by way of consoling him regarding the stubbornness of the disbelievers, and noting that this would not harm the truth at all:

﴿إِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَىٰ وَلَا تُسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الْذُعَاءِ إِذَا وَلَوْا مُذْبِرِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِهَدِي الْعُمَىٰ عَنْ ضَلَالِهِمْ ﴿٨١﴾ إِنْ تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِعَيْنِنَا فَهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾ (سورة النمل: ٨١-٨٠)

﴿Verily, you cannot make the dead hear you, nor can you make the deaf hear your call, [especially] if they turn their backs and walk away; nor can you guide the blind out of their error. You cannot make anyone hear you except those who believe in Our revelations, for they are ready to submit [to the truth].﴾ (an-Naml 27: 80-81)

Thus Allah explained to the Prophet (ﷺ) that the only ones who could benefit from his efforts to guide the misguided, and hear his message in the sense of accepting and

following it, were those who believed in Allah's revelations, for they were ready to submit (to the truth). As for those who were spiritually dead and had no life in their hearts and no interest in seeking the truth, just as you cannot make those who are really dead hear your voice, you cannot make those whose hearts are dead hear your voice when you call people to Islam and guidance, nor can you make to hear the deaf who are turning away from the truth, or guide those who are blind and given to wrongdoing. Those people are the ones on whose hearts, hearing and vision Allah has placed a seal, and they are the heedless. They are the ones against whom the word (that is, the promise of Allah) will be fulfilled, and when the fulfilment of the word against the doomed becomes due, they will never benefit from the verses or reminders, just as they will not benefit from the signs at which belief will become involuntary; this refers to the major signs which will be precursors of the Hour. When the sun rises from its place of setting, it will not benefit anyone to believe who did not believe before or earn some goodness through his faith. At that time the word will be fulfilled for the doomed, and they will continue to be doomed. There will be brought forth for them out of the earth a Beast which will speak to them, and will distinguish between the Muslim and the disbeliever. When the word is fulfilled, it cannot be changed or altered, and there will be no hope that the disbelievers will ever become believers, even if the signs are some of the major signs (of the Hour), for the verse confirms those which preceded it, and indicates that the common reason why they do not believe is that in the case of the one for whom the word is fulfilled, even if every sign came to him, he would not believe until he actually sees the painful punishment. And Allah knows best.

﴿أَوَلَيْكُنْ هُمْ أَهْلَةَ أَنْ يَعْلَمَهُ عُلِّمُوا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴾ (سورة الشعرا: ١٩٧)

﴿Is it not a sign for them that the scholars of the Children of Israel recognize it [to be true]?﴾ (ash-Shu ‘arâ’ 26: 197)

This verse indicates that through the scholars and people of knowledge, truth may be distinguished from falsehood, and halal from haram. They are a means of connection between Allah and His slaves, hence Allah quotes their testimony to affirm His oneness, the truth of Prophethood, and the soundness of the Qur’ān – as stated in this verse. He quotes their testimony to affirm His oneness in the verse in which He says:

﴿شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمُ ... ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٨)

﴿Allah bears witness that there is no god worthy of worship except Him, as do His angels and people of knowledge...﴾ (Al ‘Imrâ’ 3: 18)

– and to affirm the soundness of the Qur’ān in the verse:

﴿بَلْ هُوَ أَيَّتُ بَيْنَتُ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُتُوا الْعِلْمَ ... ﴾ (سورة العنكبوت: ٤٩)

﴿Rather it [the Qur’ān] is clear verses preserved in the hearts of those who have been given knowledge [‘ilm]...﴾ (al-‘Ankaboot 29: 49)

These verses indicate that true knowledge is that which was brought by the Messengers and revealed in the Books, and is that by means of which truth is distinguished from falsehood. Those who have any other types of knowledge – even if it is true – do not deserve to be included among the people of knowledge whom Allah instructs us to refer to. Rather those who have other types of knowledge are referred to as *ahl adh-dhikr*, of whom Allah says:

﴿... فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ (سورة النحل: ٤٣)

﴿...So [O people] ask those who have knowledge [dhikr], if you do not know.﴾ (an-Nahl 16: 43)

It is more appropriate that those whom Allah has blessed with some knowledge should be the quickest to submit to what is right and be the furthest from following what is wrong. Hence Allah emphatically criticises people of knowledge who are not quick to accept truth and keep away from falsehood, as in the following verses:

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبَهَا مِنَ الْكِتَابِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْجِبْرِ وَالظَّغْوَةِ ...﴾

(سورة النساء: ٥١)

﴿Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the scripture? They believe in *jibt* and *tâghoot*²⁵...﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 51)

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبَهَا مِنَ الْكِتَابِ يَشْرَوُنَ الْضَّلَالَةَ ...﴾ (سورة النساء: ٤٤)

﴿Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the scripture? They purchase misguidance...﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 44)

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبَهَا مِنَ الْكِتَابِ يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى كِتَابِ اللَّهِ لِيَحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّ فِرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَهُمْ مُعَرِّضُونَ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٢٣)

﴿Have you not seen those who have been given a portion of the scripture? They are invited to the Book of Allah, so it may judge between them, but a group of them turn away in aversion.﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 23)

Outcomes of faith

*F*aith is the best and noblest of qualities and virtues; indeed, there can never be any virtue or reward except by means of faith and fulfilling the duties of faith. Hence Allah (ﷺ) praised the best of His creation and those whom He chose of His slaves, as He said concerning Nooh, Ibrâheem, Moosâ, Hâroon, Ilyâs and other Prophets that they were among His believing slaves. Thus He explained that the reason why they attained what is good and were protected from evil was their faith, and He connected success and admittance to paradise to faith, as He says:

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ (سورة المؤمنون: ١)

﴿The believers have indeed attained true success.﴾ (al-Mu'minoon 23: 1)

Then He mentioned their characteristics that stem from their faith, and then said:

﴿أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَرِثُونَ﴾ (الذين يرثون الفردوس هم فيها خالدون) (سورة المؤمنون: ١١-١٠)

﴿Such will be the heirs who will inherit paradise; they will abide therein forever.﴾ (al-Mu'minoon 23: 10-11)

And He says:

﴿...وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٢٣)

﴿...and give glad tidings to the believers.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 223)

﴿أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خُوفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾ (الذين يحزنون)
 ﴿أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خُوفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾ (سورة يونس: ٦٢-٦٣)

﴿Verily, the allies and close friends of Allah will have no fear nor will they grieve, those who believe and guard against evil.﴾ (Yoonus 10: 62-63)

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدَافِعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ إِمَّا مُؤْمِنُوْا...﴾ (سورة الحج: ٣٨)

﴿Verily, Allah will defend those who believe...﴾ (al-Hajj 22: 38)

﴿... وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ١٩)

﴿...verily, Allah is with the believers.﴾ (al-Anfâl 8: 19)

And there are other texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah which highlight the virtue of faith and the virtue of people of faith, and indicate that all goodness is in having faith. So the person who wants to save himself, and seeks to attain perfection and success must strive his utmost and do all that he can to attain this characteristic, which is to have a high level of faith in terms of knowledge, deeds and frame of mind such that it will become part of his character. It is as the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Faith has seventy-odd branches, the highest of which is saying *lâ ilâha illâ Allâh*, and the least of which is removing a harmful item from the road; and modesty is a branch of faith.»²⁶

Thus, Allah describes faith as the utterance of words that Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) love, and mentions that part of it is to show kindness to the slaves of Allah, even if it is as small as removing something harmful from the road that they use. He also describes it as deeds of the heart (emotions and feelings), the basis of which is modesty or shyness, for whoever has the characteristic of modesty or shyness before Allah, his heart will be filled with knowledge, love, fear and hope of Allah, and he will strive hard to endear himself to Allah by any possible means, because faith encompasses all religious teachings, outward and inward deeds, words uttered, what crosses the mind, the deeds of the heart and physical deeds. Whoever commits himself to doing these things with sincerity and does them well will attain a higher level of faith, and whoever falls short with regard to them in terms of knowledge, deeds and good frame of mind, his faith will be lacking accordingly. People vary in their level of faith; the most perfect of them is the one whose knowledge of faith reaches the level of certainty, and whose deeds attain a high level of *ihsân* (worshipping Allah properly),²⁷ and he worships Allah with full presence of mind, knowing that He is watching. In terms of how faith impacts his behaviour and attitude, the most perfect is the one whose attitude and behaviour are a reflection of the high level of faith he has in his heart, the one who is unwavering in his faith. Indeed, if any thought arises or he finds himself

facing any situation that could undermine his faith, he immediately tries to rid himself of it, and soon returns to the way he was. Hence the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«The most perfect of the believers in faith is the one who is best in attitude.»²⁸

If his faith is not affected when faced with desires or bad thoughts – rather he ignores them and persists in adhering to Allah's commands, going against his own whims and desires – then he is a true believer. Allah says:

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِمَانُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَأُوا وَجْهَهُدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ﴾ (سورة الحجّ: ١٥)

﴿The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger, then do not doubt, and strive and fight in the cause of Allah, offering their wealth and their lives. It is they whose faith is true.﴾ (al-Hujurât 49: 15)

Hence part of perfect faith is to uphold ties with those who cut you off, give to those who withhold from you, and forgive those who wrong you. By the same token, giving what one loves – which is wealth – for the sake of Allah is also indicative of faith, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Charity is proof (of one's faith).»²⁹

Patience is to faith as the head is to the body.

- Other signs of faith include those mentioned by Allah in the passage:

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيهِمْ عَلَيْهِمْ إِيمَانُهُمْ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًا لَّهُمْ دَرَجَتُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٤-٢)

﴿The true believers are those whose hearts are filled with awe when Allah is mentioned, and when His revelations are recited to them it increases them in faith, and they put their trust only in their Lord; those who establish prayer and spend out of what We have provided for them. Such are the true believers; they will have

high ranks with their Lord, and forgiveness and a generous provision.﴿ (al-Anfâl 8: 2-4)

Allah describes the believers as being those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts are filled with awe; in other words, they humble themselves and submit to His greatness, admit their weakness before His might, and therefore give up sins, fear His punishment, and find comfort in remembrance of Him:

﴿ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطَمِّنُ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا إِنَّكُرَ اللَّهَ تَطْمِنُ الْقُلُوبُ ﴾ (سورة الرعد: ٢٨)

﴿ Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah, for verily in the remembrance of Allah hearts find comfort.﴾ (ar-Ra 'd 13: 28)

When His revelations are recited to them, it increases them in faith; that is, they increase thereby in knowledge and understanding, in the desire to do good and the fear of committing evil. Thus faith grows in their hearts, a faith that is based on the greatest evidence and proof, as they say:

﴿ ... رَبَّنَا إِنَّا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٦)

﴿ ...Our Lord! We have indeed believed; forgive us, then, our sins, and protect us from the punishment of the fire.﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 16)

﴿ رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيَا يُنَادِي أَنَّهُمْ أَمْنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَعَامَنَّا ... ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٩٣)

﴿ Our Lord! We have heard a caller calling [us] to faith [saying]: Believe in the Lord, and we have believed...﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 193)

And as the believing jinn said:

﴿ وَأَنَّا لَمَّا سَمِعْنَا أَهْمَدَيْهُمْ أَمَنَّا بِهِ ... ﴾ (سورة الجن: ١٣)

﴿ When we heard the guidance [of the Qur'an], we believed in it...﴾ (al-Jinn 72: 13)

According to a person's level of faith, his faith will increase when the Book of Allah and the Hadith are recited. This is the highest level of faith, for it is faith that

is based on the greatest evidence and on understanding; it is not like the faith of the weak believers that is based on customs and traditions and is vulnerable to the influence of what one may face of trials and circumstances. As for this strong faith, it is not shaken by doubts or by thoughts and ideas; rather it increases with the passage of time. Allah describes such believers as having attained a high level of trust in Him. Therefore the people of the greatest faith are those who have the greatest trust in Allah – especially the sublime type of trust, which is complete reliance on Allah to do that which He loves and is pleased with, and to protect him from doing that which incurs His wrath. Hence Allah mentions trust in Him alongside faith in many verses, such as the verse in which He says:

﴿...وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوا إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٢٣)

﴿...And in Allah put your trust, if you are [truly] believers.﴾ (*al-Mâ'idah* 5: 23)

You will find that the true believer adheres to what Allah has enjoined of taking appropriate measures, relying on the One Who creates the measures and brings about the outcome, putting his trust in his Lord, and not worrying about anything that may undermine these measures. He is not grieved if the measures he takes do not give the results he expected, for Allah has guided his heart and therefore he is content with his Lord and pleased with Him, and he has delegated his affairs to Him. Whoever believes in Allah, He will guide his heart, for he has understood and complied with the verses in which Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ﴾

﴿(سورة الحج: ٧٠)

﴿Do you not know that Allah knows all that is in the heavens and on earth? Verily, that is [inscribed] in a record; verily that is easy for Allah.﴾ (*al-Hajj* 22: 70)

﴿لَكُمْ لَا تَأْسُوا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَكُمْ ...﴾ (سورة الحديد: ٢٣)

﴿[Know this] so that you do not grieve for what passes you by, nor exult over what He gives you...﴾ (*al-Hadeed* 57: 23)

He trusts that his Lord is taking care of him, and he has surrendered his affairs to Him, so Allah will suffice him. In this verse (*al-Anfâl* 8: 3), the true believers are described as being those who establish prayer – which means that they do it in a

complete and perfect manner, both outwardly and inwardly – and give zakâh. Prayer involves sincerity towards Allah, and zakâh involves kindness towards the slaves of Allah (□); according to a person's level of faith, he will uphold prayer and zakâh, for they are the most essential, noblest and most sublime acts of worship, and the greatest in terms of benefit and reward. This is how Allah describes the believers in the following passage:

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾١﴿ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَشِعُونَ ﴾٢﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ الْلَّغْوِ
مُعْرِضُونَ ﴾٣﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلرِّزْكَةِ فَيَعْلُوْنَ ﴾٤﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَفَظُونَ
إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ ﴾٥﴿ فَمَنِ ابْتَغَنَ وَرَاءَ
ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ﴾٦﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْنَتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴾٧﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ
عَلَىٰ صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴾٨﴿ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَرِثُونَ ﴾٩﴿ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا
خَالِدُونَ ﴾١٠﴾ (سورة المؤمنون: ١-١١)

﴿The believers have indeed attained true success, those who humble themselves in their prayers, who turn away from all that is vain [of words and deeds], who are active in giving zakâh, and who restrain their carnal desires, except with their wives or any slave women they may own, for then they are free of blame. But whoever seeks anything beyond that, such are the transgressors. Those who are faithful to their trusts and pledges, and who are diligent in their prayers, such will be the heirs who will inherit paradise; they will abide therein forever.﴾ (al-Mu'minoon 23: 1-11)

By means of these great characteristics, perfect faith is achieved. This is a standard against which people may measure themselves and check their faith. The successful believers who will attain *al-Firdaws* are those who establish prayer in a proper manner, both outwardly and inwardly, and with humility and focus (*khushoo'*) – which is the essence of prayer – and who give zakâh as enjoined, and restrain their tongues from bad and obscene speech, such as idle talk and false utterances. Hence Allah highlighted the least of these bad characteristics from which they refrain, namely idle talk, which indicates that they are more likely to restrain their tongues from uttering that which is worse than that. The fact that Allah tells us that they turn away from idle talk, which is the kind of talk in which

there is no benefit, indicates that they would give up unlawful talk. Then Allah describes them as restraining, for His sake, their carnal desires from that which is forbidden, which implies that they would avert the gaze and not even approach anything that would lead to shameful deeds, as Allah (ﷺ) says elsewhere:

﴿قُلْ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغْضُبُوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ...﴾ (سورة النور: ٣٠)

﴿Tell the believing men to avert their gaze [from that which is forbidden] and restrain their carnal desires...﴾ (an-Noor 24: 30)

And Allah describes them as being faithful to their trusts and pledges, which includes all trusts and pledges between them and their Lord, for they have made a covenant with their Lord to hear and obey and show commitment. Hence Allah reminds them of this covenant in the verse in which He says:

﴿وَأَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيثَاقَهُ الَّذِي وَاثْقَلْتُمْ بِهِ إِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ...﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٧)

﴿And remember the favour that Allah bestowed upon you, and His covenant that He made with you, when you said: We hear and we obey...﴾ (al-Mâ 'idah 5: 7)

With regard to trusts and pledges between them and other people, they are not to break them, and they are to render back trusts to those to whom they belong. Hence the Prophet (ﷺ) stated that the sign of faith is that other people's lives and wealth are safe from the believer, as he said:

«The Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe, and the believer is the one from whom people's lives and wealth are safe»³⁰

And:

«He is not a believer whose neighbour is not safe from his evil conduct.»³¹

And he described the hypocrite as being the opposite of that.

Allah describes the believers as believing in all the truth that He has sent down, and in all the Messengers whom He sent, as He says:

﴿إِنَّمَا أَنْزَلَنَا رَسُولُنَا مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلُّهُمْ أَمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُلُّهُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ لَا تَفِقُّهُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رَسُولِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا عَفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٢٨٥) 

﴿The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the believers. Each [of them] believes in Allah, His angels, His Books, and His Messengers. We make no distinction between one and another of His Messengers. And they say: We hear, and we obey. Grant us Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the return [of all].﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 285)

As the believer is described as seeking the pleasure of his Lord and believing in all the Messengers, he is committed to obeying Allah and obeying His Messenger (ﷺ) in all things, and he asks Allah to forgive him for his shortcomings and to pardon him and forgive his sins.

- Another characteristic of the believers is that they submit to the rulings of Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) in all their affairs:

﴿فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُونَ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا سَلِيمًا﴾ (سورة النساء: ٦٥) 

﴿But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you [O Muhammad] judge in all disputes between them, then find in their hearts no reservations about your verdicts, but accept them wholeheartedly.﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 65)

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِذَا كَانُوا مَعَهُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ أَمْرٌ جَاءُوكَمْ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَسْتَأْذِنُوكَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُوكَ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَإِذَا أَسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِبَعْضِ شَأْنِهِمْ فَأَذِنْ لَمَنْ شِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ وَأَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِالْأَعْذُنَةِ عَفْوُرٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾

(سورة النور: ٦٢) 

﴿The true believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger. When they are with him for a matter of communal concern, they do not depart until they have asked his permission. Those who ask your permission [O Muhammad] are those

who believe in Allah and His Messenger, so when they ask your permission to attend to some of their own affairs, then give permission to whomever you wish among them and ask Allah's forgiveness for them, for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. ﴿an-Noor 24: 62﴾

﴿إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ أَن يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ﴾ (٥١) (سورة النور: ٥١)

﴿The only response of the believers, when they are called to Allah and His Messenger so that he may judge between them, is to say: We hear and we obey. It is they who will be the successful ones.﴾ (an-Noor 24: 51)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولَئِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَإِن تَنَزَّعُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرْدُوْهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحَسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا﴾ (٥٩) (سورة النساء: ٥٩)

(٥٩)

﴿O you who believe, obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those of you who are in authority. If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you [truly] believe in Allah and the Last Day; that is better and more seemly in the end.﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 59)

Thus the believer is the one who devotes himself sincerely to Allah and strives to follow the example of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). He does not give precedence to the words or rulings of anyone else; rather when he finds out about the way of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) with regard to a particular matter, he does not prefer anything else to it. His faith will be commensurate with his adherence to these two principles and his certainty and knowledge will increase accordingly.

- Another characteristic of the believers is that they love one another, take one another as allies, and show mercy and compassion to one another, as Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَاءُ آخَرُ بَعْضٌ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقْسِمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الْزَكُوَةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَ...﴾ (٧٦) (سورة التوبه: ٧٦)

﴿The believers, men and women, are allies of one another; they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong; they establish prayer, give zakâh and obey Allah and His Messenger...﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 71)

﴿إِنَّمَا وَلِيْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٥٥)

﴿Your only allies are Allah, His Messenger, and the believers...﴾ (al-Mâ'idah 5: 55)

﴿وَالَّذِينَ جَاءُو مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُولُوْنَ رَبَّنَا أَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلَاخْوَنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُوْنَا بِالْإِيمَنِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلَّا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾ (سورة الحشر: ١٠)

﴿And those who come after them say: Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who believed before us, and do not let there be any ill feeling in our hearts towards those who believe. Our Lord, verily You are Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.﴾ (al-Hashr 59: 10)

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«No one of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.»³²

If there are ties of kinship or neighbourhood, or there are any duties towards one another, this bond becomes stronger and treating them with kindness becomes more important, as the Prophet (ﷺ) said in the ḥaṣeeḥ hadith:

«Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honour his neighbour; whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honour his guest; whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or else remain silent.»³³

«Whoever deceives us is not one of us.»³⁴

«Religion is sincerity ... to Allah, to His Book, to His Messenger, and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk.»³⁵

So the believers devote their worship sincerely to Allah; they show their sincerity towards His Book by learning it, understanding it, acting in accordance with it and

calling others to it; they show their sincerity towards His Messenger (ﷺ) by striving to follow him in word and deed, and in all situations; they show their sincerity towards the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk by guiding them to that which is in their best interests in both spiritual and worldly terms, cooperating with them in righteousness and piety, and restraining them from sin and transgression as much as possible, as Allah (ﷻ) says in the verses quoted above where He describes them as enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.

- Another praiseworthy characteristic of the believers was mentioned by the Prophet (ﷺ) in the *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith:

«There are three characteristics, whoever attains them has found the sweetness of faith: when Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) are dearer to him than all else, when he loves a man and does not love him except for the sake of Allah, and when he would hate to return to *kufr* after Allah has saved him from it as he would hate to be thrown into the fire.»³⁶

Thus he describes attaining true faith and finding its sweetness as being achieved by loving Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), and giving them precedence over all other loved ones, so that what he loves is subordinate to that. So the believer loves a person because of what he has of deeds and characteristics that Allah loves, and what Allah has blessed him with of righteous characteristics; the more that person has of these virtues, the more he loves him. Therefore what the believer loves is connected to what Allah loves, so he loves Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), and he loves those deeds and those people whom Allah loves; his hatred of disbelief, which is the opposite of faith, is greater than his hatred of the fire into which he could be thrown. Similar to that is the hadith in which the Prophet (ﷺ) says:

«He has found the taste of faith who is content with Allah as his Lord, Islam as his religion and Muhammad (ﷺ) as his Prophet.»³⁷

We have noted above³⁸ the words of Heraclius to Abu Sufyān in *Saheeh al-Bukhāri*:

...I asked you whether they are increasing in number or decreasing, and you said that they are increasing. Such is faith, until it prevails. And I asked you whether

anyone had turned away from his religion after entering it, out of dissatisfaction with it, and you said no. Such is faith: when it penetrates deeply into the heart.³⁹

And the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«O you who have believed with your tongues but faith has not entered your hearts, do not backbite about the Muslims or seek their faults, for whoever seeks his brother's faults, Allah will seek his faults, and if Allah seeks a person's faults He will expose him even in his house.»⁴⁰

- Another characteristic of the believers is that Allah has opened their hearts to Islam, so they submit to its teachings willingly and by choice, out of love; their hearts are at ease with that and they are relying on clear proof, and they walk among people with their light.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِ...﴾ (سورة الزمر: ٢٢)

﴿Is one whose heart Allah has opened to Islam, so that he follows light from his Lord [like one who is hard-hearted]?...﴾ (az-Zumar 39: 22)

﴿فَمَنْ يُرِدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ...﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ١٢٥)

﴿Whoever Allah wills to guide, He opens his heart to Islam...﴾ (al-An 'âm 6: 125)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: When faith enters the heart, it expands and feels at ease.

They said: Is there a sign for that, O Messenger of Allah?

He said: Yes: focusing on the abode of eternity and being disinterested in this abode of deceit, and preparing for death before it happens.⁴¹

When Ḥârithah said to him: I have become a true believer, he said: What is the proof of your faith?

He said: I have lost interest in this world; I stay up at night and pray, and I go thirsty (that is, I fast) during the day; and it is as if I can see the Throne of my Lord clearly in front of me, and I can see the people of paradise in paradise visiting one another, and the people of hell in hell screaming at one another.

He said: (You are) a slave of Allah whose heart He has illuminated; be steadfast.⁴²

So the sign of true faith is that acts of worship are made easy, and one finds joy in doing difficult deeds, seeking thereby the pleasure of the Lord of the earth and the heavens, with complete belief in reward and acting in accordance with this certain belief. Hence al-Hasan (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Faith is not dressing a certain way or wishful thinking; rather it is what settles in the heart and is confirmed by one's actions.⁴³ Hence one of the greatest signs of the true believers is that their faith reaches the level of certainty, and they attain the level of the strong and true in faith (ṣiddeeqeen), as Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ إِمَّا نَبَّأُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُّلِهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ ...﴾ (سورة الحديد: ١٩) 

﴿Those who believe in Allah and His Messengers, it is they who are the strong and true in faith...﴾ (al-Hadeed 57: 19)

«When the Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned how high and lofty the chambers of paradise are, his Companions said: O Messenger of Allah, those must be the abodes of the Prophets, which no one else will reach!

He said: Nay, by the One in Whose Hand is my soul; (rather they are for) men who believed in Allah and believed in the Messengers.»⁴⁴

This is the level of the strong and true in faith, for which Allah praised the elite of His creation; it is the highest level of faith in terms of knowledge, deeds and calling others to it.

One sign of faith is when one's righteous deeds attest to it; another sign of faith is the believer's keeping away from sin and wickedness, and all types of disobedience, as mentioned in the verses:

﴿الَّذِينَ إِمَّا نَبَّأُوا وَلَمْ يَلِسُوْا إِيمَّا نَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْآمِنُونَ﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ٨٢) 

الأنعام: ٨٢

﴿It is those who believe and do not mix their faith with wrongdoing who will be truly safe, and it is they who are truly guided.﴾ (al-An 'ām 6: 82)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَتَقُولُوا أَنَّهُمْ مُّؤْمِنُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٧٨)

(٢٧٨)

﴿O you who believe! Fear Allah, and give up what is still due to you of usury, if you are [truly] believers.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 278)

- One of the dictates of faith is spending one's wealth in the ways prescribed in Islamic teachings, spending wealth appropriately, and carrying out the *hadd* punishments prescribed in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُم مِّن شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسُهُ وَلِرَسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ إِن كُنْتُمْ أَمْنَثُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَّزَلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٤١)

(٤١) ...

﴿Know that whatever spoils of war you acquire, one-fifth belongs to Allah and His Messenger, and to his close relatives, orphans, those in need and wayfarers, if you truly believe in Allah and in what We sent down to Our slave on the day when the true was distinguished from the false...﴾ (al-Anfâl 8: 41)

﴿الَّزَانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوْا كُلَّهُ وَلَا تَحْدِّمْنَهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدٍ وَلَا تَأْخُذُ كُلُّهُمَا رَأْفَةً فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِن كُنْتُمْ تُقْرِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ...﴾ (سورة النور: ٢)

(٢) ...

﴿As for the woman and the man who commit fornication, flog each of them with a hundred lashes. Do not let pity for them deter you from obedience to Allah [in carrying out the punishment He has prescribed], if you believe in Allah and the Last Day...﴾ (an-Noor 24: 2)

﴿الَّزَانِي لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً وَالزَّانِي لَا يَنْكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانِي أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ وَحُرِمَ ذَلِكَ عَلَىٰ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ (سورة النور: ٣)

(٣)

﴿A man who fornicates may only marry a woman who fornicates or who is a polytheist, and a woman who fornicates may only marry a man who fornicates or who is a polytheist. Such marriages are forbidden to the believers.﴾ (an-Noor 24: 3)

And there are other texts in the Qur'an and Sunnah that describe the believers, and indicate that a person has not attained true faith until he complies with what they prescribe.

To sum up, whenever Allah (ﷺ) says, "O you who believe, do such and such – or refrain from such and such", complying with the command or heeding the prohibition is one of the dictates and requirements of faith, which cannot be complete without it. From this, we know the true nature of the faith which Allah has made a sign of blessing and success and a means of attaining every goal one seeks and being saved from everything one fears. So we ask Allah (ﷺ) to grant us perfect faith, by which our hearts may be guided to Him, love Him and turn to Him in all our affairs, so that our tongues will utter words of remembrance and praise, and all our faculties will be obedient to Him. Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ﴾ (سورة يونس: ٩)

﴿But as for those who believe and do righteous deeds, their Lord will guide them because of their faith...﴾ (Yoonus 10: 9)

- Another of the significant characteristics of the believers is that Allah will guide them to the truth concerning ambiguous issues, and will guide them to that which is correct at times of confusion which many people find themselves unable to deal with, and they will increase in faith and certainty in circumstances in which others increase in doubt and uncertainty.

Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحِيَّ أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهِذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَسِيقُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٦)

﴿Allah is not ashamed to present an example – that of a mosquito, or of something even more insignificant. Those who believe know that it is truth from their Lord; but those who disbelieve say: What does Allah mean by this example? He causes

many to go astray thereby and He guides many thereby, but He does not cause any to go astray thereby except the evildoers.﴿ (al-Baqarah 2: 26)

﴿ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى الْقَاتِلُ الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمَّنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسُخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحَكِّمُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ حِكْمَةً ٥٣ لِيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرْضٌ وَالْقَاسِيَّةُ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَفِي شَقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ ٥٤ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَمَوْمُنُوا بِهِ فَتُخِيتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادُ الَّذِينَ أَمْنَوْا إِلَى صَرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ٥٥ ﴾ (سورة الحج: ٥٣-٥٥)

(٥٤-٥٥)

﴿ We did not send any Messenger or Prophet before you but, when he recited [the revelations], the Shaytân threw [some falsehood] into his recitation. But Allah cancels out anything [false] that the Shaytân throws in, then Allah confirms His revelations, for Allah is All-Knowing, Most Wise. [That is] so that He may make what the Shaytân throws in [of falsehood] a trial for those in whose hearts is a disease and those whose hearts are hardened, for verily the wrongdoers go much too far in opposition; and so that those who were given knowledge may know that it [the Qur'an] is the truth from your Lord, so they may believe therein and their hearts may be certain of it. Verily, Allah guides those who believe to a straight path.﴾ (al-Hajj 22: 52-54)

﴿ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ إِلَّا مَلِئِكَةً وَمَا جَعَلْنَا عِدَّهُمْ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيَسْتَيْقِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَيَزِدَادُ الَّذِينَ أَمْنَوْا إِيمَانًا ... ٣١ ﴾ (سورة المدثر: ٣١)

﴿ We have appointed none but angels as keepers of the fire, and We have only mentioned their number as a trial for those who disbelieve, so that those who were given the Book might attain certainty and those who believe might increase in faith...﴾ (al-Muddath-thir 74: 31)

﴿ ... وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّا بِهِ كُلُّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا ... ٧ ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٧)

﴿ ...And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: We believe in [the Book]; all of it is from our Lord...﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 7)

Similarly, the faith and certainty that they possess leads them to the facts and to the most appropriate options and most guided state of affairs. Hence the Qur'an is a reminder, and a mercy and glad tidings to the believers. Allah (□) says:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُم مِنْ خَشِيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴾٥٧﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُم بَأَيَّتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾٥٨﴿ وَالَّذِينَ هُم بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴾٥٩﴿ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا أَتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجْهَةُ أَهْمَمُ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ رَجِعُونَ ﴾٦٠﴿ أُولَئِكَ يُسَرِّعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَيِّقُونَ ﴾٦١﴾ (سورة المؤمنون: ٥٧-٦١)

﴿Verily, those who are filled with reverent awe of their Lord, and who believe in the revelations of their Lord, and who do not ascribe partners to their Lord, and who give what they give [of charity], their hearts filled with apprehension, knowing that they will return to their Lord, those are the ones who hasten to do good deeds, and they are foremost in attaining them.﴾ (al-Mu'minoon 23: 57-61)

﴿... إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِيَّاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾٧٩﴾ (سورة النحل: ٧٩)

﴿...Surely in that there are signs for people who believe.﴾ (an-Nahl 16: 79)

Just as they walk by the light of their faith in the darkness of ignorance and evil, and their Lord protects and guards them:

﴿أَللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ إِيمَانُهُمْ يُخْرِجُهُم مِنَ الظُّلْمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ... ﴾٢٥٧﴾ (سورة البقرة: 257)

﴿Allah is the Protector of those who have faith; from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 257)

﴿... وَالَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾٦٨﴾ (سورة آل عمران: 68)

﴿...And Allah is the Guardian of the believers.﴾ (Al 'Imrān 3: 68)

– they will walk by the light of their faith on the Day of Resurrection:

﴿يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُم بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشِّرَنَّكُمْ الْيَوْمَ جَنَّتُ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْنِهَا الْأَنْهَرُ خَلِيلِيْنَ فِيهَا ... ﴾١٢﴾ (سورة الحديد: 12)

﴿[Remember] the day when you will see the believing men and believing women, with their light streaming ahead of them and on their right. [It will be said to

them:] Glad tidings for you this day: gardens through which rivers flow, to abide therein forever...﴿ (al-Hadeed 57: 12)

As their trade was the best and most sublime of trades, their reward for their trade will be eternal bliss in the chambers of paradise:

﴿ يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدْلُكُمْ عَلَىٰ تَحْزِقٍ شُعِّيْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِ أَلِّيمٍ ﴾ (سورة الصافات: ١١-١٠)

﴿ O you who believe, shall I tell you about a deal that will save you from a painful punishment? Believe in Allah...﴿ (as-Saff 61: 10-11)

- Another of their characteristics is that Allah sends down reassurance and tranquillity to their hearts at times of difficulty and anxiety, as He says:

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا... ﴾ (سورة الفتح: ٤)

﴿ It is He Who sent down reassurance to the hearts of the believers so that they might increase even more in faith...﴿ (al-Fath 48: 4)

76.

Obligation to support those who call to truth

W^hoever adheres to truth and calls people to it, or strives to stop an evil action or to expose falsehood, it becomes obligatory to support and help him in that. This is included in the verse in which Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُفُّوْا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ ...﴾ (سورة الصاف: ١٤)

﴿O you who believe, be [steadfast] supporters of Allah's cause...﴾ (as-Saff 61: 14)

This and similar verses indicate that it is obligatory to strive and take appropriate measures of supporting the troops, such as learning and teaching beneficial knowledge and so on.

Sincerity towards Allah
and turning to Him constantly

Sincerity towards Allah and turning to Him constantly is the greatest means of attaining guidance to the straight path in both knowledge and deeds. Allah (ﷺ) tells us that Ibrâheem (ﷺ) said:

﴿...إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَى رَبِّي سَيِّدِيْنِ﴾ (سورة الصافات: ٩٩)

﴿...I am going to [a land where I may freely worship] my Lord; He will guide me.﴾ (as-Sâffât 37: 99)

And Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ جَاهُدُوا فِينَا النَّهَرِ دَيْنَهُمْ سُبْلَنَا...﴾ (سورة العنكبوت: ٦٩)

﴿As for those who strive hard in Our cause, We will surely guide them to Our paths...﴾ (al-‘Ankaboot 29: 69)

And:

﴿قَالَ رَبِّيْ أَغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي...﴾ (سورة ص: ٣٥)

﴿He [Sulaymân] said: My Lord, forgive me and grant me a dominion, the like of which will never be granted to anyone after me...﴾ (Sâd 38: 35)

Allah answered this prayer of Sulaymân, and that is what indeed happened. No matter how people’s circumstances change, and no matter how much they are given of great means – such as gaining power in the land and having control over its resources – they will never attain what Sulaymân was given of power and resources, such as the wind that would cover the distance of a month’s journey in the morning and a month’s journey in the evening (34: 12), and blew gently at his command, wherever he directed it (38: 36); and the subjugation of the devils to him, every kind of builder and diver, and other (devils), bound together in shackles (38: 37-38); and the making available to him the means of achieving all his goals:

﴿ قَالَ يَأَيُّهَا الْمَلَوْا أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ ﴾ ٣٨ ﴿ قَالَ عِفْرِيتٌ مِّنْ الْجِنِّ أَنَا أَنَا أَئِيْكَ بِهِ ﴾ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ مِنْ مَقَامِكَ وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ أَمِينٌ ﴾ ٣٩ ﴿ قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا أَئِيْكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرَتَهُ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفَكَ فَلَمَّا رَأَهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوْنِي أَشْكُرُهُمْ أَكَفَرُ وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ ﴾ ٤٠ (سورة النمل: ٣٨-٤٠)

﴿ He said [to his own court]: O chiefs, which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission? A strong jinni said: I will bring it to you before you rise from your seat. I am surely strong enough and may be trusted. One who had knowledge of the scripture said: I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye. Then when he saw it set before him, Sulaymân said: This is a favour from my Lord, to test whether I will be grateful or ungrateful. Whoever is grateful, his gratitude is to his own benefit, and whoever is ungrateful, then surely Allah is self-sufficient, most generous. ﴾ (an-Naml 27: 38-40)

And the subjugation of the birds and animals, and his learning their speech, which was one of the greatest indications that this was something divinely ordained and not within the normal capability of created beings.

The importance of gratitude

*J*n Allah's command to Zakariyâ to remember Him morning and afternoon, after He gave him the glad tidings of Yahyâ (ﷺ), and in Zakariyâ's command to his people to glorify Allah morning and afternoon, there is an indication of the importance of giving thanks to Allah (ﷻ) for new blessings, especially blessings that lead to a great deal of benefits and serve many interests. It highlights the fact that every time Allah blesses a person with something, he should give thanks to Allah again and again, and the best kind of gratitude is to remember Allah a great deal, to glorify Him, sanctify Him and praise Him.

A person's wellbeing reaches a perfect level when he attains spiritual joy and worldly joy; when he attains both, he will attain happiness in this world and the hereafter

Spiritual joy is attained by gaining knowledge that guides to the straight path and by being mindful of Allah, which means obeying His commands and heeding His prohibitions. Worldly joy is attained when one no longer puts any hope in created beings and no longer has any need of them, and Allah enables him to refrain from bad and evil deeds, then grants him a good and blessed life that will help him to carry out his duties towards his Lord. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ أَهْتَدَوْا زَادُهُمْ هُدًى وَءَاشَهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ﴾ (سورة محمد: ١٧)

﴿But as for those who follow guidance, Allah increases them in guidance and instils in them righteousness.﴾ (Muhammad 47: 17)

And:

﴿وَلَيَسْتَعِفَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّى يُغْنِيهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ...﴾ (سورة النور: ٣٣)

﴿Let those who do not have the means to marry keep themselves chaste until Allah suffices them from His bounty...﴾ (an-Noor 24: 33)

These four things are referred to in the supplication that was narrated in *as-Saheeh*, in a report which tells us that the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say in supplication (du‘â’):

«O Allah, I ask You for guidance, piety, abstinence and independence of means.»⁴⁵

If a person is sincere in his striving,
Allah will not disappoint him

If a person is sincere in loving what Allah has enjoined upon him, hating what Allah has forbidden to him, striving his utmost to do what Allah loves and refrain from what He hates, and seeks the help of Allah, beseeching Him to enable him to do what He loves and to protect him from what He hates, then Allah is Most Generous and will not disappoint one who is like this, no matter how many difficulties and problems he faces. For if a person adheres to these three measures⁴⁶, then they will inevitably yield the desired result. The only reason a person may fail to attain the desired result is his falling short in these three or in one of them. Hence when Yoosuf (ﷺ) strove hard so that he would be protected from the evil of the seduction of the wife of al-‘Azeez and the plans of those who tried to help her achieve her aim, and he was sincere in his love of obeying Allah and giving precedence to that over obeying his nafs (self), and he beseeched Allah (ﷻ) and put his trust in Him to protect him, Allah protected him and averted evil and obscenity from him. Therefore Yoosuf (ﷺ) said:

﴿... رَبِّ السِّجْنِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدُهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُنْ مِّنْ ﴾
﴿الْجَنِّهِلَيْنَ﴾ (سورة يوسف: ٣٣)

﴿...O my Lord, prison is more to my liking than that to which they are calling me. Unless You protect me from their wiles, I may succumb and lapse into folly.﴾ (Yoosuf 12: 33)

Thus he chose prison, which is a kind of punishment and humiliation, over going along with the base whims and desires of the nafs which would lead to eternal loss; he turned to Allah and beseeched Him to protect him from their wiles and their efforts to seduce him; he delegated the matter to his Lord, for he knew that if Allah left him to himself and did not avert their schemes, he would inevitably succumb to them and commit deeds of ignorance, because this is the nature of the nafs, except for those on whom Allah has mercy.

﴿مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَلَا لِأَبَائِهِمْ كَبُرَتْ كَلِمَةٌ تَخْرُجُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ إِنْ يَقُولُونَ إِلَّا كَذِبًا﴾ (سورة الكهف: ٥)

﴿They have no knowledge of such a thing, nor did their forefathers. Monstrous is the word that comes out of their mouths. What they say is nothing but a lie.﴾ (al-Kahf 18: 5)

This verse declares false the view of those who claimed that Allah has a child on three counts, and indeed on four counts:

1. These words are spoken without knowledge, and it is well known that speaking without knowledge is one of the worst types of fabrication, and it comes under the heading of ignorance and misguidance, especially with regard to the most significant and important issue, which is the issue of divine oneness (tawheed), the unique perfection of the Creator (ﷻ) and the fact that He is above all that is not befitting to His majesty of shortcomings that are contrary to divine perfection and greatness. This verse states that these people have no knowledge and they are not following people of knowledge, so they are not saying anything of which they have knowledge and they are not following in the footsteps of people of knowledge; rather they and their forefathers were clearly misguided.
2. ﴿Monstrous is the word that comes out of their mouths﴾. In other words, it is so abhorrent that one wonders how they could utter such a thing and how these dreadful words could come out of their mouths:

﴿تَكَادُ السَّمَوَاتُ يَنْفَطَرُنَّ مِنْهُ وَتَنْشَقُ الْأَرْضُ وَتَخْرُجُ الْجِبَالُ هَذَا أَنْ دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَدًا﴾ (سورة مريم: ٩١-٩٠)

﴿At which the heavens might almost be torn apart, the earth split asunder, and the mountains come tumbling down, at their ascription of a son to the Most Gracious.﴾ (Maryam 19: 90-91)

These words are so awful because they are a kind of insult to the Lord of the Worlds, and are regarded as reviling Him, as it says in the ḥaṣeeḥ hadith:

«The son of Adam reviled Me and he had no right to do so, and the son of Adam denied Me and he had no right to do so. As for his reviling Me, it is his saying that I have a son, when I am the One, the Unique, the Absolute, Who has no spouse or son, and there is none comparable to Him.»⁴⁷

What insult could be greater than this, which implies that the Lord of the Worlds needs to have a spouse or son, and is contrary to the concept of divine oneness and divine uniqueness in perfection?

3. «What they say is nothing but a lie». This confirms that what they say is a blatant lie and obvious fabrication. Think about how an argument is presented gradually: the first step is to prove that it is false and corrupt; the second step is to present an argument to further emphasise how false it is; the third step is to leave no doubt that it is utterly false, for anyone who has insight. Thus the text states that they have no knowledge to prove it; then it notes how abhorrent and monstrous what they say is and notes the level that their argument may occupy, which is the lowest and most evil of arguments, namely lying and fabrication.
4. The fourth point is what one may learn from the first three points put together, because by taking all three together one may attain understanding and clarity that cannot be attained by taking each one separately. When you put them all together, you gain a clear picture of the truth. The same applies to every issue for which there is multiple evidence, because each piece of evidence enables you to understand it from one perspective, then another piece of evidence enables you to understand it from another perspective; by having both perspectives together in your mind, you will have a better picture of the issue at hand. The more perspectives you have, the greater your understanding will be.

From the above we learn that when it comes to major issues, such as the issue of tawḥīd and other issues that are connected to it, and the issues of the hereafter and Prophethood, whoever seeks evidence and studies the proof will attain a high level of faith and certainty concerning these issues, and will attain a high level of knowledge that he cannot attain with regard to other issues that are of less significance. This is one of the most important fundamentals of faith and one of the most beneficial types of

knowledge, and it is the greatest thing that may bring one close to the Lord of the Worlds.

Section 9

Question: What is the unseen regarding which Allah praises those who believe in it and tells us that they will be blessed and will succeed, and will deserve eternal bliss?

*A*nd thus one may know what it is and where it is, so he will strive to attain faith so that he may be among the successful. For most people – and indeed most believers – do not know anything about this matter, except for some vague and general ideas, and a few words that are not fully understood. The benefit of those vague ideas is much less than the benefit of learning in detail about the unseen and various issues connected to it. So please explain to us, as much as you can. We are not expecting you to tell us something that is beyond you, for it is well known that the elite of the people will not be able to explain this issue in full and clarify it in a perfect manner. Please advise us, may Allah reward you.

Answer: I seek Allah's help and beseech Him to guide us with regard to this and other issues. The unseen is the opposite of what is seen; thus things may be divided into two categories: those that are unseen and those that are seen and tangible. That which is tangible and seen is not subject to any of the rulings or conditions of faith (*eemân*), according to which the people who will be blessed will be distinct from others. This refers to things such as the heavens and the earth, and all that is in them of visible created things, and the nature of things that are known and subject to research and reason. Rather Allah (ﷺ) refers to the evidence and proof in the visible universe to confirm what He has revealed and what His Messengers conveyed. The second category is the unseen which Allah has commanded us to believe in and has praised those who believe in it in more than one place in His Book. The definition of what comes under this category is that it is everything that Allah and His Messengers have told us of matters of faith and called people to believe in them. These matters fall into different categories, the most sublime, most important, best, most beneficial and easiest to understand of which is what He has told us in His Books, and what His Messengers have told us about, namely the beautiful names of Allah, His sublime attributes, His qualities of majesty and beauty, and His praiseworthy deeds. The Qur'an and Sunnah speak a great deal about this category, as there is a great need to know about it and

understand it. There is no greater need than people's need to know their Lord and Sovereign, for they cannot do without His help for even the blink of an eye, and their affairs cannot be rectified and their wellbeing cannot be maintained except by knowing Him and worshipping Him. The greater a person's knowledge of the names of his Lord, what He deserves of perfect attributes, and what He should be declared to be above of the opposite of these perfect attributes, the greater will be his belief in the unseen, and he will deserve praise and commendation commensurate with his knowledge of that. The way to acquire and increase this knowledge is by reflecting on the beautiful names of Allah which are ascribed to Him and by which He called Himself in His Book and on the lips of His Messengers. He should contemplate these names one by one, thinking of the meanings that they have; he should believe that Allah has of that name or attribute the most perfect and greatest level thereof, and that His perfection and greatness is infinite. He should realise that if there is anything that could contradict or undermine that perfection in any way, then Allah is to be declared as being far above that imperfection, sanctified and holy. As this type of belief (knowing the divine names and attributes) is the foundation of faith and belief in the unseen, and it is the greatest part of belief in the unseen, the Prophet (ﷺ) said in a *ṣaḥīḥ* hadith:

«Verily Allah has ninety-nine names, one hundred less one. Whoever learns them by heart will enter paradise.»⁴⁸

That is, if he learns them, understands their meanings, reflects on those meanings, worships Allah by calling upon Him by these names, and strives hard to draw close to the Lord of the Worlds by learning them. So the believer who cares about himself should do his utmost to learn about the names and attributes of Allah, and venerate Him through them. He should regard this as the most important issue for him and give it priority, so that he may attain abundant goodness.

«The Prophet (ﷺ) asked the Anṣāri man why he constantly recited the soorah:

﴿قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ﴾ (سورة الإخلاص: ١)

﴿Say: He, Allah, is One.﴾ (*al-Ikhlas* 112: 1)

The man said: Because it is a description of the Most Gracious, and I love to recite it.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Your love for it will earn you admittance to paradise.» (Agreed upon)⁴⁹

It is proven that a person's love for the attributes of the Most Gracious, constantly remembering them, bringing to mind the sublime meanings that they have and understanding those meanings are means of admittance to paradise

*T*he way to achieve that is to list the divine names that are mentioned in the Qur'an, of which there are nearly eighty, along with some more that are mentioned in the Sunnah, then to reflect upon them and to think of each name as comprehensive in its meaning, remembering that the most perfect level of that meaning belongs to Allah. So when he reflects upon the name of Allah, he should realise that Allah (□) has all attributes of divinity, which is the highest level of perfection in each attribute; this is something that is unique to Him, and He has no partner in what He does, because the only reason people turn to the divine is what He has of perfect attributes, because of which they love Him and surrender to Him, for the Creator (□) cannot be without any of the attributes of perfection in any way; or people turn to Him and worship Him because He is the One Who can bring benefit and because of the care and support He can grant. So He will bring benefit to the one who worships Him and will ward off harm from him. It is well known that Allah (□) is the only One Who has control over all of that (benefit and harm), and that none of His creation has the power to benefit or harm himself or anyone else, to cause death or give life or resurrect. Once a person realises that Allah is the only one to turn to, then he will realise that the only one whom he should love, fear, put his hope in and turn to in all his affairs is his Lord, and that he should pay no attention to any created being who does not have any attributes of perfection and cannot do anything of his own accord. There is no power and no strength except with Allah, the Most High, the Most Great.

For example, he may reflect upon the divine name al-'Aleem (the All-Knowing). Thus he will realise that all knowledge of all types, and all aspects and branches of knowledge, belong to Allah (□). Allah knows all things, what has happened and what will happen, from eternity to eternity. He knows all things, great and small, major and minor; He knows what appears of things and what is hidden, what is visible and what is

invisible, what people know and what they do not know; He knows what must happen, what cannot happen and what could happen; He knows what is beneath the lowest earth just as He knows what is above the highest heaven; He knows the tiniest details of all matters, and what is hidden in people's hearts; He knows the subtleties of what has happened and what is happening in all corners of the earth and throughout His kingdom. He is the One Whose knowledge encompasses all things at all times; nothing can be hidden from His knowledge and He does not forget anything. Then the individual may recite the verses that confirm what we have mentioned above, such as the following:

﴿...إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٧٥) 

﴿...Verily, Allah has knowledge of all things.﴾ (al-Anfâl 8: 75)

And elsewhere:

﴿يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الْأَصْدُورِ﴾ (سورة التغابن: ٤)

﴿He knows all that is in the heavens and on earth, and He knows what you conceal and what you disclose. Allah knows well what is in [your] hearts.﴾ (at-Taghâbun 64: 4)

﴿وَإِنْ تَجْهَرْ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْسِرَّ وَأَخْفَى﴾ (سورة طه: ٧) 

﴿If you raise your voice [in supplication – there is no need for that], for He knows what is said privately and that which is yet more hidden [of unspoken thoughts].﴾ (Tâ Hâ 20: 7)

﴿سَوَاءٌ مِّنْكُمْ مَنْ أَسْرَ الْقَوْلَ وَمَنْ جَهَرَ بِهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخِفٌ بِالْيَلِ وَسَارِبٌ بِالنَّهَارِ﴾ (سورة الرعد: ١٠)

﴿It is the same [to Him] whether any of you conceals his speech or declares it openly, and whether he hides under the cover of the night or walks openly in the light of day.﴾ (ar-Râ' d 13: 10)

﴿أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ﴾ (سورة الحج: ٧٠) 

﴿Do you not know that Allah knows all that is in the heavens and on earth? Verily, that is [inscribed] in a record; verily that is easy for Allah.﴾ (al-Hajj 22: 70)

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْفِي عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ٥٥ هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَوِّرُ كُمُّ مِنَ الْأَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ٥٦﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٥٥-٥٦)

﴿From Allah, verily nothing is hidden on earth or in the heavens. He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He wills. There is no god worthy of worship except Him, the Almighty, the Most Wise.﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 5-6)

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدُهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَمَّا ذَرَ ٣٤ تَكُُسِّبُ غَدَاءً وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ٣٥﴾ (سورة لقمان: ٣٤-٣٥)

﴿Verily, Allah alone has knowledge of the Hour; it is He Who sends down rain and He knows what every womb contains. No soul knows what it will do on the morrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.﴾ (Luqmân 31: 34)

﴿وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظُلْمَتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ ٥٩﴾ (سورة الأنعام: ٥٩)

﴿With Him are the keys of the unseen; no one knows them but He. He knows all that is in the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but He knows it; there is no grain in the darkest bowels of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry, but it is [inscribed] in a clear record.﴾ (al-An 'âm 6: 59)

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَتُصْبِحُ الْأَرْضُ مُخْضَرَةً إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ ٦٣﴾ (سورة الحج: ٦٣)

﴿Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the sky, whereupon the earth becomes green? Verily, Allah is the Knower of subtleties, the All-Aware.﴾ (al-Hajj 22: 63)

﴿عَلِمَ الْغَيْبُ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا﴾ (سورة الجن: ٢٦-٢٧) (٢٧)

﴿Knower of the unseen, He does not disclose His unseen to anyone, except a Messenger whom He has chosen...﴾ (al-Jinn 72: 26-27)

﴿يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلْجُّ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا...﴾ (سورة سباء: ٢)

﴿He knows all that goes into the earth and all that comes out of it, and all that descends from heaven and all that ascends to it...﴾ (Saba' 34: 2)

﴿وَلَوْ أَنَّمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَمُ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمْدُدُهُ، مِنْ بَعْدِهِ سَبْعَةُ أَخْجَرٍ مَا نَفَدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾ (سورة لقمان: ٢٧)

﴿If all the trees on earth were pens, and the sea [was ink], replenished by seven more seas, the words of Allah would still not be exhausted. Verily, Allah is Almighty, Most Wise.﴾ (Luqmân 31: 27)

﴿... وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَيْرٌ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٣٤)

﴿...And Allah is well aware of all that you do.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 234)

﴿... وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٥٣)

﴿...For Allah is well aware of what you do.﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 153)

﴿... مَا يَكْثُرُ مِنْ نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا أَدْنَى مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرٌ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعْهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا ۝ ثُمَّ يُنَتَّهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ﴾ (سورة المجادلة: ٧)

﴿...There is no private conversation among three but He is their fourth, or among five but He is their sixth, or among fewer or more than that, but He is with them, wherever they may be. Then He will inform them of their deeds, on the Day of Resurrection. Verily, Allah has knowledge of all things.﴾ (al-Mujâdilah 58: 7)

﴿فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَا أَخْفَى لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (سورة السجدة: ١٧)

﴿No soul knows what is kept hidden in store for them of delight as a reward for what they used to do.﴾ (as-Sajdah 32: 17)

And there are many other texts which convey the same meaning. Reflecting on some of that is sufficient for the believer with proper understanding to realise the all-encompassing nature of Allah's knowledge, His perfect might and His greatness, for He is the Lord, the Almighty, the Sovereign, the Most Generous.

Similarly, he may reflect upon the divine name ar-Rahmân (the Most Gracious). Thus he will realise that the grace and mercy of Allah (ﷻ) is vast and perfect, and His mercy reaches the upper and lower realms, and all of His creation; it encompasses this world and the hereafter. He may contemplate the verses which speak of that, such as the following:

﴿... وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ...﴾ (سورة الأعراف: ١٥٦)

﴿...But My mercy encompasses all things...﴾ (al-A'râf 7: 156)

﴿... إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٤٣)

﴿...for Allah is to all people Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 143)

﴿فَانظُرْ إِلَىٰ إِثْرِ رَحْمَتِ اللَّهِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتَهَا ...﴾ (سورة الروم: ٥٠)

﴿Look then at the effects of Allah's mercy, how He gives life to the earth after its death; verily it is He [the Giver of life to the dead earth] Who will give life to the dead...﴾ (ar-Room 30: 50)

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَوْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَةً، ظَاهِرَةً وَبَاطِنَةً ...﴾

(سورة لقمان: ٢٠)

﴿Do you not see that Allah has made all that is in the heavens and on earth to be of service to you, and He has showered you with His blessings, both apparent and hidden?...﴾ (Luqmân 31: 20)

﴿وَمَا بِكُمْ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ تُمَّلَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْهَرُونَ﴾ (سورة التحل: ٥٣)

﴿Whatever blessing you have, it is from Allah, then when misfortune afflicts you, it is to Him that you cry out for help.﴾ (an-Nahl 16: 53)

﴿وَإِن تَعْدُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُخْصُوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾ (سورة النحل: ١٨)

﴿If you [try to] count the blessings of Allah, you cannot count them all. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.﴾ (an-Nahl 16: 18)

And he may recite Soorat an-Nahâl, which refers to major blessings and what stems from them, which is one of the effects of divine mercy. Hence it says at the end of this soorah:

﴿... كَذَلِكَ يُتَمِّمُ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَسْلِمُونَ﴾ (سورة النحل: ٨١)

﴿...Thus does He perfect His favours to you, so that you may submit to Him.﴾ (an-Nahl 16: 81)

Then he may reflect upon Soorat ar-Râhman from beginning to end, for it gives a detailed explanation of the mercy of Allah (ﷻ), because all the ideas discussed in it refer to the mercy of the Most Gracious. Hence it ends with mention of what Allah has prepared of perfect and eternal bliss in paradise for those who obey Him, which is the effect of His mercy. Hence Allah calls paradise *rahmah* (mercy), as in the verse:

﴿وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ أَبْيَضَتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَلِيلُونَ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ١٠٧)

﴿But those whose faces become bright, they will be in Allah's mercy [paradise], to abide therein forever.﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 107)

According to the hadith:

«Allah said to paradise: You are My mercy; I will bestow you upon whomever I will of My slaves.»⁵⁰

And Allah says:

﴿... وَهُوَ أَرَحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ﴾ (سورة يوسف: ٦٤)

﴿...and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy.﴾ (Yoosuf 12: 64)

According to the saheeh hadith:

«Allah is more merciful towards His slaves than a mother to her child.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

According to another hadith:

«Allah wrote a document that is with Him above His Throne: My mercy prevails over My wrath.»⁵¹

To sum up, Allah created humankind by His mercy; He sent the Messengers to them by His mercy; and He ordained commands and prohibitions, and prescribed systems of law for them, by His mercy; He showered them with His blessings, both apparent and hidden, by His mercy; He took care of them and managed their affairs by His mercy; and He filled this world and the hereafter with His mercy. So there can be no well-being, nothing can be made easy, and no aspirations can be attained except by His mercy. His mercy is more comprehensive than that; it is greater and more sublime, and the righteous and pious will have a good share of His mercy and accumulating goodness:

﴿... إِنَّ رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾ (٥٦) (سورة الأعراف: ٥٦)

﴿...for the mercy of Allah is always near to those who do good.﴾ (al-A'râf 7: 56)

Thus a person may reflect upon the attributes of his Lord, and their impact and effect, so that his heart will be filled with knowledge of Allah, and will be enlightened and filled with awe of his Creator and of His sublime attributes. Having pointed out these three names of Allah, the same method of reflection may be applied to His other names.

A person may also reflect, for example, upon *Âyat al-Kursi*, the beginning of Soorat Âl 'Imrân, the beginning of Soorat al-Hadeed and Ghâfir, the end of Soorat al-Hashr, Soorat al-Ikhlâs and similar verses that refer to this great and sublime knowledge (that is, the names of Allah). He may also contemplate hadiths that discuss the same meanings. Thus he may attain a high level of faith and belief in the unseen, and will become among those who fear their Lord unseen.

Another aspect of belief in the unseen is belief in all the Messengers whom Allah sent, whether He refers to them in the Qur'an in general terms, or He referred to some of them in detail, mentioning their character, call and teachings. The same applies to

believing in all the Books that Allah sent down to guide His slaves. Hence Allah calls the revelation that He sent down to His Messenger *ghayb* (unseen), as He says:

﴿وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَيْنِينَ﴾ (سورة التكوير: ٢٤) 

﴿He [Muhammad] is not to be accused of lying about the unseen.﴾ (at-Takweer 81: 24)

Allah tells us that one of the proofs of the message of Muhammad (ﷺ) is the fact that he told stories of the earlier Prophets and what happened to them, as He says:

﴿تَلَكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءَ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا ...﴾ (سورة هود: ٤٩) 

﴿This is an account of the unseen [the distant past], which We reveal to you [O Muhammad]; neither you nor your people had any knowledge of it before this...﴾ (Hood 11: 49)

﴿ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءَ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلْقَوْنَ أَقْلَمَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرِيمَةَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٤٤) 

﴿This is an account of the unseen [the distant past], which We reveal to you [O Muhammad]; you were not with them when they cast lots with their pens, [to decide] who, from among them, should be the guardian of Maryam. Nor were you with them when they disputed about it.﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 44)

﴿وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الْفَرْرِيِّ إِذْ قَضَيْنَا إِلَيْ مُوسَى الْأَمْرَ ...﴾ (سورة القصص: ٤٤) 

﴿You were not there on the western side [of the mountain] when We decreed for Moosâ the commission...﴾ (al-Qâsâs 28: 44)

And there are similar verses which prove the soundness of the message and Prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ), as he told of unseen matters. Complete belief in the unseen requires a person to believe in all the Messengers of Allah, and to learn about their attributes and messages, so that he may attain that level of belief in the unseen.

By the same token, he believes in all the Books, especially this Qur'an, which he is obliged to believe in both in general terms and in detail.

What is meant by believing in it both in general terms and in detail is to believe and affirm that it is the word of Allah, that He sent down with Jibreel (ﷺ) to the heart of Muhammad (ﷺ) in the Arabic language, so that he might warn humankind and guide people to the truth in all matters; the individual commits himself, without any hesitation, to believing everything that Allah says in it, to obey its commands and heed its prohibitions, to regard as permissible what it says is permissible and to regard as prohibited what it says is prohibited. Then after that, he examines the details of that belief, so he strives to understand the message contained therein, and to make that message deeply rooted in his heart, so that no specious argument can shake it and no circumstances can change it. He strives to do all that he has been commanded to do, whether it has to do with deeds of the heart (beliefs, emotions and feelings) or physical deeds, and he tries to carry it out in the most perfect and complete manner, whether in terms of his knowledge, his actions or his frame of mind, and whatever he cannot do, he should intend to do it whenever he becomes able. By the same token, with regard to the prohibitions, he should restrain himself with regard to everything that is forbidden, so that he does not come anywhere near it and does not hover around it, in obedience to the command of Allah and in hope of His reward. The way he carries that out reflects the level of his belief in the unseen; some people achieve little, others achieve a great deal, and some are in between. This also includes believing in what Allah tells us of matters of the past and of matters that will happen in the future.

Another aspect of believing in the unseen is believing in the last day, and what Allah has promised His slaves of requital. This includes believing in all that will happen after death, such as the trial in the grave, the conditions of the grave; the description of the Day of Resurrection and its terrors; the description of hell and its inhabitants and what Allah has prepared for them therein; and the description of paradise and its inhabitants, and what Allah has prepared for them therein. Thus he develops a sound understanding of these issues, based on the clear texts of the Qur'an and *ṣaheeh Sunnah*. The more he learns of the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah concerning this topic, and understands them in the proper manner, the stronger his belief in the unseen will be.

When belief in the divine promise and warning takes root in a person's heart, and he learns a great deal about the details of this issue, this will motivate him to do that which will bring him reward from Allah and to keep away from that which will bring him disgrace. He knows that Allah (ﷻ) watches over every soul and what it earns, and that He is abundant in grace and perfectly just. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿جَنَّتِ عَدَنِ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ عِبَادَهُ، بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَأْتِيًّا﴾ (سورة مريم: ٦١)

﴿[Theirs will be] gardens of perpetual abode, which the Most Gracious has promised to His slaves without their having seen them. Verily, His promise must come to pass.﴾ (Maryam 19: 61)

﴿...وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلَا﴾ (سورة النساء: ١٢٢)

﴿...and who is truer in word than Allah?﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 122)

﴿...وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا﴾ (سورة النساء: ٨٧)

﴿...Who is truer in word than Allah?﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 87)

﴿...إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٩)

﴿...for Allah does not break His promise.﴾ (Al 'Imrân 3: 9)

Another aspect of belief in the unseen is belief in the noble angels, whom Allah has made honoured slaves:

﴿لَا يَسْأَقُونَهُ، بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (سورة الأنبياء: ٢٧)

﴿They do not speak until He has spoken, and they only do as He commands.﴾ (al-Anbiyâ' 21: 27)

They (the angels):

﴿...لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمِرُونَ﴾ (سورة التحريم: ٦)

﴿...do not disobey Allah in whatever He commands them, and they do whatever they are commanded to do.﴾ (at-Tahreem 66: 6)

﴿يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتَرُونَ﴾ (سورة الأنبياء: ٢٠)

﴿They glorify Him night and day, without flagging.﴾ (al-Anbiyâ' 21: 20)

Allah (□) causes them to run the affairs of this world and the hereafter by His Leave, so they form the majority of His troops, and they are His envoys with regard to

His religious decrees and His universal decrees (the divine will and decree, *qadâ' wa qadr*).

Allah has appointed angels in succession who watch over the individual by His command and record his deeds:

﴿مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ﴾ (سورة ق: ١٨)

﴿Not a word does he utter but there is with him a watcher, ready to record it.﴾ (*Qâf* 50: 18)

﴿كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُونَ بِالدِّينِ﴾ (١٢) ﴿وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَفِظِينَ﴾ (١٣) ﴿يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ﴾ (١٤) (سورة الانفطار: ٩-١٢)

﴿Nay, but you deny the Last Judgement, while indeed there are watchers appointed over you, honourable scribes, who know all that you do.﴾ (*al-Infiṭâr* 82: 9-12)

They have attributes and deeds that are mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and belief in the unseen is not complete without belief in them.

Belief in the unseen means to believe in the six pillars of faith: belief in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and the divine decree, both good and bad, as explained above. Whoever believes in all of that is a true believer in the unseen, and is one of the pious and successful.

A note on humility

What is the humility that Allah enjoins, praises those who have it, and criticises those whose hearts grow hard and who have no humility? What is the reality of this humility, and what is the sign of it? I say: Allah has praised humility in general terms, at all times, in all situations and in all acts of worship, as in the verses in which He says:

﴿...وَالْخَشِعِينَ وَالْخَشِعَتِ ...﴾ (سورة الأحزاب: ٣٥) 

﴿...humble men and humble women...﴾ (al-Ahzâb 33: 35)

﴿أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَّلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ...﴾ (سورة الحديد: ١٦) 

(١٦)

﴿Has the time not come for the hearts of those who believe to be humbled at the mention of Allah and of what has been revealed of the truth...﴾ (al-Hadeed 57: 16)

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَخْبَتُوْا إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ﴾ (سورة هود: ٢٣) 

﴿Verily, those who believe, do righteous deeds and humble themselves before their Lord, such will be the inhabitants of paradise; they will abide therein forever.﴾ (Hood 11: 23)

He praises humility in prayer in particular, as when He says:

﴿الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَشِعُونَ﴾ (سورة المؤمنون: ٢) 

﴿Those who humble themselves in their prayers.﴾ (al-Mu'minoon 23: 2)

Humility in the heart is a sign of faith and of being blessed, just as hardness of the heart and a lack of humility is a sign of doom and wretchedness. Humility means submitting before the Lord and humbling oneself to Him, and that humility should remain with the person at all times; if he becomes heedless, he goes back to it, and if he finds

himself engaging in idle pursuits he goes back to it; if he begins to do an act of worship that brings him closer to Allah, he humbles himself in it, showing the proper etiquette and attitude which is the effect of humility, especially in the most essential of acts of worship, which combines all kinds of emotional, physical and verbal worship, namely the prayer. He stands in prayer, fully aware that Allah is watching, and the level of *ihsân* is such that he worships Allah as if he can see Him, for if he does not see Allah, he knows that Allah sees him. Therefore he strives to perform this act of worship in the most perfect manner; he focuses his mind and converses with his Lord in his heart before he speaks, and he focuses on what he is saying and doing. Thus he becomes still and does not fidget. This is why, when the Prophet (ﷺ) saw a man fidgeting with his beard whilst praying, he said, “If this man truly felt humility in his heart before Allah, he would have been still.”⁵²

Thus it is known that one of the greatest signs of humility is physical stillness and carrying oneself properly whilst praying, which is the result of stillness and calming the heart. Hence Allah describes His slaves whom He mentions in conjunction with His attribute of mercy or grace as follows:

﴿ وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هُنَّا ... ﴾ (سورة الفرقان: ٦٣) 

﴿The true slaves of the Most Gracious are those who walk humbly and with dignity on the earth...﴾ (al-Furqân 25: 63)

That is, they submit and are humble. Another of the signs of this humility is that their hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah; they submit to the truth that Allah has sent down, so they believe in what the revelation points to of truth, and are motivated to put into practice what the revelation calls to of good, and avoid what it warns against of evil. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطَمِّنُ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا إِنِّي نَسِّخُ أَنَّا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطَمِّنُ الْقُلُوبُ ﴾ (سورة الرعد: ٢٨) 

﴿Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah, for verily in the remembrance of Allah hearts find comfort.﴾ (ar-Râd 13: 28)

﴿ أَلَّمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَّلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ... ﴾ (سورة الحديد: ١١)

(١٦)

﴿ Has the time not come for the hearts of those who believe to be humbled at the mention of Allah and of what has been revealed of the truth...? ﴾ (al-Hadeed 57: 16)

﴿ ... فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَسِيَّةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَوْلَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾ (٢٢) ﴿ اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَبِّهًا مَّثَانِي نَقْشَرُ مِنْهُ جَلُودَ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلَيْنُ جَلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهُ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادِ ﴾ (سورة الزمر: ٢٣-٢٢)

الزُّمُر: ٢٣-٢٢

﴿ ... Woe to those whose hearts harden upon hearing the reminder of Allah [the Qur'an]. Such people are clearly misguided. Allah has sent down the best of messages: a Book that is consistent within itself, wherein is reiteration. The skins of those who fear their Lord tremble with awe thereat [when they hear it], then their skins relax and their hearts soften towards the reminder of Allah [the Qur'an]. Such is the guidance of Allah, with which He guides whomever He will, but whomever Allah has caused to go astray, no one can guide. ﴾ (az-Zumar 39: 22-23)

The hard-hearted person is not moved by the revelation at all, and the reminder only increases him in persistence in misguidance and transgression. The one whose heart is humble – because he has good intentions and he loves the truth, seeks it and is ready to accept it – recognises the truth when it reaches him, and he recognises the need – and indeed the necessity – for it, so he rejoices and is comforted by it, his love for the truth increases, it creates humility in his heart and causes his tears to flow and his skin to tremble. Then his heart softens and finds comfort in the remembrance of Allah (□). This is by the guidance and help of Allah, except in the case of those who turn away, so Allah turns away from them. Allah (□) says:

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ يَخِرُّوا عَلَيْهَا أَصْمَأَوْ عُمَيَّانًا ﴾ (سورة الفرقان: ٧٣)

﴿ Those who, when they are reminded of the revelations of their Lord, do not turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to them. ﴾ (al-Furqân 25: 73)

Rather they pay attention to them, adhere to them, understand them and submit to them willingly. Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ إِذَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّونَ لِلأَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا ﴾ (١٠٧) وَيَقُولُونَ سُبْحَنَ رَبِّنَا
إِنَّ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا لَمَفْعُولًا ﴾ (١٠٨) وَيَخِرُّونَ لِلأَذْقَانِ يَبْكُونَ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ خُشُوعًا ﴾ (١٠٩) (سورة الإسراء: ١٠٧-١٠٩)

﴿... Verily, those who were given knowledge before it, when it is recited to them, fall down on their faces in prostration, and they say: Glory be to our Lord. Verily, the promise of our Lord is ever bound to be fulfilled. They fall down on their faces, weeping, and it [the Qur'an] increases them in humility.﴾ (al-Isrâ' 17: 107-109)

This is the impact of the revelations of Allah on people of knowledge and humility, who combine humility of the heart, humbleness in speech when beseeching Allah, and physical humility when they fall down on their faces, weeping. Allah (ﷺ) says, after mentioning His humble chosen ones:

﴿أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّنَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ آدَمَ وَمِنْ حَمَلَنَا مَعَ نُوحَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْرَائِيلَ
وَمِنْ هَدَيْنَا وَاجْبَرْنَا إِذَا أُنْتَلَى عَلَيْهِمْ أَيَّتُ الرَّحْمَنَ خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبَكَيْتَ ﴾ (٥٨) (سورة مريم: ٥٨)

﴿These are some of the Prophets whom Allah blessed from among the descendants of Adam and of those whom We carried with Nooh [in the ark], and from among the descendants of Ibrâheem and Isrâ'eel, and from among those whom We guided and chose. When the revelations of the Most Gracious were recited to them, they fell down in prostration, weeping.﴾ (Maryam 19: 58)

One of the greatest signs of the humble is what Allah mentions:

﴿... وَيَشِّرِّ الْمُخْبِتِينَ ﴾ (٣٤) (سورة الحج: ٣٤)

﴿...And give glad tidings [O Muhammad] to the humble.﴾ (al-Hajj 22: 34)

After which He says:

﴿الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجَلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَى مَا أَصَابَهُمْ وَالْمُقِيمِي الصَّلَاةِ وَمَنَّا رَزَقَنَهُمْ
يُنْفِقُونَ ﴾ (٣٥) (سورة الحج: ٣٥)

﴿Those whose hearts are filled with awe when Allah is mentioned, who endure with patience whatever befalls them, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them.﴾ (al-Hajj 22: 35)

When they humble themselves before their Lord and begin to beseech Him, their hearts are filled with awe when Allah is mentioned, and they endure with patience whatever befalls them of tests and trials, and they carry out what is enjoined upon them of prayer and different types of spending. Thus the description of the humble combines the deeds of the heart – namely patience and awe – with all physical actions, words (namely the prayer, which combines all types of worship) and financial actions, giving precedence to love of Allah over love of wealth. Hence they give wealth, which is dear to people, spending it in ways that are pleasing to Allah (ﷻ) and giving precedence to pleasing their Lord. These are the characteristics of the one who is humble, and no one deserves to be described as such unless he acquires these characteristics.

Another of the characteristics of the humble is that they know the truth in situations of uncertainty and doubt, so they increase in faith, as Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿وَلَيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أَوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُجْزَى لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُادُ الَّذِينَ إِذَا آمَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ﴾ (سورة الحج: ٥٤)

﴿And so that those who were given knowledge may know that it [the Qur'an] is the truth from your Lord, so they may believe therein and their hearts may be certain of it. Verily, Allah guides those who believe to a straight path.﴾ (al-Hajj 22: 54)

The verse ﴿Verily, those who believe, do righteous deeds and humble themselves before their Lord, such will be the inhabitants of paradise; they will abide therein forever﴾ (Hood 11: 23) describes those who are humble as people who turn to their Lord in all situations and at all times. When they humble themselves before their Lord and humble themselves before His greatness, they show humility when worshipping Him, therefore He accepts it from them, causes them to attain their goals and makes them people of paradise who will abide therein forever. When they humbled themselves before Him, their hearing, sight, speech and all physical faculties became humbled before the Most Gracious.

One of the indications that these things (physical stillness and so on) are connected to whether there is humility and focus in the heart is the words of the Prophet (ﷺ)

quoted above, “If this man truly felt humility in his heart before Allah, he would have been still.” Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿ وَعَنَتِ الْوُجُوهُ لِلَّهِ الْقَيُّومِ ... ﴾ (سورة طه: ١١١)

﴿All faces will be humbled before the Ever-Living, the Self-Sustaining and All-Sustaining...﴾ (Tâ Hâ 20: 111)

﴿ ... وَخَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا ﴾ (سورة طه: ١٠٨)

﴿...All voices will be stilled before the Most Gracious, and you will not hear anything but a faint sound.﴾ (Tâ Hâ 20: 108)

Hence many of the commentators interpreted the words ﴿those who humble themselves in their prayers﴾ (*al-Mu'minoon* 23: 2) as meaning that they lower their gaze, move little and do not look around. Undoubtedly this is the effect and proof of proper humility and focus, for the one who is humble is the one in whose heart resides fear and awe of Allah, and belief in His promise and warning. Therefore he humbles himself and carries out the physical actions (and religious duties) that are enjoined upon him, refraining from insolence and conceit which are contrary to humility. The further away the heart is from that description, the harder it becomes, so that it will not submit to the command of Allah and no dhikr will have any impact on him; rather it may increase him in loss and cause him to drift away from the path of truth at times of calamity and when he is exposed to specious arguments, and he will go against the command of his Lord.

O Most Kind to His slaves,
 Who bestows kindness upon whomever
 He wills, be kind to us in all our affairs

What is meant by the kindness (*lutf*) of Allah to His slave, that people always hope for and seek from their Lord? It is one of two things that are implied by the divine name *al-Lateef*. The name *al-Lateef* may mean All-Aware and All-Knowing, the meaning of which is well known, but what is meant here is the second meaning, which is Most Kind, which is something that people are desperate for. We will mention some examples to make the meaning clear. It should be understood that the kindness (*lutf*) that people seek from Allah, either explicitly or implicitly, is a type of mercy or grace. In fact it is a special kind of mercy: the mercy that reaches people when they are not aware of it or of its causes is the kindness (*lutf*) of Allah. If a person says: O Most Kind (Yâ Lateef), be kind to me, I ask You for Your kindness, what he means is: Take special care of me, by means of which my condition will be rectified both outwardly and inwardly, and by means of which all harms will be warded off from me, whether they are spiritual or material. Mercy in spiritual affairs means inspiring and helping him, and mercy in material affairs means making available external means and causes to help him. If Allah facilitates things for His slave, makes the way of good easy for him and helps him to follow it, then He has shown him kindness in spiritual terms, and if Allah makes available to him material means that are not under his power, through which his well-being is maintained, then He has shown him kindness in material terms. Hence when Yoosuf (ﷺ) went through various trials – starting with his dream, the envy of his brothers and their attempts to get rid of him so that they could have their father's full attention, then the test with the women, then prison, then coming out of prison because of the king's significant dream, when he was the only person who could interpret it, and his becoming established in the land, and the tests and trials that his father went through, then after all of that the happy reunion, the end of the tragedy when the situation of all was rectified, and the great blessing of Yoosuf's having been chosen by Allah – he realised that these things and others were a sign of Allah's kindness and grace to him. Therefore he acknowledged this blessing and said:

﴿...إِنَّ رَبِّيْ لَطِيفٌ لِمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾ (سورة يوسف: ١٠٠)

﴿...Verily, my Lord is gracious to whomever He will, for He is the All-Knowing, Most Wise.﴾ (Yosuf 12: 100)

That is, His kindness and grace is only for whomever He chooses of His slaves, who He knows are deserving and qualified for that. So He does not bestow that kindness and grace except as appropriate, and Allah knows best where to bestow His grace. If you see that Allah (ﷻ) has enabled someone to follow the path of salvation, made the path of goodness easy for him, enabled him to overcome all obstacles and difficulties, made the path smooth and helped him to take measures to stay on track, and helped him to avoid the path of perdition, then He has shown him kindness and grace. Part of His kindness and grace to His believing slaves is that He takes care of them and shows them kindness and mercy, so He brings them forth from the depths of darkness into the light, from the darkness of ignorance, disbelief, innovation and sin to the light of knowledge, faith and obedience.

By His kindness and grace, He protects them from going along with their nafs that is inclined to evil, which is its nature and its wont. So He enables them to restrain their nafs and keep away from whims and desires, and He averts from them evil and shameful deeds. So there may be causes of temptation, sins may be attractive, and whims and desires may cause them to drift, but all of that will be countered by the grace and kindness of Allah, and the light of their faith with which He has blessed them, so that they steer away from that, feeling reassured and happy to keep away from it.

By His kindness and grace to His slaves, He decides and decrees the amount of their provision according to His knowledge of what is in their best interests, and not according to what they want. They may want one thing when something else is more appropriate for them, so Allah decrees for them that which is more appropriate, even if they dislike it, out of grace and kindness towards them.

﴿اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ﴾ (سورة الشورى: ١٩)

﴿Allah is kind towards His slaves; He grants provision to whomever He wills, and He is the Strong, the Almighty.﴾ (ash-Shoorâ 42: 19)

﴿ وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَنَكِنْ يُنَزَّلُ بِقَدَرِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَيْرٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴾

(سورة الشورى: ٢٧) 

﴿If Allah were to grant abundant provision to [all] His slaves, they would indeed transgress all bounds [and commit much injustice] in the land; but He sends it down in due measure as He wills. Verily, He is well aware of His slaves and sees them all.﴾
(ash-Shoorâ 42: 27)

By His kindness and grace to them, He decrees that they should be stricken with different types of calamities, tests and trials, and be tried with difficult commands and prohibitions, out of grace and mercy towards them, so as to drive them to the path that will lead to their perfection and the perfection of their bliss:

﴿ ... وَعَسَى أَن تَكْرُهُوا شَيْئاً وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى أَن تُحِبُّوا شَيْئاً وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ ﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٢١٦) 

﴿...But it may be that you dislike a thing although it is good for you, and that you like a thing although it is bad for you. Allah knows, and you do not know.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 216)

One sign of His very subtle grace and kindness to His slave, if He wants for him a high status – that cannot be attained except through great measures that no one can attain except people of strong will, great resolve and high aspirations – is that He will decree that in the beginning he will go through some circumstances that could be the first steps towards that lofty status, so that he may gradually move from a low position until he attains a sublime position, and so that he may gain some experience that is relevant to his future role. An example is what Allah decreed for Moosâ, Muhammad (ﷺ) and other Prophets (blessings and peace of Allah be upon them) at the beginning of their lives, which was that they should tend sheep, so that they might move from tending animals and caring for their well-being to tending the sons of Adam, calling them to faith and caring for their well-being.

Similarly, He may cause His slave to taste the sweetness of some acts of worship, so that he will become attached to them and be encouraged to do them repeatedly, and will subsequently develop a strong inclination to do acts of worship that are of a higher status and more sublime.

By His kindness and grace towards His slave, He may cause him to be brought up under the guardianship of people of righteousness, knowledge and faith, and among good people, so that he may learn from their good etiquette and discipline, and follow them in the path of righteousness, learning from them how to call others to righteousness, as Allah blessed Maryam:

﴿فَتَقْبَلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَلَهَا زَكَرِيَّاً ...﴾ (سورة آل عمران: ٣٧)

﴿Her Lord graciously accepted her and caused her to grow in a good manner, and entrusted her to the care of Zakariyâ...﴾ (*Al 'Imrân 3: 37*)

Another example of that is if a person grows with righteous parents and pious relatives, or in a righteous land, or Allah enables him to take good people as friends and to keep company with them, or if he is taught by devoted scholars. This is among the greatest kindness and grace that Allah shows to His slave, for a person's following the path of righteousness depends on many things, one of which – indeed, one of the most important and beneficial of which – is being taught by scholars. Another example is if he grows up in a land where people follow the path of *Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamâ'ah*. This is a sign of Allah's kindness and grace towards him.

Another example is if Allah decrees that the *shuyookh* from whom a person learns – both living and dead – are people who adhere to the Sunnah and are pious; this is a sign of divine grace and kindness. Divine grace is quite evident in the presence of Shaykh al-Islâm Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) at some point in the history of this Ummah, for Allah has caused the Ummah to benefit greatly from him and his students, from their abundant knowledge and their efforts in striving against those who promoted innovation, those who denied the divine attributes, and the disbelievers. It is a great blessing that his books have become widespread in our time, and undoubtedly this is by the grace of Allah to those who read them and benefit from them, for the Ummah has benefited greatly from them – to Allah be praise and thanks.

By His kindness and grace towards His slave, Allah makes it easy for him to earn a living by lawful means and makes him content with what he earns, as it is enough to meet his needs and does not distract him from that for which he was created, namely worshipping Allah, seeking knowledge and doing righteous deeds; rather what he earns helps him and allows him time to do that, and gives him peace of mind. Hence by Allah's kindness and grace, a person may aspire to attain some worldly gains that he thinks will be good for him, but Allah (ﷻ) knows that these things would be harmful to

him and would prevent him from attaining what is beneficial for him, so He prevents him from attaining them, and the person becomes upset and does not realise that his Lord has been gracious and kind to him, as He has enabled him to attain that which is beneficial and has averted from him that which is harmful. Hence acceptance of and contentment with the divine decree in such matters is one of the highest of statuses.

By His kindness and grace towards His slave, if Allah wants to enable him to do a great act of worship that he cannot do without helpers, He decrees that he will have those helpers to assist him. Moosâ (ﷺ) said:

﴿وَاجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِنْ أَهْلِي﴾ (٢٩) هَرُونَ أَخِي (٣٠) آشَدُ بِهِ أَزْرِي (٣١) وَأَشْرِكُهُ فِي أَمْرِي (٣٢) كَيْ نُسِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا (٣٣) (سورة طه: ٢٩-٣٣)

﴿And appoint for me a helper from my family, Hâroon, my brother. Strengthen me through him, and let him share in my task, so that we may glorify You much.﴾ (Tâ Hâ 20: 29-33)

And He reminded ‘Eesâ (ﷺ) of His favour when He said:

﴿وَإِذْ أَوْحَيْتُ إِلَيَ الْحَوَارِيْكَنَ أَنْ عَامِنُوا بِرَسُولِي قَالُوا إِنَّا مَنَّا وَأَشَهَدُ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ﴾ (١١١) (سورة المائدة: ١١١)

﴿And [remember] when I inspired the disciples to believe in Me and in My Messenger; they said: We believe. Bear witness that we submit to Allah [as Muslims].﴾ (al-Mâ''idah 5: 111)

And Allah reminded the Prophet (ﷺ) of His blessing when He said:

﴿...هُوَ الَّذِي أَيَّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهِ وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ (٦٢) (سورة الأنفال: ٦٢)

﴿...He it is Who strengthened you with His help and with [the support of] the believers.﴾ (al-Anfâl 8: 62)

This is grace and kindness to His slave which is beyond the means of the individual.

Another example of Allah's kindness and grace to those who are guided is when He causes a person to meet guided people who can help him on the path of guidance and

whose advice he will accept; thus the benefits and rewards will be multiplied to an extent that a person could not achieve by his own efforts; rather it depends on an external factor.

Another example of Allah's kindness and grace to His slave is when He blesses him with children, wealth and spouses that bring him joy and happiness in this world, then He tests him with some of that by taking it away, then He compensates him for that with an immense reward if he bears it with patience and seeks reward with Him. The blessing that results from some of those things being taken away is greater than the blessing of that which is left with him and he merely experiences the joy of having it in this world. This is something good and the individual will attain much reward through it that he could not attain by himself; rather it is the grace and kindness of Allah to him, whereby Allah puts him through hardship and rewards him immensely for that.

By the kindness and grace of Allah, He tests His slave with some calamities and helps him to bear them with patience, thus enabling him to attain high status that he could not attain through his deeds alone. He may make the calamities harder for him, as He did to Ayyoob (ﷺ), then He creates in his heart the sweetness of hope for relief and mercy and the removal of harm, then He lessens his pain and causes him to feel more joy and energy. This is the kindness and grace of Allah towards the believers, whereby He causes them to seek reward with Him, then He reduces the impact of the calamity, and whatever hardships they face when seeking His pleasure become easy to bear.

By the kindness and grace of Allah towards His weak believing slave, He saves him from trials and tests that could weaken his faith and undermine his certainty. By the same token, by His grace towards the strong believer, He puts him through some trials and tests, helps him to bear them and relieves him of them, thus increasing his faith and reward. Glory be to the Most Kind, All-Aware, Who puts some through trials and spares others, Who gives and withholds.

By the kindness and grace of Allah towards His slave, the individual strives to perfect himself in the way that could help him to achieve that in the easiest way, even though there are other ways that are more difficult for him. So Allah enables him to find a book or a teacher through which achieving the goal will be easier. Similarly, He makes it easy for him to do some particular act of worship that he finds easy and comfortable, yet that does not bar him from doing other acts of worship that could also benefit him. This is by the kindness and grace of Allah.

By the kindness and grace of Allah towards His slave, a person may have many concerns to deal with and many issues to handle, both internal and external, which a group of people would not have the power to deal with all of them. But Allah blesses him with a relaxed attitude and calm nature, so that he will look at every concern or issue, examine it deeply and think of the right way to handle it, without becoming worried or distressed at the large number and variety of matters he has to deal with. Rather Allah helps him to deal with them, and shows him kindness by enabling him to handle them and making it easy for him.

If you want to know the best example in this regard, then look at the story of the Prophet (ﷺ), whom Allah sent to show people how to attain well-being and happiness in this world and the hereafter; He sent him to perfect himself and to perfect a nation which is great and is the best of nations, yet Allah enabled him, within the span of one-third of his life, to carry out all that Allah commanded him to do, even though there were so many varied issues, and to establish for his Ummah their religion in its entirety, teaching them all of its fundamentals and minor issues. By means of him, Allah brought forth a great nation from the depths of darkness to the light, and by means of him many benefits and much good – for both the elite and the common folk – were achieved, such as was never achieved by any nation before.

By the kindness and grace of Allah to His slave, He makes what a person commits of sin a cause of His mercy. So when that happens, He opens the gate of repentance so that he may humble himself and turn to his Lord, thinking little of himself and shedding his self-admiration and arrogance, which is better for him than doing a lot of acts of worship.

By His kindness and grace towards His slave who is dear to Him, if that person goes along with his harmful physical desires and gets carried away in that, Allah spoils it for him and causes some trouble for him, so that he can hardly have any physical pleasure but it will be accompanied by some problem that will spoil it, so that he will not make it his complete focus. On the other hand, by His kindness and grace, He causes him to enjoy acts of worship and obedience, and to find pleasure in them, so that he will focus on them completely.

By His subtle kindness and grace to His slave, Allah rewards him for deeds that he did not do, but he intended and resolved to do them. So if he decides to do an act of worship, then changes his mind for some reason and does not do it, he will still attain the reward for it. See how kind Allah is to him! He made him think of it and decide to

do it, even though He knew that he would not do it, so that He might reward His slave by various means. Even more subtle than that, He enables him to do an act of worship or obedience other than what he had decided to do, that is more beneficial for him; so the person decided not to do an act of worship that could be pleasing to Allah, and instead did another act of worship that is more pleasing to Allah, thus he will attain reward for what he actually did, and reward for what he intended to do. If he intended to migrate for the sake of Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), but death caught up with him before he could carry out his intention, then his reward becomes incumbent upon Allah, even though the reason why he could not fulfil his intention was death, over which he has no control. So how about one who was about to do an act of worship, then was interrupted by thoughts of another act of worship that would bring a greater reward? Allah may cause someone to think of several acts of worship, each of which, if he was able to do it on its own, he would have done it, because he is fully inclined to do it and loves it, but he will not be able to do one of them without missing out on the others. Hence Allah enables him to weigh up the various acts of worship and causes him to give precedence to the best of them and do it, whilst hoping to attain the reward of all of them because of his intention and willingness to do each of them if he had the opportunity.

More subtle than that, Allah decrees a test for His slave when the means of sin become available to him, and the motive for that is strong in him, although He knows that he will not do it, so that his refraining from that sin, of which the means are available, will become one of the greatest acts of worship. We see this divine grace and kindness in the story of Yoosuf (ﷺ) and the attempt of the woman to seduce him; and in the reference to one of the seven whom Allah will shade with His shade on the Day when there will be no shade but His, namely a man whom a woman of status and beauty calls to sin, but he says: I fear Allah.

By His kindness and grace to His slave, Allah decrees that one person should do acts of generosity and kindness, and cause another person to be the intermediary who carries out that action, making him a means of that kindness and generosity reaching those who deserve it. Thus Allah will reward both the former and the latter.

By His grace and generosity towards His slave, Allah causes him to carry out some charitable work with some of his wealth that brings benefit to others, then He grants him ongoing reward without him realising it. So if a person plants a tree or sows a crop, and it benefits a soul (human or animal), Allah will reward the one who planted it without him realising, especially if he had good intentions and made a deal with his

Lord that whatever benefit resulted from what he did with his wealth, I ask You, O Lord, to reward me for it and make it a means of drawing closer to You. The same applies if he has livestock and people benefit from their milk, or by riding them and carrying loads on them, or he has dwellings that people benefit from by living in them, even for a little while, or if he has vessels and the like that people make use of, or he has a spring or well from which people drink, or other things – such as a book that helps people to learn something, or a *mus-haf* from which people read, for Allah is the Possessor of abundant grace.

By His kindness and grace towards His slave, Allah may open a door to good for him that never crossed his mind, not because he had no interest in it before, but because he was unaware of it and oblivious to it, then suddenly something brought it to his attention, and he felt happy about that and realised that it was by the kindness and grace of his Lord, Who created reasons to draw his attention to it. Therefore he turns his attention to it, focuses his mind on it and is able to achieve of it whatever Allah wills and enables him to do.

﴿لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعَمُوا إِذَا مَا أَتَّقَوْا
وَءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ثُمَّ أَتَّقَوْا وَءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ أَتَّقَوْا وَأَحْسَنُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

(سورة المائدة: ٩٣) 

﴿For those who believe and do righteous deeds, there is no blame on them for what they ate [and drank], so long as they fear Allah, believe and do righteous deeds, then fear Allah and believe, then fear Allah and do good, for Allah loves those who do good.﴾ (al-Mâ'idah 5: 93)

I reflected upon the reason why fearing Allah (*taqwâ*) is mentioned three times in this verse, and I found that there could be one of two interpretations:

The first interpretation is that the first mention refers to the past, the second refers to the present, and the third refers to the future. To explain further: the phrase ﴿For those who believe and do righteous deeds, there is no blame on them for what they ate [and drank]﴾ includes the past, the future and the present, because it says that there is no blame on the believers in general, and this general statement can only apply to any of the three. This repetition is one of the ways in which the Qur'an ensures that it covers all situations, by making sure that the phrasing (in Arabic) covers all situations (past, present and future). That is because if they feared Allah, in the past, or do so in the present, or in both the past and the present but not in the future, it cannot be said that there is no blame on them. Every time fearing Allah is mentioned, whether in the past, the present or the future, it must refer to faith and righteous deeds, or to faith and *ihsân* (doing good). This interpretation is supported by the verse in which Allah says:

﴿... قَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَأْخَرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهُ ...﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٢٠٣) 

﴿...But if anyone hastens to leave [Mina] in two days, there is no blame on him, and if any one stays on, there is no blame on him, for him who fears Allah. So fear Allah...﴾

The phrase ﴿there is no blame on him﴾ is similar to the phrase used here (in *al-Mâ'idah* 5: 93, which is also translated as ﴿there is no blame on them﴾). The verse in al-Baqarah is definitely not referring to the past, because it is a conditional phrase and is referring to the future, or it may also be referring to the present. Allah says ﴿there is no blame on him﴾ referring to the present, the one who fears Allah now, then He mentions something that refers to the future, as He says, ﴿So fear Allah﴾. If we compare this verse (2: 203) with the first verse (5: 93), we will understand the reason for this repetition, which is to cover all times (past, present and future).

The second interpretation is that the first instance refers to Islam, the second refers to eemân (faith), and the third refers to *ihsân*.⁵³ The believer cannot attain perfection in his fear of Allah or piety (taqwâ) until he refrains from what Allah has forbidden, and his religious commitment cannot be complete until he fulfils these three concepts, because the concept of Islam dictates that there should be visible good deeds alongside faith and piety. In this verse, Allah says:

﴿...إِذَا مَا أَتَقَوْا وَءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ...﴾ (سورة المائدة: ٩٣)

﴿...so long as they fear Allah, believe and do righteous deeds...﴾ (*al-Mâ'idah* 5: 93)

The concept of eemân requires belief in the pillars of faith, alongside piety or fearing Allah, so Allah says: ﴿then fear Allah and believe﴾. The concept of *ihsân* requires doing good alongside piety or fearing Allah, so Allah says: ﴿then fear Allah and do good﴾. So the one who deserves to have no blame on him cannot be anyone except the one who fulfils the dictates of all three concepts.

Whichever of these two is the right interpretation of this verse, the verse is proof of the majestic nature and greatness of the Qur'an, how precise and wise its meanings are, and how free it is of any flaws or contradictions. This would compel anyone to testify that it is indeed the word of Allah, and may truly and justly be described as such, for it occupies the highest level of eloquence and no other writing can compare to it. It may be said that both interpretations are intended, because the Arabic wording of the verse does not contradict either of them and both interpretations are implied by the wording. The way to interpret the Qur'an is to choose the most comprehensive and appropriate interpretation, because it was revealed from One Who is Most Wise, Most Praiseworthy, and has knowledge of all things; Allah knows best the intended meaning

and the subtle meanings of His Book. O Allah, remind us of what we were caused to forget, teach us what we do not know, and make us among those who recite it as it should be recited and understand it.

Conclusion

*W*hen the author (may Allah have mercy on him) had concluded his discussion on the meaning of the divine name al-Lateef, he said:

I hope by Allah's grace that our discussion in this book is of this type, and that what He has enabled me to do is the impact of His name al-Lateef, because the type of ideas and comments mentioned in this book used to cross my mind whilst reading the Book of Allah, but I would not pay any attention to them and would not record them, so I lost many of them. But at the beginning of this blessed month, I thought that I should start writing down these ideas that came to mind, which I do not think ever crossed my mind before that. So I started doing that, until I finished this work by the grace of Allah, as I started it by the grace of Allah, which resulted in this small book. I completed it on the twenty-eighth day of this blessed month, Ramadan 1347 AH. Praise be to Allah first and last, inwardly and outwardly, much good and blessed praise, and may Allah send blessings and peace upon Muhammad (ﷺ). This book was completed by the compiler who is in need of his Lord in all ways, 'Abdur-Rahmân ibn Nâşir ibn 'Abdullâh as-Sa'di.⁵⁴

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Appendix 1: Jihad

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*J*ihad is the struggle against all forms of evil and injustice, both within one's own self (*nafs*) and against others. Thus, jihad is not limited to the use of military force, although such armed struggle is one form of it, and in that sense, jihad has been practiced and sanctioned by all nations since the beginning of time. After all, there is no nation in our world that does not have an army, and in all nations, martyrdom is seen as the ultimate sacrifice. War, then, may be good or bad, depending on the motives of those who engage in it and their conduct during and after the campaign. We believe that armed struggle was prescribed in Islam to defend not only Muslims but also non-Muslims who suffer from oppression, as well as to support God's cause of justice on Earth. It was also meant to protect the right to worship God, Who created us, in complete security; it is natural that He would want that right granted to His servants.

There are, however, certain Qur'an verses that may be taken out of context and wrongly described as a declaration of endless war against the unbelievers. For

example, Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿... وَقَاتَلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يَقْتَلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً...﴾ (سورة التوبه: ٣٦)

﴿...and fight against the polytheists collectively as they fight against you collectively...﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 36)

And:

﴿فَإِذَا أَنْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حِيَثُ وَجَدُّهُمْ...﴾ (سورة التوبه: ٥)

﴿And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them...﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 5)

While the vast majority of Muslims do not think that we should be fighting perpetually against the rest of humanity, a fringe minority of mostly youth, inflamed by the real and perceived injustices committed against Muslim peoples, use these verses and others to wage jihad against all of their opponents, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Lacking any means to wage conventional wars, they resort to terrorism to pursue their agenda or to avenge themselves against the enemies who fight them. Such is the dilemma that Muslims are facing nowadays and that mars the name of jihad.

It is true that the verses cited are the words of Allah, Most High. He also said:

﴿قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحِرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّىٰ يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدِهِمْ صَفَرُونَ﴾ (سورة التوبه: ٢٩)

﴿Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth [that is, Islam] from those who were given the Scripture – [fight] until they give the jizyah [poll tax] willingly while they are humbled.﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 29)

He also said:

﴿وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونُ الَّذِينَ لِلَّهِ فِي إِنْهَاوًا فَلَا عُدُونَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٩٣)

(١٩٣)

﴿Fight them until there is no [more] fitnah and [until] religion [that is, worship] is acknowledged to be] for Allah. But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the oppressors.﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 193)

And the Prophet ﷺ said:

«أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أُقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَشْهَدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ، وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ، فَإِذَا فَعَلُوا ذَلِكَ، عَصَمُوا مِنِّي دِمَاءَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالُهُمْ، إِلَّا بِحَقِّ الْإِسْلَامِ، وَحِسَابُهُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى»

«I was commanded to fight the people until they testify that none is worthy of worship except Allah, and (until) they believe in me and what I came with. If they do that, then they have safeguarded their blood and wealth from me, except according to it (Islam), and their judgment is upon Allah.» (Agreed upon, on the authority of Abu Hurayrah)

Not only that, but in previous scriptures, namely the Bible, much more than this is attributed to God, including the killing of infants and children, referred to in the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, and others.⁵⁵ Certainly, we do not believe that those statements about children and infants are from God, because it would be too hard to provide context that could explain them. However, in Islam, there is an explanatory context for all of these verses. First, it is important to note that Allah (ﷻ) also says:

﴿وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا إِلَيْنَا فَاجْنِحْهُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ﴾ (سورة الأنفال: ٦١)

﴿And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He Who is the Hearing, the Knowing.﴾ (al-Anfâl 8: 61)

﴿... فَإِنِّي أُعْتَذِلُوكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ وَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْكُمُ الْسَّلَامَ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلًا﴾

(سورة النساء: ٩٠)

﴿...So if they remove themselves from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah has not made for you a cause [for fighting] against them.﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 90)

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ لَا تَسْمَنُوا لِقَاءَ الْعَدُوِّ وَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ الْعَافِيَةَ فَإِذَا لَقِيْتُمُوهُمْ فَاصْبِرُوْا وَاعْلَمُوْا أَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ تَحْتَ ظِلَالِ السُّيُوفِ»

«O people, do not wish to meet the enemy, and ask Allah for pardon. But if you meet them, be patient and know that paradise is under the shade of the swords.» (Agreed upon, on the authority of 'Abdullâh ibn Abi Awfâ)

Who should be connecting the dots and reconciling the seemingly conflicting reports? The scholars well-grounded in the tradition. One of them, namely Imam Ibn Taymiyah, wrote a treatise on *Qitâl al-Kuffâr wa Muhâdanatuhum* [War and peace (treaties) with the disbelievers], in which he showed conclusively that the 'illah (effective cause) for fighting them is their aggression, not their disbelief. He pointed out that the texts implying an open fight against them can never be used as proof for fighting the people at large, because they appear to contradict other evidences (some of which is mentioned above), the consensus, and even the life of the Messenger (ﷺ) himself. Some of them appear to suggest fighting the people at large until there is no religion on Earth except Islam – yet this is contrary to the consensus. Do you not see that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) made peace and truces with non-Muslims? In fact, he said:

«دَعُوا الْجِبَشَةَ مَا وَدَعُوكُمْ وَاتْرُكُوا التُّرْكَ مَا تَرَكُوكُمْ»

«Leave the Abyssinians alone so long as they leave you (alone), and leave the Turks (alone) as long as they leave you alone.» (Abu Dâwood, and deemed ḥasan by al-Albâni in *Saheeh al-Jâmi'*)

This clearly indicates that the command to fight does not apply to the people at large. Rather, Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah bestow mercy upon him) said in *Hidâyat al-Hayârâ* [Guiding the bewildered]:

When Allah sent His Messenger [ﷺ], most of the religions willingly submitted to him and to his caliphs after him. He never forced the religion upon anyone, and he would only fight those who fought and warred against him. As for those who made peace with him, he did not fight them or compel them to embrace his religion, out of compliance with the command of his Lord [□], Who says:

﴿لَا إِكْرâهٌ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشُدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۖ ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٥٦)

﴿There is no compulsion in religion; truth has been made clear from falsehood...﴾

(*al-Baqarah* 2: 256)

These verses and hadiths, which appear to enjoin fighting the people at large, were referring to specific peoples during the Prophet's time, or to fighting in specific circumstances – such as defending the oppressed in accordance with the words of the Most High:

﴿وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقْتَلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ ...﴾ (سورة النساء: ٧٥)

(٧٥)

﴿And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children...﴾ (*an-Nisâ'* 4: 75)

– or to prevent tyrants from forcing those who embraced Islam to abandon worshipping Allah, the One and Only, as in the words of the Most High:

﴿وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ ...﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٩٣)

﴿And fight them until there is no [more] fitnah...﴾ (*al-Baqarah* 2: 193)

– or preemptively against (genuine, not imaginary) enemy aggression, as the Muslims did when the Persians sent troops to arrest the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), or when the Romans incited their allies, the Christians of Shâm, against the Muslims. The Christians blocked the Muslims' roadways and surrounded their trade caravans, and the ally of the Romans, Shurahbeel ibn 'Amr al-Ghassâni, killed al-Hâarith ibn 'Amr al-Azdi, who was the Prophet's messenger to the ruler of Busra.

Scholars in the past entertained the following question: Is the default in international relations peace or warfare? The majority viewed peace as the default, while others believed it was warfare, although some of the latter may have been referring to the situation at their time, when they had no stable borders or statehood as we know it. Empires were constantly fighting against others to expand their territories (as can be seen in any infographics showing the changes in the map of Europe over the last one thousand years). If we pose this question to them again, using different wording, asking, “Do we prefer peace or warfare?”, perhaps all of them would answer in favor of peace. Did not the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say, in addition to all of the aforementioned?

«Indeed, Allah is gentle and loves gentleness, and He grants because of gentleness what He does not grant because of harshness, nor what He grants because of anything else.»
(Agreed upon, on the authority of ‘Â’ishah, and this is the wording of Muslim)

If a nation that essentially rules with justice makes peace with us, grants security to the Muslims within its borders, and does not persecute us, then why should we fight them? If our objectives are that no one is deprived of the right to worship their Lord in peace, that no tyrant subjugates any of the creation of Allah, and that no one threatens the interests of our Ummah, and we can attain all that peacefully, is fighting still justified? Would choosing it in these circumstances embody the gentleness that Allah loves in all matters?

Even after all this discussion, we have still not looked at the essence of the matter in question: war. Was war one thousand years ago the same as war today? This is not an insignificant inquiry because applying the legislative rulings correctly is contingent upon understanding the current reality in the place where these specific rulings are to be applied. In our age, the structure of nations has become stabilized and the borders of these nations have become distinct, in contrast to previous ages when nations did not rule themselves. Instead, they were ruled by dynasties and factions whose sovereignty would expand and then contract, only to be occupied by another.

In the past, the ruling factions fought on the battlefield, but this fighting rarely harmed ordinary people, farmers, women, or the weak. Furthermore, the masses would enjoy the rule of a just nation that replaced the tyranny that they had lived under for decades or centuries. This would bring them joy, just as the Christians of Shâm were overjoyed when the Muslims liberated them from Rome and its allies. But nowadays, the price of warfare is widespread chaos, corruption, and tragedy that do not differentiate between soldiers and civilians – for bombs and rockets are not like arrows and spears. If Imam Ibn Taymiyah ruled that a catapult could not be used except for the necessary jihad (to repel the enemy),⁵⁶ what would he say about modern weapons of war?

In the past, jihad was sometimes necessary to secure the deliverance of *da’wah* to the entire creation, for it removed the obstacles, such as the tyrants and their oppressive regimes, that were preventing it. In our times, the deliverance of the *da’wah* is possible through the jihad of articulation and the tongue, via broadcasts, satellite channels, and especially the Internet, which delivers written, audible, and visual statements alike.

Furthermore, the *du‘āt* can travel to distant lands, mix with their people, and invite them, while enjoying security throughout.

To conclude this point, we can never deny the virtue of jihad and martyrdom in Islam and its raising its people upon courage, dignity, honor, and sacrifice. However, we must also be confident that Islam decisively prefers peace over war.

The default for the relationship with United Nations member states is that of peace. All the Muslim states who signed the charter of this organization committed to peace with the rest of the signatory states. Such a covenant is acceptable in Islam and makes all the world, by default, a land of *muwâda‘ah* (peace). The Ḥanafi *fuqahâ‘* declared that *al-muwâda‘at al-mutlaqah* (a peace treaty without an agreed-upon term) is one of the types of valid treaties.⁵⁷ There is a difference of opinion on this issue among the Shâfi‘i and Ḥanbali schools, but Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751 AH/ 1350 CE), the famous Ḥanbali jurist and disciple of Ibn Taymiyah (d. 728 AH/ 1328 CE), made a strong case for the validity of such treaties.⁵⁸ Imam Muhammad ibn Idrees ash-Shâfi‘i (d. 204 AH/ 820 CE) has himself explicitly stated that such a treaty is valid if the parties are given the option to terminate the treaty at will.⁵⁹ ‘Uthmân ibn ‘Affân made a treaty with the Nubians that stated:

We (Muslims) shall not wage war against you, prepare for war against you, or attack you, as long as you observe the conditions of the treaty between us and you... But it will not be incumbent upon the Muslims to drive away any enemy who may encounter you, or to prevent him from you, between the limits of the territory of Ulwah and Aswan.⁶⁰

There is another pertinent discussion here, which is that the war that Islam deems justifiable, at times, is an ethical war that must also be Sharia-complaint. It is a war where the civilians, or to be more precise, all non-combatants, are spared. Abu Dâwood reported from Anas that when they had to go to war, the Prophet (ﷺ) would instruct them not to kill “an older man, a child, or a woman,” and he would say, “Do righteousness and show kindness, for Allah loves those who are kind.” Ibn Mâjah added that the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade killing the ‘aseef, which is best translated as a non-combatant attachment to the army.

May Allah bring peace, justice, and security to the distressed and suffering among humankind.

Appendix 2: Slavery

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The issue of slavery may be one of the hardest issues to discuss. Our collective conscience as a global community is extremely averse to the discussion because of a variety of factors, not least of which is the cruel treatment that slaves suffered for centuries. Many preachers find it difficult to talk about the issue, particularly when they are asked why Islam's stance did not mandate the immediate and absolute abolition of slavery. Furthermore, classical books of Islamic law contain extensive discussions of the rulings pertaining to the slaves, causing discomfort to many educators who must address them. In the following discussion, I will attempt to highlight some of the facts about Islam's stance on slavery.

A Historical Matter

To begin with, any discussion of slavery in Islam that does not put the issue in its proper historical context will be flawed. No heavenly religion sought to eliminate the institution of slavery more than Islam did. It would welcome the current state of abolishment of slavery worldwide, and it would certainly be keen on all the nations of the world maintaining this state. A central credo of conduct for Muslims is that when they engage in any agreement, they must comply with it, for Allah (ﷺ) says:

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ ...﴾ (سورة المائدة: ١)

﴿O you who have believed, fulfill [all] contracts...﴾ (*al-Mâ'idah* 5: 1)

This defense of the Islamic stance on slavery, and its description of the excellent treatment of the slaves in Islam is, therefore, only a topic of theological and historical importance, not a practical matter.

Never Racist

The second important point to highlight is that slavery in Islam was never a racist practice. In the early history of the Muslim state, there were slaves from all nations, and even before Islam, the Arabs had slaves of all races. The most famous slaves in the history of Islam were the Prophet's esteemed Companions Salmân the Persian, Bilâl the Abyssinian, and Suhayb the Roman (ﷺ). Indeed, as British historian S. H. Leeder writes, the issue of color was irrelevant to the early Muslims.

“TAKE away that black man!” exclaimed the Christian Archbishop Cyrus. “I can have no discussion with him!” when the Arab conquerors had sent a deputation of their ablest men to discuss terms of surrender of the capital of Egypt, headed by the negro Ubâdah, as the ablest of them all. To the scared archbishop’s astonishment, he was told that this man was commissioned by the General Amr; that the Moslems held negroes and white men in equal respect – judging a man by his character and not by his colour.⁶¹

This is not to claim that there have never been racist Muslims. Racism is a human condition that arises from egoism and is manifested in different forms, such as tribalism, groupism, classism, nationalism, and so on. The closer and more devoted you become

to Allah, the less egoistic you will be. The information here is about the institution of slavery in its theory, governing laws, and communal legal practice. Throughout the history of Islamic states, slaves came from all backgrounds; in fact, through most of Islamic history, they were from non-African nations, since there were not many conquests in sub-Saharan Africa. As in the Far East, those nations mostly came into the fold of Islam without war.

Slavery before Islam and in Other Religions

Slavery existed before Islam, and it spanned nearly every culture, nationality, and religion. While it may not have been known among hunter-gatherer populations, it was a part of every ancient civilization. In both a socio-geographic and religious context, slavery was normalized and tolerated worldwide, including in pre-Columbian America. Slavery was also common in Africa; in non-Muslim Africa, it was associated with pagan practices such as burying one or two young slaves alive next to the body of their deceased master. The spread of Islam is credited with ending this practice.⁶²

Research shows that no religion encouraged the ending of the practice as much as Islam did; likewise, no religion encouraged the beneficent treatment of the slaves as much as Islam did.

Here are some mentions of slavery in the Bible. (Note that the newer translations have changed the word ‘slave’ to ‘servant’.)

Numbers 31: 17-18, NIV

Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man.

This statement, attributed to Moosâ (摩西), clearly allows capturing, enslaving and having sex with young women.

Leviticus 25: 44-46, NIV

Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property. You can bequeath them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life, but you must not rule over your fellow Israelites ruthlessly...

Exodus 21: 2-11, GNB

If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. If he comes alone, he shall go out alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out alone. But if the slave plainly says, “I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,” then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.

American historian and philosopher Will Durant describes the position of the Church as follows:

The Church did not condemn slavery. Orthodox and heretic, Roman and barbarian alike assumed the institution to be natural and indestructible; a few philosophers protested, but they too had slaves... Pagan laws condemned to slavery any free woman who married a slave; the laws of Constantine ordered the woman to be executed, and the slave to be burned alive. The Emperor Gratian decreed that a slave who accused his master of any offense except high treason to the state should be burned alive at once, without inquiring into the justice of the charge.⁶³

Islam's Answer to the Dilemma of Slavery

It may be said that Islam did not take an absolute abolitionist stance on the institution of slavery, and this is true to some extent. One must remember, though, that during the time

of the ministry of the Prophet (ﷺ), not only was the immediate abolitionist approach not proposed by any religious or secular order, but it would have been infeasible. Furthermore, it might have resulted in social and economic turmoil, not only for the larger communities, but firstly for the many slaves who would have been unable to fend for themselves.

In addition, the issue of how to handle war captives made slavery the surest path to saving their lives. In the past, armies could not keep the captives in prison and provide for them due to the scarcity of resources. Freeing them was not always possible because they could regroup and go back to fighting.

Finally, since the enslavement of captives was a common practice of all armies, it would have been unexpected for the Muslims to free all the captives when they won a battle but still be taken as captives when they lost.

Islam's answer to the dilemma of slavery can be summarized in two major points:

1. Gradual diminishment of the institution by simultaneously cutting off its tributaries and widening its runoffs
2. Enjoining the excellent treatment of slaves for as long as the institution survived

In the following paragraphs, I will address these two points.

The Gradual Diminishment of the Institution of Slavery

When one wishes to drain a river of its water, there are two methods: cutting off its tributaries (sources) and increasing its runoffs. Before Islam, a person could be condemned into slavery through various means, including a man selling his own wife or child, child abandonment, debt-slavery, captivity in war, kidnapping, and as a punishment for certain crimes. Islam cut off all of those tributaries that fed into the river of slavery except for one: captivity in war, for, as mentioned previously, it was a logistical necessity at times and, more importantly, enslavement helped protect the captives' lives. Despite that, Islam recommended freeing those captives. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«فَكُوَا الْعَانِيَ يَعْنِي الْأَسِيرَ وَأَطْعِمُوا الْجَائِعَ وَعُودُوا الْمَرِيضُ»

«Free the captives, feed the hungry, and visit the sick.» (Bukhari)

Islam's Encouragement of the Emancipation of Slaves

Evidence from the Qur'an and the Sunnah makes it clear that the emancipation of slaves is considered one of the greatest virtues and ways to earn the Lord's pleasure.

Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿وَهَدِيَتِهُ النَّجَدَيْنِ ﴿١٠﴾ فَلَا أَفْنَحَمُ الْعَقَبَةَ ﴿١١﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَنَكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ ﴿١٢﴾ فَكُرَبَّةٌ﴾ (سورة الْبَلْد: ١٠-١٣)

﴿And have shown him [humankind] the two ways [of good and evil]? But he has not broken through the difficult pass [to righteousness]. And what can make you know what is [breaking through] the difficult pass? It is the freeing of a slave.﴾ (al-Balad 90: 10-13)

﴿لَيْسَ الَّذِي أَنْ تُولُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الَّذِي مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَئِكَةَ وَالْكِتَبِ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ وَءَانَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ دُوَى الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَمَى وَالْمَسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّيِّلِ وَالسَّاَلِيْلِينَ وَفِي الْرِّقَابِ ... ﴿١٧٧﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٧٧)

﴿Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves...﴾ (al-Baqarah 2: 177)

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«مَنْ أَعْتَقَ رَقَبَةً مُسْلِمَةً أَعْتَقَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ عُضُوٍّ مِنْهُ عُضُوًا مِنَ النَّارِ»

«Whoever frees a Muslim slave, Allah will save all the parts of his body from the (hell) fire as he has freed the body parts of the slave.»

Sa‘eed ibn Marjânah said that he narrated this hadith to ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn, who then freed his slave, even though ‘Abdullâh ibn Ja‘far had offered him ten thousand dirhams, or one thousand dinars, for that slave. (Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah also narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«من أَعْتَقَ شَرْقَصَا لَهُ فِي عَبْدٍ أَعْتَقَ كُلُّهُ إِنْ كَانَ لَهُ مَالٌ وَإِلَّا يَسْتَسْعِي غَيْرُ مَشْقُوقٍ عَلَيْهِ»

«Whoever frees his portion of a jointly-owned slave should free the slave completely by paying the rest of his price if he has enough money; otherwise, the price of the slave is to be estimated, and the slave should be helped to work, without hardship, until he can pay the rest of his price.» (Bukhari)

Islam also specified the freeing of slaves as the expiation for many sins.

Yet the best system Islam legislated was to give the slaves control over their own passage into the world of the free, by allowing them to purchase their own freedom with the help of the community members whom Allah ordered to support their cause. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿... وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْكِتَبَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوهُمْ إِنْ عِلِّمْتُمُ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا وَإِنْ تُوْهُمْ مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي أَتَيْتُكُمْ ...﴾ (سورة النور: ٣٣)

﴿...And those who seek a contract [for eventual emancipation] from among whom your right hands possess – then make a contract with them if you know there is within them goodness and give them from the wealth of Allah which He has given you...﴾ (an-Noor 24: 33)

This was beneficial for the slaves who had to be weaned from depending on their masters for provisions, for they would have faced problems if they were suddenly required to provide their own food, clothes, and shelter. (We must not underestimate the potential impact on the stability and security of the society if it had been mandated that all the slaves be immediately freed.) Of course, it was also beneficial for the masters, who were, to a great extent, dependent on the slaves for their businesses.

This was also favorable for the community, for they would see responsible people, who knew the value of work and labor, moving from the ranks of the slaves to those of the free.

It is worth noting that the Prophet (ﷺ) led by example. According to the books of *seerah* (the Prophet's noble history), he emancipated all the slaves he had before Islam was revealed to him, as well as those given to him after Islam. In the most authentic book of Hadith, 'Amr ibn al-Hârith (□), the brother of the Mother of Believers, Juwayriyah (□), reported from her that when he died, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) left neither a dinar nor a dirham, neither a male nor a female slave, nor anything else except his white riding mule, his weapons, and the land which he had given in charity to wayfarers. (Bukhari: Book 1, Hadith 475)

Finally, in attestation to the Islamic plan for eliminating slavery, C. Snouck Hurgronje writes:

Setting slaves free is one of the most meritorious pious works, and, at the same time, the regular atonement for certain transgressions of the sacred law. So, according to Mohammedan principles, slavery is an institution destined to disappear.⁶⁴

Islam's Enjoinment of the Excellent Treatment of the Slaves

The excellent treatment of slaves in Islam is a fact that I will try to highlight by proofs from the textual and historical accounts, including testimonies by non-Muslim historians and thinkers.

In the Qur'an, there are several verses commanding the good treatment of slaves, including:

﴿ وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَنَا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْبِ وَابْنِ السَّيِّلِ وَمَا مَلَكُتُ أَيْمَانُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا ﴾ (سورة النساء: ٣٦)

﴿Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther away, the

companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful. ﴿*an-Nisâ' 4: 36*﴾

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) repeatedly commanded people to treat the slaves with mercy and compassion. One of his last recommendations to the Muslims before he died was to fear Allah regarding their slaves. A quick review of the following hadiths will further testify to his instructions regarding the excellent treatment of slaves:

«لَا يَقُولَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ عَبْدِي وَأَمَتِي ... فَإِنَّكُمْ الْمَمْلُوكُونَ وَالرَّبُّ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ»

«None of you should say: My slave (‘abdi) or: My slave woman – for you are all (Allah’s) slaves, and the Lord is Allah, Most High.» (A sound hadith recorded by Abu Dâwood)

Al-Ma‘roor ibn Suwayd narrated:

«I saw Abu Dharr al-Ghifâri wearing a cloak, and his slave was wearing a cloak (like it). We asked him about that.

He replied: Once I abused a man, and he complained of me to the Prophet (ﷺ).

The Prophet (ﷺ) asked me:

«يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ أَعْيَرْتَهُ بِأَمْمِهِ إِنَّكَ امْرُؤٌ فِي كَجَاهِلِيَّةٍ إِخْوَانُكُمْ خَوْلُكُمْ جَعَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ تَحْتَ أَيْدِيكُمْ فَمَنْ كَانَ أَخْوَهُ تَحْتَ يَدِهِ فَلْيُطْعِمْهُ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ وَلْيُلِبِّسْهُ مِمَّا يَلْبَسُ وَلَا تُكَلِّفُوهُمْ مَا يَغْلِبُهُمْ فَإِنْ كَلَّفْتُمُوهُمْ فَأَعْيَنُوهُمْ»

O Abu Dharr! Did you abuse him by slighting his mother? You are a man who has *jâhiliyah* (pre-Islamic ignorance and disbelief).

(He added:) Your slaves are your brethren, upon whom Allah has given you authority. If you have your brethren under your control, you should feed them with the like of what you eat and clothe them with the like of what you wear. You should not overburden them with what they cannot bear, and if you do so, help them (in their hard job).» (Bukhari 3:46:721)

The Prophet (ﷺ) unequivocally prohibited the separation of a mother from her slave child. Abu Moosâ reported that he said:

«لَعْنَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ مِنْ فَرَقَ بَيْنَ الْوَالِدَةِ وَوَلَدِهَا وَبَيْنَ الْأَخِ وَبَيْنَ أَخِيهِ»

«May he be cursed, he who separates a mother from her child, or a brother from his sibling.» (A weak hadith recorded by Tirmidhi)

And for one who humiliates his slave by beating him or slapping him, the Prophet ﷺ said:

«مَنْ لَطَمَ مَمْلُوكَهُ أَوْ ضَرَبَهُ فَكَفَّارَتُهُ أَنْ يُعْتَقَهُ»

«He who slaps his slave or beats him, there is no expiation for this but to free him.» (Muslim)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was always concerned about the wellbeing of the slaves, and he would always mention them at the times when he expected the greatest attention from his audience, such as the time of his death and during the Farewell Pilgrimage, where he had the largest audience in his lifetime. “As for your slaves, male and female,” he exhorted them during the Farewell Pilgrimage, “feed them with what you eat yourself and clothe them with what you wear. If you cannot keep them or they commit any fault, discharge them. They are God’s people like unto you and be kind unto them.”⁶⁵

No other nation or religious group in the world treated slaves better than the Muslims did, as demonstrated by the aforementioned examples of instructions from Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. The following are the testimonies of non-Muslim historians and leaders regarding this very fact:

On the attitude of the Muslim master towards his slaves, American historian and philosopher Will Durant writes:

...he handled them with a genial humanity that made their lot no worse – perhaps better, as more secure – than that of a factory worker in nineteenth-century Europe... It is astonishing how many sons of slaves rose to high place in the intellectual and political world of Islam, how many, like Mahmud and the early Mameluks, became kings.⁶⁶

At the end of the eighteenth century, Mouradgea d’Ohsson (an Armenian historian and diplomat who wrote extensively about the Ottoman Empire) declared:

There is perhaps no nation where the captives, the slaves, the very toilers in the galleys are better provided for or treated with more kindness than among the Muhammedans.⁶⁷

Napoleon Bonaparte, a military leader who was Emperor of France from 1804 to 1814, is recorded as saying about the condition of slaves in Muslim countries:

In the East, slavery never had the same characteristics as in the West. The slavery of the East is that which is seen in the Holy Scripture: the slave inherits from his master and marries his daughter. Most of the Pashas had been slaves; a great number of grand viziers, all the Mamluks, Ali Bey al-Kabir, and Murad Bey had all been slaves. They started by performing the most menial services in the house of their master and subsequently rose in status because of their merit or through favours. In the West, on the other hand, the slave was always below the domestic servant; he occupied the lowest rank...⁶⁸

With regard to the question of concubines and having sex with the slave girls, we must first say that the Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged the masters to free their female slaves and marry them. He said:

«وَرَجُلٌ كَانَتْ لَهُ أُمَّةٌ فَغَذَاهَا فَأَحْسَنَ عِذَاءَهَا ثُمَّ أَدْبَهَا فَأَحْسَنَ أَدْبَهَا ثُمَّ أَعْتَقَهَا وَتَزَوَّجَهَا فَلَهُ أَجْرٌ»

«He will be doubly rewarded... the man who had a slave girl, and he fed her well, taught her manners and educated her, and then freed her and married her.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

Secondly, this system was not new, nor was it introduced by Islam; all the prophets before Islam acknowledged it and used it. There is no argument among the Jews, Christians, and Muslims that Hâjar was the concubine of Prophet Ibrâheem, and the Old Testament contains countless stories about concubines, including those of the Prophets Dâwood and Sulaymân (peace and blessings be upon them).

We can never view sexual relations with a female slave nowadays from the same perspective of those who lived during those times. It is illogical to deal with historical matters without understanding their context; judging a practice as good or bad cannot be done in the abstract, separate from its context and the norms of the time. Prostitution refers to sex outside of the socially acceptable context, but in ancient times, the

concubine (like the wife) was allowed to have sex with the master as a legitimate partner. No woman would ever be allowed to have two sexual partners at the same time, so this concubine was not a sex tool to be enjoyed by the master and his relatives and friends. She could be wed to only one person, and her rights, along with the rights of her children, were guaranteed. Ultimately, sex with the female slave provided a way to fulfill her needs, and she also gained a special status once she delivered a child, who had the same rights as the master's other children. After bearing his child, she could not be sold and was freed upon the death of the master.

I would conclude by emphasizing that Islam was keen on the emancipation of slaves, and it enjoined this throughout its teachings. The original and natural state in which God created his servants is the state of freedom, and He desires a return to that freedom. Let us all pray for the deliverance of all people from all forms of disguised slavery that exist in our world today and for the end of all manifestations of subjugation of people by others.

Glossary of Islamic Terms⁶⁹

abu (or *abi*) أَبُو، أَبِي father (of)

ahl as-Sunnah wal-jamâ‘ah أَهْلُ السُّنْنَةِ وَاجْمَعَةً ‘people of the Sunnah and the community’

âmeen آمِينٌ O Allah, accept our invocation; amen

Ansâr الْأَنْصَارُ ‘helpers’: the Muslim citizens of Madinah who gave refuge to the Prophet (ﷺ) and the other Muslim emigrants from Makkah

âyat al-Kursi آيَةُ الْكُرْسِيِّ Verse 255 of *Soorat al-Baqarah*. Various hadiths narrate the virtues of this verse, and the Prophet (ﷺ) confirmed (in a hadith recorded by Muslim) that it is the greatest verse in the Qur'an

banu (or *bani*) بَنُو، بَنِي lit. ‘children (of)’; *usu.* referring to a tribe that claims a common ancestor

barakah الْبَرَكَةُ blessing

<i>da'eeef</i>	ضَعِيفٌ	a grade of hadith: weak
<i>dhikr Allâh</i>	ذِكْرُ اللهِ	remembrance of Allah; specifically, remembering Allah through praising and supplicating to Him
<i>du'â'</i>	الدُّعَاءُ	supplication; invocation
<i>eemân</i>	الْإِيمَانُ	faith; belief in all the six pillars of the creed of Islam
<i>faqeeh</i>	الْفَقِيهُ	scholar of jurisprudence; pl. <i>fuqahâ'</i>
<i>fiqh</i>	الْفِقْهُ	Islamic jurisprudence; understanding or interpreting Islamic law
<i>firdaws</i>	الْفِرْدَوْسُ	the highest level of paradise
<i>fitrah</i>	الْفِطْرَةُ	the natural inclination (of humans) instilled by Allah
<i>ghareeb</i>	غَرِيبٌ	<i>lit.</i> ‘strange’ or ‘unusual’: a category of <i>ahâd</i> hadith with only one narrator at some points in its chain
<i>hadd</i>	الْحَدْرَ	specific punishments prescribed in Sharia for specific offences such as theft and fornication
Hadith (<i>Hadeeth</i>)	الْحَدِيثُ	the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that with the Qur'an form the basis of Islamic law
hadith (<i>hadeeth</i>)	حَدِيثٌ	a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers
<i>hadith qudsi</i>	حَدِيثٌ مَّقْدُسٌ	‘sacred hadith’; a hadith communicated to Prophet

قدْسِيٰ ﷺ Muhammad (ﷺ) by Allah, but that is not part of the Qur'an

halal (*halâl*) الحلال permitted according to Islamic law

haram (*harâm*) الحرام forbidden according to Islamic law

hasan ghareeb حَسَنٌ a category of hadith that is reliable, although at some points in its chain there is only one narrator
غَرِيبٌ

hasan saheeh حَسَنٌ a category of hadith that is authentic; although *hasan* is considered inferior to *saheeh*, both are considered to be authentic
صَحِيحٌ

'iddah العَدَّة the waiting period after a woman is widowed or divorced, during which she is not allowed to remarry, in order to ascertain whether or not she is pregnant with the child of her late or ex-husband

ifk الْإِلْفُك forged statement; a lie or slander

ihsân الْإِحْسَانٌ goodness, perfection, excellence; to worship Allah as if you see Him knowing that even if you do not see Him, He sees you

in shâ' Allâh إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ God willing

isnâd الْإِسْنَادٌ the chain of narration through which a hadith can be traced back to the Prophet (ﷺ)

jâhiliyah الجَاهِلِيَّةَ lit. 'ignorance'; the age of spiritual darkness before Islam

jayyid جَيْد a grade of hadith: good

Jibreel جَبْرِيل the Arabic name for Gabriel (ﷺ), the archangel who transmitted the verses of the Qur'an and other communications from Allah (ﷻ) to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)

jihad (jihâd) اِجْهَاد struggle or striving (in Allah's cause)

jinn (plural of *jinni*) اِجْنَّنْ non-human, rational beings created by Allah from fire, often referred to as 'demons' or 'devils'. They have free will like humans: some are Muslims, others disbelievers; some are obedient to Allah, others disobedient. Satan is a jinni. Some disobedient jinn mislead people into thinking that they can foretell the future, near or distant, or provide people with riches or some sort of power.

jizyah الْجِزْيَة a tax levied on the People of the Scriptures when they are under the protection of a Muslim government; it is in lieu of the alms tax paid by Muslims

Kaaba الْكَعْبَة (Ka 'bah) the House of Allah in Makkah, originally built by Prophets Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel, which Muslims face when they pray

khushoo' اِحْسُنْ humility, devotion, and sincerity

kufr الْكُفْر disbelief in Allah and/or what He has revealed

lâ ilâha illâ Allâh لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الله the Islamic testimony of faith: 'there is none worthy of worship other than Allah'

mawdoo' مَوْضُوع forged tradition; it is a hadith whose text goes against the

established norms of the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) or whose reporters include a liar

<i>mudṭarib</i>	مُضطَرِّب	a category of hadith: when different narrations of the same hadith differ, either in the text or the chain, without the possibility of preferring one narration to the others because they are all equal in their authenticity and related by trustworthy narrators
<i>Muhâjiroon</i> (or <i>Muhâjireen</i>)	المُهاجِرُون	<i>lit.</i> ‘emigrants’ of any kind; used in Islamic discourse to refer to people who emigrate to safeguard their religion, specifically the Muslims who migrated with Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) from Makkah to Madinah
<i>munkar</i>	الْمُنْكَر	a category of hadith: a narration that is related by only one narrator, who is neither upright nor precise; technically, it is a weak hadith that contradicts an authentic hadith
<i>mursal</i>	مُرْسَلٌ	a category of hadith: a ‘loose’ hadith with a broken link in its chain of narration at the level of a Companion; reported by a <i>tâbi ‘i</i> (successor) as if it had been heard directly from the Prophet (ﷺ)
<i>mus-haf</i>	المُصَحَّف	a copy of the Arabic text of the Qur'an that is neither accompanied by commentary nor translated
<i>mushrikoon</i> (sg. <i>mushrik</i>)	الْمُشْرِكُون	polytheists and idolaters
<i>muttaṣil</i>	مُتَّصِّلٌ	<i>lit.</i> ‘connected’: a category of hadith: a narration whose chain is connected all the way to the Prophet (ﷺ)
<i>nafs</i>	النَّفْسُ	inner soul or self

<i>niyah</i>	النية	intention; a prerequisite for the acceptance of one's deeds is that they be purely for the sake of Allah
<i>qadar</i> (or <i>qadr</i>)	القدر	divine predestination; destiny; power; exact measure
Ramadan (<i>Ramadân</i>)	رمضان	the ninth month in the Islamic calendar; the month of obligatory fasting and the month in which the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed
<i>saheeh</i>	صحيح	a grade of hadith: sound or authentic
<i>shaykh</i>	الشيخ	teacher; mentor; scholar
Shayṭân	الشيطان	Satan
<i>shirk</i>	الشرك	associating partners with Allah
<i>siddeeqoon</i>	الصادقون	those who are strong and true in faith
Sunnah	السنة	the practice and collected sayings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that together with the Qur'an forms the basis of Islamic law
<i>tafseer</i>	التفسير	exegesis: commentary, or explanation of the meanings (<i>usu.</i> of Qur'anic verses)
<i>taqwâ</i>	التقوى	fearful awareness of Allah; being mindful of Allah; pious dedication; being careful not to transgress the bounds set by Allah
<i>tawheed</i>	التوحيد	the Oneness of Allah: the knowledge that He alone deserves to be worshipped and that He has no partners

Ummah **الْأَمَّةُ** community or nation: *usu.* used to refer to the entire global community of Muslims

waqf **الْوَقْفُ** trust; inalienable endowment for a charitable purpose

zakât (or *zakâh*) **الزَّكَاةُ** obligatory charity: an ‘alms tax’ on wealth that is paid by Muslims and be distributed to others who qualify as recipients

Notes

¹ Muslim, 817.

² All hadiths in this text have been checked and verified by IIPH's researchers. It is rare, but it does happen that a hadith is not verifiable within the timeframe of researching and editing the book. In that case, a decision is made by the editorial board whether or not to include the hadith. It is IIPH's policy not to include weak hadiths or fabricated (fake) hadiths in our publications. If a weak hadith is included in any text, it is usually because the author of the book discusses it as a weak hadith. (Editor)

³ As he himself noted in his conclusion to this book.

⁴ At the end of his *Tafseer*, as-Sa‘di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This commentary on the Book of Allah has been completed with His help and support by the compiler and writer thereof, ‘Abdur-Rahmân ibn Nâşir ibn ‘Abdullâh, who is known as Ibn Sa‘di; may Allah forgive him and his parents and all the Muslims. 1 Rabee‘ I, 1344 AH.

⁵ I have not come across anything in this book that may be regarded as repetition of material from the author's previous books, apart from the question that he discusses at the end of section no. 49. As for the rest of the book, most of it – approximately 80 per cent – consists of material that is not mentioned in the *Tafseer* or in the summary thereof. The remaining 20 per cent is not exactly the same as the text in the *Tafseer* and its summary, or close to it; rather it refers to matters that are referred to briefly in those two books, but here they are discussed in greater detail.

⁶ Stated by Imam Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on him). See: *al-Âdâb ash-Shâr‘iyah*, 2/53.

⁷ Stated by Ibn al-Mubârak (may Allah have mercy on him). See: *Jâmi‘ Bayân al-‘Ilm wa Fadlihi*, 1/406.

⁸ Wherever possible, Arabic terms have been translated into English. In cases where we have chosen to retain the Arabic, the transliterated word or phrase is shown in italics the first time it appears in the text; the term is also defined in the glossary found at the end of this book. (Editor)

⁹ It was printed by the Madinah publishing company in Jeddah.

¹⁰ Via Brother Mâhir ibn ‘Abdul-‘Azeez ash-Shibl.

11 The translations of the meanings of the verses of the Qur'an in this book have been taken, with some changes, from *The Majestic Qur'an*, translated by Nasiruddin al-Khattab, under publication with IIPH. (Editor)

12 This is a reference to the verse:

﴿It is He Who has sent down to you the Book. In it are definitive verses, which are the foundation of the Book; others are ambiguous, but those in whose hearts is deviation follow the part thereof that is ambiguous, seeking [to cause] confusion, and seeking an interpretation [that suits them]. But no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: We believe in [the Book]; all of it is from our Lord. None will pay heed except people of understanding.﴾ (*Āl Imrān* 3: 7)

13 This verse affirms the divine attribute of a Countenance.

14 Bukhari, 6079; Muslim, 2351.

15 Bukhari, 6262; Muslim, 990.

16 Allah is with people in the sense that He is constantly watching over them, knows them and knows about them, and has power over them wherever they may be.

17 At-Tirmidhi, 2516; Ahmad, 2803. At-Tirmidhi said: A ḥaṣīḥ hadith.

18 At-Tirmidhi, no. 3407 – he classed it as *ghareeb*; an-Nasā'i, 1305; Ahmad, 17114; it was classed as ḥaṣīḥ by Ibn Ḥibbān, 935. Ibn Rajab commented on it in a separate essay, which was annotated by Shaykh Sāmi Jād Allāh.

19 Abundance here refers to everything that people would like to have in abundance in this world and the hereafter, such as space, provision, patience, and space in the grave and in paradise. (az-Zamakhshari; Ibn ‘Āshoora)

20 This may refer to rising for prayer or to do other good deeds, mobilizing for jihad, or rising to make space for newcomers or to leave the gathering of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). (az-Zamakhshari; Ibn ‘Āshoora; at-Tabari)

21 This book is *Dar ' Ta 'ārud al- 'Aql wa 'n-Naql*.

22 This refers to Banu an-Naḍir who were the first group to be banished from Madinah following their act of treachery and their plot to kill the Prophet (ﷺ).

23 That is, if you deem them able to earn their own livelihood and not become dependent on others.

24 Bukhari, 50; Muslim, 8.

25 *Jibt* and *ṭāghoot*: These words may refer to everything that is worshipped instead of or alongside Allah, whether it is an idol, a stone, a grave, a devil or a human being; they may also refer to sorcery or witchcraft.

26 Muslim, 35; there is a similar hadith in Bukhari, 9. See: *Sharḥ an-Nawawi 'alā Muslim*, 2/5.

27 *Iḥsān* is referred to in the well-known hadith in which it was narrated: «Umar said: We were sitting with the Prophet (ﷺ) when a man came to him whose clothes were intensely white and whose hair was intensely black; no signs of travel could be seen upon him, and none of us knew him. He sat down facing

the Prophet (ﷺ), with his knees touching his, and he put his hands on his thighs, and said: O Muhammad, what is Islam?

He said: To testify that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah, and that I am the Messenger of Allah; to establish regular prayer; to pay zakâh; to fast in Ramadan; and to perform Pilgrimage to the House (the Kaaba).

He said: You have spoken the truth.

We were amazed by him: he asked a question then told him that he had spoken the truth. Then he said: O Muhammad, what is faith?

He said: To believe in Allah, His angels, His Messengers, His Books, the Last Day, and the divine decree (*al-qadr*), both good and bad.

He said: You have spoken the truth.

We were amazed by him: he asked a question then told him that he had spoken the truth. Then he said: O Muhammad, what is *ihsân* (right action, goodness, sincerity)?

He said: To worship Allah as if you see Him, for even though you cannot see Him, He sees you.»

This version was narrated by Ibn Mâjah; the hadith was also narrated by Bukhari, Muslim and others.

²⁸ Abu Dâwood, 4682; at-Tirmidhi, 1162; Ahmâd, 7402. At-Tirmidhi said: *Hasan saheeh*; it was also classed as *saheeh* by Ibn Hibbân.

²⁹ Muslim, 223.

³⁰ This version was narrated by at-Tirmidhi (2627). The hadith may also be found in Bukhari (10) and Muslim (41).

³¹ The version narrated by Bukhari (6016) says:

«The Prophet (ﷺ) said: By Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe.

It was said: Who, O Messenger of Allah?

He said: The one whose neighbour is not safe from his evil conduct.»

The version narrated by Muslim (46) says:

«He will not enter paradise, whose neighbour is not safe from his evil conduct.»

³² Bukhari, 13; Muslim, 45.

³³ Bukhari, 6019; Muslim, 47.

³⁴ Muslim, 101.

³⁵ Muslim, 55.

³⁶ Bukhari, 16; Muslim, 43.

³⁷ Muslim, 43.

[38](#) I (the editor) could not find this in the copy that I have; perhaps it was omitted from it, or perhaps the shaykh (may Allah have mercy on him) had recently quoted the hadith of Heraclius elsewhere in one of his other books, so he thought that it was in this book and therefore referred to it. And Allah knows best.

[39](#) Bukhari, 7; Muslim, 1773.

[40](#) Abu Dâwood, 4880; at-Tirmidhi, 2032. From the hadith of Abu Barzah (□). At-Tirmidhi said: This is a *ḥasan ghareeb* hadith; we only know it from the hadith of Ḥusayn ibn Wâqid. Al-‘Irâqi graded its *isnâd* as *jayyid* in *al-Mughni*, p. 661. Al-Mundhiri graded its *isnâd* as *ḥasan* in *at-Targheeb*, no. 3529, from the hadith of al-Barâ’ (□).

[41](#) Narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah, 76-77; Sa‘eed ibn Mansoor, 5/88 – via ‘Abdullâh ibn Miswar, who said: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) recited...

This is a fabricated (*mawdoo'*) hadith because of this ‘Abdullah, who was accused of fabricating hadith. See: Bukhari, *at-Târeekh al-Kabeer*, 5/195; *al-Kâmil fid-Du‘afâ'*, 5/274; *Târeekh Baghdaâd*, 11/413. In the commentary on *Sunan Sa‘eed ibn Mansoor* by Dr. Sa‘eed al-Humayid there is a detailed discussion of its *isnâd*.

[42](#) Narrated by al-Bazzâr in his *Musnad*, 6948, via Yoosuf ibn ‘Atiyah, from Thâbit, from Anas, from the Prophet (ﷺ).

This is a *munkar* hadith. It was narrated by Yoosuf ibn ‘Atiyah, who is *da‘eef*, and was the only one to narrate it from Thâbit al-Bunâni, and his narration was *muḍtarib* as al-Bayhaqi stated, which was narrated from him by Ibn Ḥajar in *al-İşâbah*, 1/690. Hence al-‘Aqeeli said in *ad-Du‘afâ'*, 4/455: This hadith has no *isnâd* that can be proven sound. Ibn Rajab said – in *Istinshâq Naseem al-Urs*, 99: This hadith is *mursal*; it was narrated with a *muttaṣil* *isnâd*, but via *da‘eef* (weak) chains of narration.

[43](#) *Shu‘ab al-Eemân*, 1/161.

[44](#) Bukhari, 3256; Muslim, 2831.

[45](#) Muslim, 2721.

[46](#) That is, sincerity in loving what is enjoined and hating what is prohibited, striving hard to do what is loved and refrain from what is hated, and seeking divine help in all of that.

[47](#) Bukhari, 4974.

[48](#) Bukhari, 2736; Muslim, 2677.

[49](#) This is the version narrated by Bukhari, 741. The version narrated by Muslim (813) says:

«Tell him that Allah loves him.»

[50](#) Bukhari, 4569; Muslim, 2846.

[51](#) Bukhari, 6986.

[52](#) Narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah, no. 6787, and Ṣâliḥ ibn al-Imâm Aḥmad, 2/178, from the hadith of Ibn al-Musayyib in a *mawqoof* report; the *isnâd* of Ibn Abi Shaybah includes a man who is not named.

With regard to the *marfoo'* *isnâd*, it was narrated by al-Hakeem at-Tirmidhi in *an-Nawâdir*, via Sulaymân ibn ‘Amr an-Nakha‘i, who is a liar, therefore it is *mawdoo'* (fabricated). To describe this hadith as *da‘eef* (weak) only, as was stated in *al-Mughni* by al-‘Irâqi, p. 178, is too lenient.

53 This is a reference to the well-known hadith in which it was narrated:

«‘Umar said: We were sitting with the Prophet (ﷺ) when a man came to him whose clothes were intensely white and whose hair was intensely black; no signs of travel could be seen upon him, and none of us knew him. He sat down facing the Prophet (ﷺ), with his knees touching his, and he put his hands on his thighs, and said: O Muhammad, what is Islam?

He said: To testify that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah, and that I am the Messenger of Allah; to establish regular prayer; to pay zakâh; to fast in Ramadan; and to perform Pilgrimage to the House (the Kaaba).

He said: You have spoken the truth. We were amazed by him: he asked a question then told him that he had spoken the truth.

Then he said: O Muhammad, what is faith?

He said: To believe in Allah, His angels, His Messengers, His Books, the Last Day, and the divine decree (*al-qadr*), both good and bad.

He said: You have spoken the truth.

We were amazed by him: he asked a question then told him that he had spoken the truth. Then he said: O Muhammad, what is *ihsân* (right action, goodness, sincerity)?

He said: To worship Allah as if you see Him, for even though you cannot see Him, He sees you.»

This version was narrated by Ibn Mâjah; the hadith was also narrated by Bukhari, Muslim and others.

54 The author died on 23 Jumâdâ II 1376 AH; may Allah forgive him and shower Him with His mercy and be pleased with him, and cause him to dwell in His vast paradise, for He is All-Hearing, Ever-Responsive.

55 For example, in the First book of Samuel 15: 1-3, Samuel said to Saul:

1 I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the LORD. 2 This is what the LORD Almighty says: I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. 3 Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.

According to Deuteronomy 20:10-18, God said:

10 When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. 11 If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. 12 If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. 13 When the LORD your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. 14 As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the LORD your God gives you from your enemies. 15 This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby. 16 However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. 17 Completely destroy them – the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites – as the LORD your God has commanded you. 18 Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God.

In Numbers 31:17-18, Moosâ said, “17 Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, 18 but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man.”

And in Joshua 6: 21, “They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it-men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.”

⁵⁶ *Majmoo ‘al-Fatâwâ*, 24:69.

⁵⁷ See al-Kâsâni, *Badâ’i‘ as-Šanâ’i‘*, 6:77.

⁵⁸ See Ibn al-Qayyim, *Aḥkam Ahl adh-Dhimmah* (Beirut: Dâr al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 2002), 1:336-344.

⁵⁹ See Muhammad ibn Idrees ash-Shâfi‘i, *al-Umm* (Cairo: Dâr al-Fikr, 1961), 4:110.

⁶⁰ See Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State*, (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, Booksellers, and Exporters, 1987), 293.

⁶¹ S. H. Leeder, *Veiled Mysteries of Egypt and the Religion of Islam* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1913), 332.

⁶² Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World* (New York: New Amsterdam, 1989), 7.

⁶³ Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization: Vol. 4, The Age of Faith* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950).

⁶⁴ C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mohammedanism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), 129.

⁶⁵ Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World*, 19.

⁶⁶ Durant, *The Story of Civilization: Vol. 4, The Age of Faith*, 209.

⁶⁷ H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Islam: New Edition*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 35.

⁶⁸ Christian Cherfils, *Bonaparte et l'Islam d'après les Documents Français & Arabes* (Paris: Librairie de la Cour d'Appel et de l'Ordre des Avocats, 1914), 124

⁶⁹ The Arabic words are transliterated according to the conventions of the Transliteration Chart found in this book. If a word has become part of the English language (that is, is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book and appears first in this Glossary, with the transliterated form in brackets after it.