

A Brief Tour through the Quran



YAHIAN
TIME TO EXPLORE

The first journey | Haya Muhammad Eid

Edited by Emily Richardson



In the Name of Allah
The Most Merciful, The Ever-Merciful

**BASED ON THE MOST
AUTHORITATIVE BOOKS OF TAFSIR
(QUR'AN INTERPRETATION)**

THE FIRST JOURNEY

Through the first ten of the thirty parts of
the Noble Qur'an

From the Chapter of Al-Fatihah (1)
to the Chapter of Yunus (10)



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Read in the Name of
your Lord Who
created. He created
the human from a
clot. Read, and your
Lord is the Most
Generous, Who has
taught by the pen. He
has taught the human
that which he knew
not (Al-‘Alaq 96: 1-5).



The first revealed chapter of the Qur’an, *Al-‘Alaq* (literally, clinging clot), speaks in particular of the creation of humankind and its origin, a clinging clot. That little origin of simple composition is elevated by God to the rank of man and woman, who can be taught, who can learn, which reveals more about the Grace of our Creator than it does about His Power. *Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous.*

Read

Reading the Noble Qur'an gives the feeling that the speaker is all around, seeing and hearing everything; all-knowing of us – every feeling, every thought, every memory, every good or evil tendency; all-knowing of the heavens and earth – every atom, every breath of air, every grain of sand, every fruit on every tree; and all-knowing of the past, present, and future – every moment, every event, every detail. *«He knows what enters into the earth and what comes forth from it, what descends from the sky and what ascends to it. He is with you wherever you may be. And Allah¹ is the All-Seer of what you do.»* [Al-Hadid 57: 4-6]

While looking into the eyes, the Qur'an speaks, and while shaking us awake, it points us in the right direction with a tone of supreme authority, full lordship, and absolute sufficiency. *«Allah, there is no god except Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Sufficient Master Who sustains and protects all that exists. Neither slumber nor sleep overtake Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth.»* [Al-Baqarah 2: 255]

¹ The name of the One True God that is indicative and all-inclusive of every Divine Name and Attribute of Absolute Perfection: the One and Only God, the Maker, the Almighty, the All-Merciful, etc. In Arabic, it means 'the One exclusively worthy of deification and worship'. It is noteworthy that Allah is the same word that Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews use for God.

Enveloping us in its grandeur and majesty, it does not evoke in us a sense of distance or strangeness, but rather affinity with the divine words because of their familiarity with human nature, its needs, its fears, its pains, and its desires. *«Indeed, We (Allah) have created the human, and We know what his own self whispers to him. And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.»*
[Qaf 50: 16]

Reading and rereading it, each time with more purpose and focus, eventually forms a rope safely tying us to our Creator, as depicted by Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace): *“Truly, this Qur’an is a rope; one end of it is in Allah’s Hand and the other end is in yours. Hold fast to it. Indeed, you will never go astray or be ruined after it (after holding on to it).”* (Ibn Hibban)

1-Al-Fatihah

﴿In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of existence, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful, the Owner (Master) of the Day of Judgment. It is You (alone) we worship, and You (alone) we ask for help. Guide us to the Straight Path, the Path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not the path of those who have incurred Your Anger, nor of those who have gone astray.﴾ [Al-Fatihah 1: 1-7]

Al-Fatihah (the Opening) is so named because it is the chapter with which the Qur'an begins. It is also named *Umm Al-Qur'an* (the Mother of the Qur'an) and *As-Sab'-ul-Mathany* (Seven Oft-recited Verses).

Short and concise as it is, this Qur'anic chapter adroitly contains the totality of the Islamic creed, which reveals the wisdom behind the divine ruling that *Al-Fatihah* be recited in every unit of *Salah* (prayer) and the invalidity of *Salah* without it.

In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful.

The start of anything, as Allah guides, should be in His Name; everything in this Universe is in His Name and happens by His Will and Permission. Starting any action with Allah's Name means taking Him as one's Helper and Supporter in that action.

The mention of Allah's Name is accompanied by His two Sublime Attributes, the All-Merciful and the Ever-Merciful, as a constant reminder of the open doors of His Mercy; thus, no one should feel unwelcome.

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of existence.

Coming into existence out of nothing is a bounty from the Lord of existence, Who gives to all, and takes nothing for Himself. With every breath, His endless and continuous blessings flow by day and night, which can render the tongue speechless, at a loss for the right words. But Allah teaches that thanking Him is done with only two words, "*Alhamdu lillah* (Praise be to Allah)." This is a favor in itself. Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) expressed the human inability to fully thank our Creator, when he said: "*I cannot praise You enough. You are as You have praised Yourself.*" (Sahih Muslim)

The Owner (Master) of the Day of Judgment.

This is what gives balance to the whole world. Without it, the world would be a jungle. Without it, human life could not be elevated. Only through belief in the Day of Judgment can hearts find rest; what humans receive in this world is not their final portion. There is a world to come that is worth striving for, unrestricted by the limits of a lifetime or the scope of this earth.

Believers and disbelievers in this Day are not the same in their emotions, thoughts, behavior, or actions. Their attitude towards it splits them into two totally different types of people. Believers rarely lose sight of their inevitable meeting with Allah and retain Him in their thoughts and actions, for they know they will be judged. Disbelievers do not have Allah in any of their thoughts or actions. About them, Allah says: *«As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it to be nothing. Instead he finds Allah before him, Who will pay him in full his due. And Allah is swift in account.»* [An-Nur 24: 39]

It is You we worship, and You we ask for help.

As long as people worship only their Creator and seek only His Help, they are free and immune to subjugation by regimes, circumstances, or other humans. They will not fall prey to superstitions, myths, or fancies. Filled with feelings of submission to and reliance on Allah alone, Muslims live in this world free, with no fear of – or for – anything. They bow to Allah (Exalted be He) with humility and stand with their heads raised before everything else.

Guide us to the Straight Path.

This is the first and most important supplication a believer can pray for to continue to adhere to and practice Allah's True Religion, Islam, to attain happiness in this life and the next.

2-Al-Baqarah

﴿This is the Book about which there is no doubt; guidance for those conscious of Allah, who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in *Salah* (prayer), and spend out of what We have provided for them; those believe in the Revelation (the Qur'an) sent down to you (Muhammad) and sent down before you (the Zabur, the Torah, the Gospel, etc.), and believe with certainty in the Hereafter. It is they who are following their Lord's Guidance, and it is they who will prosper.﴾ [Al-Baqarah 2: 2-5]

At the very beginning of the Qur'anic chapter of Al-Baqarah, the Noble Qur'an refers to itself as the Book *﴿...about which there is no doubt.﴾* The implication here is that the truths enunciated by the Noble Qur'an are clear and self-evident to any normal person upon reflection, leaving no room for denial, suspicion, or hesitation.

The subsequent verses call mankind to worship its Maker alone and present certain acts specific to Allah alone as proof of Him being the only true God, exclusively worthy of deification and worship. *«O mankind, worship your Lord, Who created you and those before you, so that you may guard yourselves (against His Anger or Punishment). He Who has made for you the earth a bed (spread out), and the sky a canopy, and sent down water (rain) from the sky, and brought forth therewith fruits as provision for you. So do not set up rivals to Allah while you know (you have no god other than Him Who created you and provides for you).»* [Al-Baqarah 2: 21-22]

Similar to the creation of the earth and heavens, sending rain, and bringing forth vegetation is the Noble Qur'an, the like of which no human could ever produce. For those who suspect that it is the product of a human, the next verse proposes a challenge – to produce a passage resembling or equaling the Noble Qur'an in order to substantiate their claim, allowing them to call to their aid all possible helpers. *«And if you are in doubt about that which We have revealed to Our slave (Muhammad), produce a Surah (chapter) the like thereof and call on your witnesses (supporters and helpers), other than Allah, if you are truthful.»* [Al-Baqarah 2: 23]

The challenge lies not merely in the words and the style, but in the guidance, the spiritual efficacy, and the transforming power of the Qur'an. If their individual or collective endeavors should fail, and they certainly will, they should acknowledge the Noble Qur'an to be Allah's Word. If they should still persist in their denial, the next Qur'anic verse warns them of Hellfire, prepared for stubborn disbelievers. *«But if you do not, and you will never be able to, then guard yourselves against the Fire, whose fuel is people and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.»* [Al-Baqarah 2: 24]

﴿How can you disbelieve in Allah when you were dead and He brought you to life, then He will cause you to die, then He will bring you (back) to life, and then to Him you will be returned?﴾ [Al-Baqarah 2: 28]

Humans did not bring themselves into being by their own will. They were nothing before coming into this world, with no will to choose to be or not to be born into it. A will, other than their own, brought them into being and gave them life and all kinds of abilities, aptitudes, skills, and elements to enable them to live on earth.

Their submission to a power outside themselves is as palpable as the air they breathe. But what should never happen does happen: the undeniable is denied, even though humans carry the evidence of Allah in themselves and can see it in everything around them. Their transition from non-being to life and existence, then their inevitable transition from life to death, should alone be sufficient proof, as there is no other explanation except Allah and His absolute sovereign power. *﴿Allah is the One Who created you, then provided for you, then will cause you to die, and then will give you life (on the Day of Resurrection). Is there any of your (so-called) partners (gods you have taken along with or instead of Allah) that do anything of that? Exalted be He and high above what they associate with Him.﴾* [Ar-Rum 30: 40]

The vast distance between what humans begin as and what they become points to the hand of their mighty Creator. They begin as nothing but a formless and powerless fluid to become a single cell (zygote) that divides and organizes into diverse and complex tissues and organs such as muscles, bones, lungs, heart, liver, brain, and so forth to develop into a fully-formed human being able to move, see, hear, and perceive. They, then, argue with and oppose their Lord, haughtily demanding evidence, believing it to be too hard for the power that brought

them from nothing to resurrect them after decay and oblivion! ﴿O mankind, if you are in doubt about the resurrection, then verily We created you (i.e., your father, Adam) from dust, then (his progeny) from a Nutfah (mixed drops of male and female sexual discharge), then from an Alaqah (a leech-like clinging clot), then from a Mudghah (a chewed-like lump of flesh), some formed and some unformed (miscarried). We thus clarify (it) for you (i.e., show you that resurrection is not more difficult for Us than your creation). And We cause whom We will to remain in the wombs for an appointed term, then We bring you out as infants, then (give you growth) that you may reach your age of full strength. And among you there are they who die (young), and among you there are they who are brought back to the decrepit age (senility), so that they know nothing after having known.﴾ [Al-Hajj 22: 5]

﴿Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, and the ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits mankind, and the water (rain) which Allah sends down from the sky and makes the earth alive therewith after its death, and the moving (living) creatures of all kinds that He has scattered therein, and in the veering of winds and clouds which are held between the sky and the earth, are indeed *Ayat* (signs or evidence) for people who use reason.﴾ [Al-Baqarah 2: 164]

The miracles of the prophets were something other than the messages they preached. The turning of Moses's (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) staff into a snake and the parting of the Red Sea were separate from the Torah, and the healing gift of Jesus (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and his ability to bring the dead back to life were separate from the Gospel. Even though these acts only occurred at the hands of prophets, and the populace responded to them with belief, they are irrelevant to the mission of a prophet or the aims of Divine Revelation and Divine Law.

Allah (Glorified be He) willed that the miracle supporting the last message, Islam, be inseparable from its essence; that the truths of the message and the proof of its truthfulness be one Book.

The Noble Qur'an – with the moral, social, and justice laws it contains and the ethics, virtues, and rectitude it implants – is the very message of Islam. It is its miracle.

A physical miracle compels the mind to believe; instead, the Noble Qur'an addresses the mind directly, restoring its natural function, and proceeds to build belief and certainty based on absolute mental freedom. It draws the mind to the wondrous signs of creation and the moral values that the message contains, and urges it to use its faculties to accept or reject faith.

Its words remove the bandages from the eyes and hearts so that people may contemplate the endless wonders of creation in the heavens, on the earth, and in themselves, all testifying to the One Almighty, All-Powerful God, and to the truthfulness of the Message of Allah's Oneness.

Certainly, these wondrous spectacles, when reflected upon with open eyes and a conscious heart, as the Noble Qur'an urges, will cause a shiver to run through the body from the Mightiness of Allah's Power. In each of them lies the miracle that inspires hearts and guides souls to their Maker.

«Do they not look at the camels, how they are created? And at the heaven, how it is raised? And at the mountains, how they are rooted and fixed firm? And at the earth, how it is spread out?»
[Al-Ghashiyah 88: 17-20]

«Do they not see the birds above them, spreading out their wings and folding them in? None holds them aloft except the Most Merciful (Allah). Verily, He is the All-Seer of everything.» [Al-Mulk 67: 19]

«Have they not seen how We drive water (rain clouds) to barren land, and therewith bring forth crops providing food for their cattle and themselves? Will they not then see?» [Al-Sajdah 32: 27]

«Have they not traveled through the land and have hearts wherewith to understand and ears wherewith to hear? Verily, it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts that are in the breasts that grow blind.» [Al-Hajj 22: 46]

That is the miraculous effect of the Qur'an; the living sign and miracle of the Last Prophet of Islam. As long as humans respect their minds, the value of this miracle shall persist. It shall persist as long as the mind remains the most precious commodity and people use it to judge matters – unprejudiced.

«Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west (in prayers), but (true) righteousness is the one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets; gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, those who ask (for help), and (to free) those in bondage (slaves and captives); is steadfast in *Salah* (prayer) and gives *Zakah* (obligatory charity); fulfills their promise when they make a promise; and is patient in poverty, disease, and during battle. Such are they who have been true. Such are the Allah-fearing.» [Al-Baqarah 2: 177]

There is no point turning the face towards the *Qiblah* (direction faced in prayer) without a full turning of the heart towards Allah as well. The outward performance of rituals, devoid of feeling and proper conduct, does not make a person righteous. To be achieved, righteousness must develop into concepts, feelings, actions, and behavior, impacting on the life of the individual and society. Faith in Allah is the peak, which entails faith in everything unseen or unwitnessed that He tells us to believe in; namely, the Last Day, His Angels, all divine

books, and all His Messengers (disbelief in any is tantamount to disbelief in all). Belief must then move from the sphere of emotions to the sphere of action and affectivity, and beyond the walls of the individual to the wide expanse of the group or community, through which Allah's Law is truly lived out, practiced, and used to shape identity.

﴿And when My servants ask you (O Muhammad) about Me, indeed I am near. I answer the supplication of the supplicant when he calls upon Me (without any mediator or intercessor). So let them respond to (obey) Me and believe in Me, so that they may be rightly guided.﴾ [Al-Baqarah 2: 186]

Near and responsive – this is how Allah wants to be known. Directly and without mediators – this is how Allah wants to be reached. Exclusively and without rivals – this is how Allah wants to be obeyed and worshipped. On hearing the Companions raising their voices in *Takbir* (saying, "*Allahu Akbar* [Allah is the Greatest]"), the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "*O people, be easy with yourselves (and lower your voices). You are not calling upon one who is deaf or absent; you are calling upon One Who is All-Hearing and Close. And He is with you.*" (Sahih Muslim)

Just as He is unlimited, so are His Answers. For anyone, in any place, at any time, under any circumstances, Allah is there, at hand, approachable, easily accessible, and ready to help, protect, and provide for whoever calls upon Him alone. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, "Our Lord (Blessed and Exalted is He) descends every night to the nearest heaven (to our world), when only the last third of the night remains, and says, '*Is there any seeker of My Favor that I may give to them? Is there any supplicant that I may answer them? Is there any asker of forgiveness that I may forgive them?*' This continues until the break of dawn." (Sahih Muslim)

«There is no compulsion in (the acceptance of) religion. Truth stands clear of falsehood. Whoever disbelieves in *Taghut* (false gods) and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break.» [Al-Baqarah 2: 256]

Humans were purposely created different from angels. Angels have no choice but to worship and obey Allah. Allah thus decided to create a being whose worship of Him would be superior because it would be done out of free choice; a being capable of good and evil, with desires, needs, and temptations, that still chooses to worship Him and sacrifice—something angels cannot do; and upon this score, surpasses angels.

Necessary to choosing to be a worshipper of Allah is the component of sincerity, which is incompatible with compulsion. Actions which are coerced have no value. The aim of religion is to place moral value on every action. *«And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed, all of them entirely. Then, (O Muhammad), would you compel the people in order that they become believers?»* [Yunus 10: 99]

Therefore, *«there is no compulsion in religion.»* Faith is a matter of the heart and conscience, both of which are beyond force and because *«truth stands clear of falsehood.»* Truth has absolute authority within the human conscience, which calls it urgently to affirm its Creator and Sustainer.

That distinct truth, once grasped, remains forever as one first grasped it; strong and secure. And when that which humans hold on to is strong, they too become strong; and with that strength comes true freedom. It is of that freedom that the eminent scholar Ibn Taymiyyah said: *“What can my enemies do to me? My paradise is in my heart (with me wherever I am). Imprisoning me is seclusion with my Lord. Exiling me is travel in Allah’s Cause. Killing me is martyrdom.”*

«Allah is the *Wali* (Supporter and Protector) of those who believe. He brings them out of manifold darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their *Auliya* (pl. of *Wali*) are *Taghut* (false gods). They bring them out of light into manifold darkness. Those are the dwellers of the Fire, and they will abide therein forever.» [Al-Baqarah 2: 257]

There can be no description more fitting for belief than light, and none more fitting for disbelief than manifold darkness. «*Is he who was dead (without belief) and We (Allah) gave him life and made for him a light (by belief) with which to walk among the people like him who is in manifold darkness (of disbelief) from which he can never come out?*» [Al-'An'am 6: 122]

Once belief settles into the soul, it shines within and brings peace, clarity, and insight. It causes a person to come into harmony with Allah's Universal Laws, which govern this entire existence. Therefore, it is described as one light (singular), as it guides to one path.

Error and disbelief, on the contrary, contain manifold forms of darkness. The darkness of wandering aimlessly with no path to follow; the darkness of servility and subjugation to those other than Allah; the darkness of doubt and confusion; the darkness of indulging in whims and lusts; the darkness of pride and oppression; the darkness of hypocrisy and deceit; the darkness of greed and envy; and other endless forms of darkness that gather upon people when they stray from Allah's Path and Laws. «*Or (the state of a disbeliever is) like the darkness in a vast unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds; layers of darkness one above another. If one puts out his hand, he can hardly see it! And he to whom Allah does not give light, can have no light.*» [An-Nur 24: 40]

«Have you heard of the one who, because Allah had given him kingship, argued with Ibrahim (Abraham) about his Lord (Allah)? When Ibrahim said (to him), "My Lord is He Who gives life and causes death," he said, "I give life and cause death." Ibrahim said, "Verily, Allah brings the sun from the east, so bring it from the west." Thus, the disbeliever was dumbfounded, and Allah does not guide the unjust people.» [Al-Baqarah 2: 258]

This is an example of how Allah supports those who believe in Him and abandons those who reject faith. The arrogant king argued with Prophet Abraham (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) about Allah, denying His existence, for the same reason he should have believed in Him and shown gratitude towards Him: «*because Allah had given him kingship*» and placed authority in his hands. Instead, he ruled people by his law, not Allah's Law, and claimed for himself what belonged only to Allah.

The power of life and death are in the hands of no one but Allah, without exception. Any attempts to explain them as being separate from Allah are nonsense. Prophet Abraham, in answer to the king's question about who his Lord was, defined his Lord by His Exclusive and Unrivalled Divine Attribute: «*He Who gives life and causes death*». But the arrogant king claimed the same for himself. And to give Abraham proof, he summoned two prisoners and ordered that one be released and the other be killed!

Wisely, Prophet Abraham proceeded no further in this line of argument, and shifted its course from confronting the king with undeniable facts about Allah to challenging him to change these facts. «*Allah brings the sun from the east*»; if you are god, «*bring it from the west*»!

The truth is crystal clear, leaving no doubt, and is open to no misunderstanding or argument. Accepting it is what is natural and just. But when disbelievers are overwhelmed by pride, which is a major deterrent to receiving the truth, it throws them into error and injustice, creating a barrier between themselves and guidance.

﴿Or (have you heard of) the one who, on passing by an empty town that had fallen into utter ruin, said, "How will Allah ever bring this to life after its death?" So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then brought him to life. He (Allah) said, "How long have you remained (dead)?" He (the man) said, "(Perhaps) I have remained a day or part of a day." He (Allah) said, "Nay, you have remained (dead) for a hundred years. Look at your food and your drink; they have not changed with time. And look at your donkey! And, thus We have made of you a sign for the people. Look at the bones (of your donkey), how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh." When this was clearly shown to him, he said, "I know (now) that Allah is Able to do all things.﴾ [Al-Baqarah 2: 259]

On the contrary, the speaker in this verse acknowledges Allah, but the scene of total emptiness and decay that had overcome the town he passed by filled him with wonder about "*How will Allah bring this town to life after its death?*" Rather than tell him, Allah actually made him experience, in real life, how He would make it happen. He caused him to die for a hundred years and then brought him back to life. The man, his food, and his drink remained intact, just as they were, showing no signs of age. The effect of the hundred years was only visible on his donkey, which became scattered bones. Then the sign occurred: the bones were lifted, brought together, clothed with flesh, and given life again right before the man's eyes, who, in contrast,

had remained safe from decay. Their different destinies – although they had both remained in the same place, for the same duration, subject to the same weather and environmental conditions – was another sign of Allah’s Omnipotence. Indeed, with Allah there are no limits or impossibilities.

﴿The example of those who spend their wealth in Allah’s Way is like a grain (of corn) which grows seven ears; in each ear is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies (His Reward) for whom He wills. Allah is All-Munificent, All-Knowing. Those who spend their wealth in Allah’s Cause, and do not follow up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury, their reward is with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.﴾ [Al-Baqarah 2: 261-262]

The utter perishing and decay of material things, and then their confirmed resurrection, is juxtaposed in the subsequent Qur’anic verses by that which never perishes and remains of ongoing benefit until the Day of Resurrection – charity, through which whatever is given to others for Allah’s Sake, hoping for His Reward, is given permanency. Charity is similar to a good seed sown in fertile land; a seed that grows and multiplies, and continues to bring forth fruit a hundredfold or more, in proportion to the degree of faith and sincerity with which it is paid.

The family of Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) slaughtered a sheep and gave it all in charity except for its shoulder. When the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) came, he asked, “*What has remained of it?*” His wife, Lady ‘Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her), said, “*Nothing has remained of it except its shoulder.*” He replied, “*Rather, all of it has remained except its shoulder.*” [That is, what is eaten of it is gone; what is given in charity will last.] (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

«The Messenger (Muhammad) believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers, (saying), "We make no distinction between any of His Messengers." And they say, "We hear, and we obey. (We seek) Your Forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the final return (of all)." Allah does not charge a soul except with that within its capacity. It will reap the consequence of what good it has earned, and it will bear the consequence of what evil it has earned. "Our Lord, punish us not if we forget or fall into error. Our Lord, lay not on us a burden like that which You laid on those before us. Our Lord, impose not on us that which we have not the strength to bear. Pardon us. Forgive us. Have mercy on us. You are our *Maula* (Supporter, Protector, Guardian), so give us victory over the disbelieving people."» [Al-Baqarah 2: 285-286]

The Chapter of Al-Baqarah, the longest in the Qur'an, concludes with these two great verses that perfectly summarize the core duties of faith in Allah, ensuring that they are feasible and within the realm of human capability. Each person is individually accountable for applying or failing to apply them – nobody is held accountable for the actions of others. Every soul, and no one else, will bear the consequences of the good or evil it does during this life journey. *«No bearer of burden (sins) shall bear the burden (sins) of another. That a human shall have nothing but what he does (good or bad). That his deeds will be seen, then he will be recompensed for them with the fullest recompense.»* [An-Najm 53: 38-41]

There is a point of realization of individual responsibility and each person's inevitable return to Allah, alone, with their own record of deeds, without expecting to be referred to or supported by anyone. *«You have come to Us alone (without*

wealth, companions, or anything else) as We created you the first time (naked and barefooted). You have left behind you all that which We had bestowed on you. We do not see with you your intercessors whom you claimed to be partners with Allah. Now all relations between you and them have been cut off, and all that you used to claim has vanished from you.﴾ [Al-An'am 6: 94] When it occurs, it awakens the desire to turn to Allah for forgiveness, mercy, and support. This is how believers should relate themselves to Allah at all times.

3-Al-'Imran

﴿Allah, there is no god but Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of existence. It is He Who has sent down to you (O Muhammad) the Book with the truth, confirming what came before it. And He sent down the Torah and the Gospel aforetime, as guidance for mankind, and sent down the *Furqan* (the Distinguisher and Separator between truth and falsehood, right and wrong [this Qur'an]). Truly, those who disbelieve in the *Ayat* (proof, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of Allah will suffer severe torment; and Allah is All-Mighty, All-Able of Retribution. Truly, nothing is hidden from Allah, on the earth or in the heavens. It is He Who shapes you in the wombs as He pleases. There is no god except Him, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.﴾ [Al-'Imran 3: 2-6]

The unequivocal declaration of the absolute Oneness of Allah is followed by that of the unity of the source of all divine books and messages. The God Who revealed the Torah to Moses and the Gospel to Jesus is the same God Who revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad (may Allah bless them and grant them peace). All divine books contain one and the same religion and truth, for one and the same goal; namely, to guide mankind.

The last heavenly revealed book, the Qur'an, stands as a witness over all previously revealed Books, confirming whatever is true in them, rejecting any distortions made in them, and abrogating some of their laws. *«We have sent down to you (O Muhammad) the Book (this Qur'an) with the truth, confirming the Scriptures that came before it, and as an authoritative witness and judge over it (old Scriptures).»* [Al-Ma'idah 5: 48]

Besides the Qur'an (literally, reading or recitation), Allah (Exalted be He) called His Book by several other names, pointing to its other sublime attributes, which itself is a sign of the honor and grandeur of this Book. These names include *Kalam Allah* (Allah's Words), *Habl Allah* (Allah's Rope), *Amru Allah* (Allah's Command), *Al-Furqan* (the Distinguisher between Truth and Falsehood), *Al-Kitab* (the Book), *At-Tanzil* (the Revelation), *Ar-Ruh* (Soul or Life [as it overcomes death through ignorance]), *As-Sidq* (the Truth), *Al-'Ilm* (the Knowledge), *Al-Huda* (the Guidance), *An-Nur* (the Light), *Ash-Shifa'* (the Healing), *Al-Bayan* (the Eloquent Speech), *Al-Mau'izhah* (the Good Advice), *Ar-Rahmah* (the Mercy), *Al-Basa'ir* (the Clear Insights and Evidence), *Al-Balagh* (the Well-Informed Message), *Al-Mubin* (the Truth Clarifier), *Al-Karim* (the Most Honorable), *Al-'Azhim* (the Most Great), *Al-Majid* (the Ever-Glorious), *Al-Mubarak* (the Blessed), *Al-'Ai Al-Hakim* (the Exalted, Full of Wisdom), *As-Sirat Al-Mustaqim* (the Straight Path), *Adh-Dhikr Al-Hakim* (the Wise Reminder), *At-Tadhkirah* (the Admonition), and *Al-Bashir* (the Giver of Glad Tidings), and *An-Nadhir* (the Warner).

Unlike previous Books, which were revealed for a specific people for a specific time, and whose preservation was entrusted to those people to whom they were sent down, the Glorious Qur'an, which is the last revelation for all mankind until the end of time, shall forever remain authentic and unaltered through Allah's Own Protection of His Word. *«It is We Who have sent down the Dhikr (the Qur'an) and it is We Who will guard it (from corruption - any change to the original text).»* [Al-Hijr 15: 9]

Covering up truth with denial, after knowledge of the Qur'an, will therefore receive a painful torment from Allah, Who knows what is shown and what is hidden. *«Behold, they (the disbelievers) bend their breasts that they may hide (their feelings, on hearing the Qur'an, that the speaker is Allah) from Him. Surely, even when they cover themselves with their garments, He knows what they conceal and what they reveal. Verily, He is the All-Knower of that within the breasts.»* [Hud 11: 5]

The tone of the Qur'anic verse then becomes one of awakening, a reminder of the time when, in the darkness of the womb, mankind was without knowledge, power, or awareness. It was totally Allah's Decision in what manner, and what shape, mankind would be created, which introduces the theme of the conception and birth of Jesus (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), the details of which unfold as the Chapter of Al-'Imran (the Family of Amram) progresses.

﴿(And mention) when the angels said, "O Maryam (Mary), indeed Allah gives you the glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, 'Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam, held in honor in this world and in the Hereafter, and will be among those who are near to Allah. He will speak to the people in the cradle and in maturity, and he will be of the righteous." She asked, "My Lord, how can I have a son when no man has touched me?" He (the angel) said, "Such is Allah; He creates what He wills. When He decrees something, He only says to it, 'Be!' and it is. And He will teach him the Book and wisdom, and the Torah and the Gospel.﴾

[Al-'Imran 3: 45-48]

﴿And (will make him) a Messenger to the Children of Israel, (saying), 'Indeed I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. I make for you out of clay the figure of a bird, then breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's Permission. And I heal those born blind and the lepers, and I bring the dead to life by Allah's Permission. And I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses. Surely, there is a sign for you in that, if you are believers. And (I have come) confirming the Torah that was (revealed) before me, and to allow you some of what was forbidden to you. And I have come to you with proof from your Lord, so fear Allah and obey me. Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. This is the straight path.'﴾ [Al-'Imran 3: 49-51]

Truth is clear and easily credible. Anything other than Allah is His creation. He creates whatever He wills, however He wills; whether by direct command, without a male or a female, as He created Adam; or from a male without a female, as He created Eve; or from a female without a male, as He created Jesus; or from a male and a female, as with the rest of mankind. *﴿O mankind, fear your Lord, Who created you from a single soul (Adam), and from it He created its mate (Adam's wife, Eve), and from them both He spread (through the earth) many men and women.﴾* [An-Nisa' 4: 1]

Offspring are not automatic either, but depend wholly on Allah's Will, Who may give daughters to some; sons to others; both sons and daughters to others; and neither sons nor daughters to others, instead causing them to be barren. *﴿To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills. He bestows female offspring on whom He wills, and bestows male offspring on whom He wills. Or He bestows both males and females, and He makes whom He will barren. Verily, He is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.﴾* [Ash-Shura 42: 49-50]

Jesus's birth without a father was not intended as a sign of his divinity, but rather of Allah's absolute power of creation. Inviting the Christian delegation of Najran to reason with him, Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) asked, *"Do you wonder about Jesus's birth without a father?" If so, Adam had no father or mother.*" Allah created Adam from dust, to which He gave His Command, "Be", and it became a human. If the miraculous birth of Jesus makes him divine, then Adam is more deserving of that claim of divinity; Jesus at least had one parent; Adam had none. Just as Adam was not divine, nor was Jesus divine. Rather, both were honorable prophets and humble servants of Allah. *«Indeed, to Allah, Jesus is like Adam. He created him from dust, then said to him, 'Be,' and he was.»* [Al-'Imran 3: 59]

Another unassailable fact is presented in the Noble Qur'an through the following verse. *«The Messiah, son of Maryam, was no more than a messenger; many were the messengers that passed away before him. And his mother was a Siddiqah (strong believer). They both used to eat food. Look how We make the proof clear to them, then look how they (disbelievers) turn away.»* [Al-Ma'idah 5: 75] To see the truth, there must first be willingness. Need and want cannot be characteristic of Allah, Who is All-Perfect. Both the Messiah and his pious mother used to eat. The need to eat, drink, and void nullifies any claim to divinity.

Thus, with logic and evidence, the doctrines of sonship and trinity that crept into Christianity are clearly and strongly confuted throughout the Qur'an, and their followers are warned to desist from them. *«O people of the Scripture, do not exceed the limits of your religion, nor say anything about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam, was no more than a Messenger of Allah and His Word ('Be' and he was), which He bestowed on Maryam, and a soul created by Him. So, believe in Allah and His Messengers, and do not say, 'Three.' Desist! It is*

better for you. Indeed, Allah is one. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And Sufficient is Allah as a Disposer of affairs. ﴿An-Nisa' 4: 171﴾

﴿And (mention, O Muhammad), when Allah took the covenant of the prophets, (saying), "No matter (how great) is that which I give you of the Book and wisdom, and then there comes to you a messenger confirming what is with you, you must, then, believe in him and support him." Allah said, "Do you affirm and accept My Covenant?" They said, "We affirm it." Allah said, "Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses." Then whoever turns away after this, they are the defiantly disobedient.﴾ [Al-'Imran 3: 81-82]

The line of the Prophets, successive and supportive, forms one unified whole, by a solemn covenant taken from each, from Adam to Jesus (may Allah bless them all and grant them peace); every prophet and his nation must believe in and support any coming prophet, regardless of the extent of the knowledge revealed to them from Allah. The purpose of this is to humbly take up and pass on guidance, not personal glory, ascendancy, or aggrandizement. The mission is all about others, not oneself. It is based on unity rather than plurality, solidarity rather than individualism, and harmony rather than conflict. Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, *"The Prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, and their religion is one."* (Sahih Muslim)

This is also clear in the words of Jesus (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."* (Matthew 5: 17)

Through this binding covenant, Allah's Religion was preserved against the promptings of zealotry and bigotry, whether on the part of the prophets or their followers. Thus, the successive messengers remained one body, affirming one another and preaching the Oneness of Allah, as Allah commanded them: *«You should establish religion, and not be divided therein.»* [Ash-Shura 42: 13]

Against this background of fraternity and selflessness, fanatical attachment to the externals rather than the essence of previous divine messages – which originally called people to believe in and support the Last of the Prophets – is considered a defiant breach of that covenant made to Allah.

«Is it other than Allah's Religion they desire, when to Him have submitted all that is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they shall be returned?»
[Al-'Imran 3: 83]

It is Allah's Will that humans alone, out of all living beings, have free will. But whether people choose to accept or reject Almighty Allah, they, as the rest of the universe, submit to Allah's Sovereign Law; a believer, willingly, in matters of both free will (choice) and non-free will (fate), and a disbeliever, unwillingly, in matters of non-free will. However, this exercise of volition is neither indefinite nor unaccountable. It is limited by the inescapability of death and the finite time of life on earth, and will then follow the inevitable return of each person to Allah and accountability before Him for free will choices made in the worldly life.

﴿Say (O Muhammad), "We believe in Allah, and in that which was revealed to us, and that which was revealed to Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma'il (Ishmael), Ishaque (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob), and the Descendents (the twelve sons of Jacob), and in that which was given to Musa (Moses) and 'Isa (Jesus) and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him (Allah) we have submitted ourselves." And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam (literally, submission and resignation to Allah alone), it will never be accepted of them, and in the Hereafter they will be among the losers.﴾ [Al-'Imran 3: 84-85]

Acceptance of Allah's Religion entails acceptance of every prophet He sent and every book He revealed. Denial of any is a denial of all. That is the universal religion of Islam; a totality of all previously revealed divine messages, as Allah commanded His Messenger Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to declare to the world; and the loyalty it enjoins towards the previous messengers who preached one and the same faith. *﴿We did not send before you any messenger but We revealed to him that, "There is no god but Me (Allah), so worship Me."﴾* [Al-Anbiya' 21: 25]

﴿And hold fast, all of you together, to Allah's Rope (i.e., His Religion or the Qur'an), and be not divided among yourselves. And remember (with gratitude) Allah's Favor upon you; for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together so that, by His Grace, you became brethren. And you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His Signs clear to you that you may be guided.﴾ [Al-'Imran 3: 103]

One thing against which historical hostilities, tribal revenge, racist banners, and personal interests dwarf into insignificance is brotherhood through faith in Allah. Nothing else could have reconciled the long-warring tribes of Aws and Khazraj (two main tribes of pre-Islamic Medina) referred to in this Qur'anic verse.

The Arabs of that time were fiercely sectarian and tribal, prepared to defend any one of their own, even if he was a criminal, to the very last man. They had a saying, "*Support your brother, whether he is the oppressor or the one oppressed.*" For Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to declare that bonds of faith surpass that of tribe and family was nothing short of revolutionary.

During pre-Islamic times, long, bloody civil wars raged between the two tribes of the Aws and Khazraj, the inhabitants of Al-Madinah. The last was the Battle of Bu'ath that shattered the strength of both. Their people were divided, their chiefs killed and wounded.

Hatred, enmity, and disbelief were pushing them closer and closer to the precipice of destruction, when, through the Prophet's arrival among them, Allah saved them and untied their hearts. Even though not all the treasures of the earth, if spent, could have united them, Allah (Glorified be He) united them and gathered them around His Messenger. *«It is He who supported you with His Help and with the believers, and brought together their hearts. If you had spent all that is on the earth, you could not have brought their hearts together; but Allah brought them together. Indeed, He is All-Mighty, All-Wise.»* [Al-Anfal 8: 62-63]

After this, they were no longer Aws and Khazraj. The *Hijrah* (the Prophet's migration to Madinah) established immediate peace and unity between the two warring tribes and blended them into one whole, with the epithet "*Al-Ansar*" (the Supporters) bestowed on whoever supported and defended the new faith.

The relationship between the *Ansar* became one of mutual respect, love, and true brotherhood, which taught them to support one another by turning their backs on bloodshed and ruin and standing up against injustice.

The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, *"Support your brother, whether he is the oppressor or the oppressed."* A man asked, *"O Messenger of Allah, I will support him if he is oppressed; but tell me, if he is an oppressor, how shall I support him?"* He replied, *"Prevent him from (doing) injustice; that is supporting him."* (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

﴿And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous; those who spend (benevolently) in prosperity and in adversity, who repress anger, and who pardon people. Verily, Allah loves the doers of good. And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves (by transgression), remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins – and who can forgive sins except Allah? – and do not knowingly persist in what (wrong) they have done. For such, the reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they shall abide forever. And excellent is the reward of the (righteous) workers.﴾ [Al-'Imran 3: 133-136]

The stronger the faith, the greater the haste and competitiveness with which Allah's Forgiveness and Paradise are sought, manifesting as prompt repentance of sin as soon as it is committed; and prompt readiness to be good and do good, summarized by the above Qur'anic verses as giving and forgiving throughout both the prosperous and difficult times of life.

One does not know when death will come. At this point of consciousness, time becomes an impelling factor, and speed takes the place of procrastination. Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) advised, saying, *"Deliberateness is good in everything except when it comes to the deeds of the Hereafter."* (Al-Mustadrak)

'Uqbah bin Al-Harith narrated, "I offered the 'Asr (afternoon) Prayer with the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), who, after finishing the prayer, got up quickly and went (into the house) to one of his wives. On coming out, he saw the astonishment on the faces of the people because of his speed, which he explained, saying, *'I remembered while in prayer a piece of gold that we had at home, and I disliked that it should remain with us throughout the night or until the morning. So I ordered it to be distributed to the poor.'*" (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

«Indeed Allah conferred a great favor on the believers when He sent among them a Messenger (Muhammad) from among themselves, reciting to them His Verses (the Qur'an), purifying them, and teaching them the Book (the Qur'an) and Wisdom (Sunnah), while before that they had been in manifest error.» [Al-'Imran 3: 164]

The shift, the transformation, the awakening from ignorance and barbarism to knowledge, purity, and wisdom which Allah brings about in the lives of people through His Messenger Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), who once lived among them and passed through all human experiences, is indeed a great gift from Him. For actions are more powerful than words. Words remain just words, merely a static law. There must be a heart that influences the world of humans by carrying the law and transforming it into a vivid reality that moves and acts in their world. Consequently,

attachment develops, induces adoption of the law, and molds the behavior, attitudes, feelings, and thoughts of people accordingly. With every revealed Book, therefore, Allah sent a prophet to give His Words the power of life.

Regarding how life-changing Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was for people, Ja'far bin Abu Talib narrated to the Negus, when he and a group of persecuted Muslims sought asylum, "O king, we were ignorant people who worshiped idols, ate dead meat, committed obscenities, severed the ties of the womb (kinship), ill-treated the neighbors, and allowed the strong among us to devour the weak. We remained so until Allah sent us a Messenger from among ourselves. We know his descent, his truthfulness, his honesty, and his chastity. He invited us to Allah, to believe in His Oneness and worship Him alone, and cast off the stones and idols that our forefathers and we used to worship besides Him. He ordered us to speak the truth, render back the trust, join the ties of the womb, treat the neighbors kindly, and refrain from bloodshed and things forbidden. He forbade us from immoralities, making forged statements, devouring the property of orphans, and calumniating chaste women. He ordered us to worship Allah alone, associating nothing with Him, and to offer prayer, pay obligatory charity, and fast (Ramadan)..."

4-An-Nisa'

﴿O mankind, fear your Lord, Who created you from a single soul (Adam), and from it He created its mate (Adam's wife, Eve), and from them both He spread (through the earth) many men and women.﴾ [An-Nisa' 4: 1]

This is a reminder to humanity of the unity of its Maker and origin, which, when forgotten, causes everything else to sink into forgetfulness and chaos. Had this truth been accepted and

maintained, humanity would have been spared all the misery and suffering it has endured because of ethnic, racial, class, and gender conflicts. *﴿O mankind, We (Allah) have created you from a male (Adam) and a female (Eve), and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in Allah's Sight is the most pious of you.﴾* [Al-Hujurat 49: 13]

Allah created the human family from one soul and shaped it into nations and tribes for the purpose of knowledge; so they may know, complement, and cooperate with one another, not divide and fight.

Criteria of superiority or inferiority established by people are worthless. Excellence of wealth, birth, color, race, or country is of no value in Allah's Sight, as the scales will only balance a person's deeds. *"Anyone whose deeds slow them down, their lineage will not help them speed up,"* Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) warned. (Sahih Muslim)

Superiority of one over another is only attained by piety, as Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) declared during the Farewell Hajj. *"O people, verily your Lord is One and your father is one (i.e., Adam). Behold, there is no superiority of the Arab over the non-Arab, or of the non-Arab over the Arab, or of the red over the black, or of the black over the red except by piety. Have I informed you?"* (Musnad Ahmad)

﴿Marry women of your choice, two or three, or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one or what your right hands possess. That is nearer to prevent you from doing injustice.﴾ [An-Nisa' 4: 3]

Polygyny was not initiated by Islam; it existed in previous divine messages. Some prophets before Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) were

polygamous (including Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon, may Allah bless them all and grant them peace). In a social context, it was widely practiced in pre-Islamic communities, without an upper limit or restrictions. Islam implemented an upper limit of four wives, permitting a man to marry more than one wife only on the condition that he can deal justly with and can afford to maintain multiple wives.

Merely fearing the inability to be morally and financially just with more than one wife limits man to the choice "...then marry only one." Therefore, polygamy is not a rule, but an exception, flexible enough to relate to various circumstances, times, cultures, and needs, and firmly shuts the door on illicit relations. It has a strict restriction that prevents any abuse of such a right on the part of men, which is perfect justice, even in feelings – something man can never totally achieve. *«You will never be able to do perfect justice (in feelings) between wives, even if it is your ardent desire.»* [An-Nisa' 4: 129]

Since equality of rights, not feelings, is what lies within human capability, Allah (Exalted be He) warns: *«So do not incline too much to one of them so as to leave the other hanging. And if you do justice, and do all that is right and fear Allah, then indeed, Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.»* [An-Nisa' 4: 129]

Completion rather than competition; as a garment is to the body, covering, protecting, and providing warmth, so are a husband and wife depicted by the Qur'an, each as the covering and protection of the other. *«They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them.»* [Al-Baqarah 2: 187]

The distribution of the responsibilities of married life is balanced and in harmony with the physiological and psychological make-up of men and women. *«And they (women) have rights (over their husbands) similar to those (of their husbands) over them, according to what is reasonable; but men have a degree (of responsibility) over them.»* [Al-Baqarah 2: 228] *«Men are the protectors and maintainers of women by (right of)*

what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend (for maintenance) from their wealth.﴾ [An-Nisa' 4: 34]

Each spouse is entitled to reciprocal rights and owes duties to their partner, with an extra role reserved for husbands – that of *Qawamah* (guardianship, caretaking, financial maintenance, and protection) – which adds responsibility, not superiority, to men, and is a natural law in any collective life that entitles the gentler sex to support and protection, and allocates work based on who is naturally qualified to do what.

Difference does not mean inequality; assigned roles are finely attuned to the nature of each spouse and to the well-knit fabric of a stable society, in which each performs the role for which they have been created and both are treated on equal terms with regard to reward and punishment. ﴿*For men there is reward for what they have earned, and for women there is reward for what they have earned, and ask Allah of His Bounty.*﴾ [An-Nisa' 4: 32] And to both, Allah gives His Promise: ﴿*Never will I allow the work of any of you to be lost, whether male or female. One of you is as the other.*﴾ [Al-'Imran 3: 195]

﴿Surely, We have sent down to you (O Muhammad) the Book (Qur'an) with the truth that you might judge between people by that which Allah has shown you, so be not a pleader for the treacherous. And seek Allah's Forgiveness; certainly, Allah is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And argue not on behalf of those who deceive themselves. Verily, Allah does not love the one who is treacherous and sinful. They may hide (their crimes) from people, but they cannot hide (them) from Allah, for He is with them (by His Knowledge), when they plot by night in words of which He does not approve. And Allah ever encompasses what they do.﴾

﴿Lo! You are those who have argued for them in the life of this world, but who will argue for them on the Day of Resurrection against Allah, or who will then be their defender? * And whoever does evil or wrongs himself but afterwards seeks Allah's Forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And whoever earns sin, he earns it only against himself. And Allah is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise. And whoever earns a fault or a sin and then blames it on someone innocent, he has indeed burdened himself with falsehood and a manifest sin.﴾
[An-Nisa' 4: 105-112]

* The reprimanding speech here is addressed to Ta'mah's kin, who defended Ta'mah even though he was a thief.

The agreed-upon occasion for the revelation of these Qur'anic verses was when a Jew was unjustly accused of stealing. The real thief was a Muslim man from the *Ansar* (Supporters) who faked evidence, aided by his kin, to incriminate the innocent Jew with perjury and false testimony.

Ta'mah bin Ibariq, the real thief, swore that he did not steal. His kin asked the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to vouch for him and declare him innocent. Consequently, Noble Qur'anic verses, angry and protective of the truth, were sent down to uphold justice by exculpating the non-Muslim and castigating the Muslim and his kin.

Although the *Ansar* was the party that supported Islam, and the Jewish minority in Al-Madinah constituted the party that warred against it, Allah's Justice makes no distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, friends and foes.

Justice in Islam must be served and truth upheld, even if it is against oneself or one's closest relatives, whether rich or poor: *«O you who believe! Stand up firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, or your kin, be they rich or poor. Allah is a Better Protector to both (than you). So follow not your (personal) inclinations, lest you swerve from justice. And if you distort your testimony or refuse to give it, indeed, Allah is Ever Well Acquainted with what you do.»* [An-Nisa' 4: 135]

A lady committed theft during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). Her folk asked Usamah bin Zaid (may Allah be pleased with him) to intercede with the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) on her behalf. But when Usamah pleaded for her, the color of the Prophet's face changed and he replied, *"Are you interceding regarding (to revoke or obstruct) one of the penalties prescribed by Allah (for violating His Law)?"* Usamah said, *"O Messenger of Allah, ask Allah's Forgiveness for me."*

In the evening, the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) rose up and delivered a speech in which he praised Allah as He deserves to be praised, and then said, *"Verily, that which destroyed people before you was that when a person of rank (or importance) among them stole, they would leave him (without punishment); but when a weak person among them stole, they would execute the prescribed penalty upon him. I swear by Allah, if Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, stole, I would cut off her hand."* (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

Such was the command and pattern of Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) - uncompromising justice among all people; protecting and restoring rights and freedoms regardless of religion, color, race, or affiliations; and siding with the oppressed against the oppressor, while remaining honest, objective, tolerant, and merciful.

5-Al-Ma'idah

﴿Do not let the hatred of a people who obstructed you from Al-Masjid Al-Haram (the Sacred Mosque in Makkah) lead you to transgress. And help one another in righteousness and piety, but do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is severe in punishment.﴾ [Al-Ma'idah 5: 2]

The aforementioned Qur'anic verse was revealed to stop any transgression on the part of the Muslims against the disbelievers who prevented them from entering *Al-Masjid Al-Haram* to perform *'Umrah* (minor pilgrimage), triggering a course of events that eventually led to the signing of the *Hudaibiyah* Treaty.

Although this treaty is referred to as a "manifest victory" in the first verse of the Chapter of Al-Fath, when this event was actually occurring as a milestone in the history of Islam, the Muslims who witnessed it with Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) considered it anything but a victory.

The Quraish included some stipulations in this treaty to the detriment of Islam and Muslims, and blatantly in favor of the Quraish. But the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) had the bigger picture in his mind; that of allowing Islam to be heard in an atmosphere of peace and security through this ten-year suspension of war treaty. Therefore, he forbearingly overlooked all provocations and transgressions made by the Quraish against them, even their attempt to assassinate him and his companions.

Forbearance against aggression, and justice against injustice is repeated a couple of verses later as incumbent on every Muslim, towards any person, under any circumstances; enemies are no exception from the rule: *«O you who believe! Stand up firmly for Allah and be just witnesses, and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just; that is nearer to piety, and fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Well Aware of what you do.»* [Al-Ma'idah 5: 8]

Hostility and hatred is something that may pass away, as taught by the Prophet, who said, *"Hate your enemy mildly; maybe he will become your friend one day."* (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

And the Noble Qur'an keeps alive the spark of hope for future friendship and reconciliation: *«It may be that Allah will bring about affection between you and those who are your enemies from among them. And Allah has power (over all things), and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.»* [Al-Mumtahinah 60: 7]

This truly happened through the *Hudaibiyah* Treaty that culminated in the Victory of Makkah. Many embraced Islam, and the enemies turned into believers, allies, and close companions.

«And recite (O Muhammad) to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam [Habil (Abel) and Qabil (Cain)], when they offered a sacrifice (to Allah), and it was accepted from one of them, and not accepted from the other. "I will surely kill you," said one. "Allah accepts only from the Allah-fearing and sincere (to Him in what they do)," said the other. "If you stretch your hand against me to kill me, I shall never stretch my hand against you to kill you. I fear Allah, the Lord of existence. I want you to be laden with my sin and your sin, so you become a dweller of the Fire. And that is the recompense of the wrongdoers.»

﴿And his soul allowed him the murder of his brother, so he murdered him and became one of the losers. Then Allah sent a crow, scratching into the earth, to show him how to hide the dead body of his brother. He (the murderer) said, "Woe is me! Am I unable to even be as this crow and to hide the dead body of my brother?" And he became one of the remorseful. Because of that, We (Allah) made it a law for the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul – other than in retaliation for a soul (killed) or for corruption done in the land – it shall be as if he has killed all humanity. And, whoever saves a soul, it shall be as if he has given life to all humanity. And indeed, there came to them Our Messengers with clear proof; even then, after that, many of them continued to commit excesses in the land.﴾ [Al-Ma'idah 5: 27-32]

A situation far removed from provoking murder – two sons of Adam offering sacrifices to Allah – was actually the scene of the first murder committed on earth, the motives of which are revealed in the Qur'an.

Defeated on the ethical level by the rejection of his offering, instead of blaming his failure on himself, one son of Adam decided to annihilate the cause that laid it bare by physically wiping out the other son, saying, *"I will surely kill you."* To which his brother calmly responded, *"Allah accepts only from the Allah-fearing and sincere."* In other words, the fault is within you, not me; to solve it, try to become Allah-fearing yourself.

The difficult confrontation continued; one party insisting on physical power as his only solution to efface his ethical weakness versus the other party staunchly clinging to his ethics as his source of power, refusing to get dragged into the sphere of violence in which evil and good might get confused, and one brother must kill the other. *"If you stretch your hand to kill me, I shall never stretch mine to kill you."*

Despite exhortation, the party issuing the threat “*I will kill you*” carried out his threat. Yet, the Noble Qur’an declares him to be the loser. Losing one’s humanity is the true irreparable loss indeed; a point of no return, after which it is impossible to live as a normal human being again.

There are many such examples of evil humans who attack peaceful people, who are not involved in any act of violence or transgression. Evil is deeply rooted in them, admonitions and warnings are futile, and forbearance and non-resistance are no deterrent. Due to the presence of such people, Allah decreed that the crime of unjustly killing a soul shall be as grievous as killing all mankind. And, contrastingly, saving a soul from being killed or legally retaliating for one unjustly killed [thus sparing any prospective victims] shall be as good as giving life to all mankind.

«And We ordained therein (the Torah) for them: “A soul for a soul, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and wounds equal for equal.” But if anyone remits the retaliation by way of charity, it shall be for him an expiation.» [Al-Ma’idah 5: 45]

Rage is the instinctive response to bloodshed or physical injury, to which the Divine Law responds through the rule of *Qisas* (just retaliation or equality in punishment). Only firm and indiscriminating justice can release resulting pent-up wrath, hold back criminals from replicating their crimes, and act as a deterrent to other prospective criminals. At the same time, Islam encourages voluntary pardon and rising above vengeful feelings by the aggrieved party, forgoing the punishment of the wrongdoer by way of charity, in return for deeper and much more lasting healing – divine forgiveness. «*If you punish (a transgressor), punish with the like of that with which you were afflicted. But if you endure patiently, verily, it is better for the patient ones.*» [An-Nahl 16: 126]

﴿O you who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic beverages), gambling, sacrificial stone-altars, and divining arrows are abominations of Satan's work. Avoid them, in order that you prosper. Satan only desires to stir up enmity and hatred among you through intoxicants and gambling, and to bar you from the remembrance of Allah and from praying. Will you not abstain from them?﴾ [Al-Ma'idah 5: 90-91]

These forbidden practices rooted in corrupted beliefs were not immediately corrected by Islam due to the inefficacy of applying a remedy on the surface before doing so deep beneath. Rather, Islam started with the creed itself, pulling out the entire pre-Islamic doctrine from the roots and implanting the correct Islamic doctrine right in the core, relying on pure instinct.

It first demonstrated to people the falsity of their beliefs about godhood and guided them to their true God. When they recognized Him, they began to listen to what He would like or dislike them to do. Otherwise, they would never have listened, obeyed a command, or avoided a prohibition. They would never have abandoned their pre-Islamic traditions, no matter how repeatedly exhorted and forbidden from them.

Lady 'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated, "Among the first revealed verses of the Qur'an was a chapter from *Al-Mufassal* (short chapters that have many breaks between them), speaking of Paradise and Hellfire. Until people became steadfast in Islam, verses speaking of the lawful and unlawful things were revealed. If the first revealed verse of the Qur'an had been '*Do not drink alcohol,*' people would have said, '*We will never give up alcohol,*' or if it was '*Do not commit adultery,*' people would have said, '*We will never give up adultery.*'" (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

The knot of belief must first be sealed from springing loose in order to anchor and render durable any moral discipline or social reform. There lies the key to human instinct, which, unless opened with the right key, will remain a locked vault with winding paths; every time one path is revealed, another becomes concealed; every time one side is bright, another becomes dark; and every time one knot is untied, another is tied and so on.

6-Al-An‘am

﴿And to Him belongs whatever dwells in the night and in the day, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. Say (O Muhammad), “Shall I take as my *Wali* (Protector and Helper) any other than Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth? He Who feeds and is not fed.” Say, “Verily, I have been commanded to be the first who submits himself to Allah,” and (was commanded), “Never be one of the *Mushrikin* (those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity or worship).” Say, “Indeed I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a Mighty Day.” Anyone from whom it (punishment) is averted on that Day has been shown mercy (by Allah). That is the manifest triumph. And if Allah touches you with affliction, none can remove it except Him; and if He touches you with good, indeed, He has power over all things. And He is the Omnipotent over His servants, and He is the All-wise, the Cognizant (of all things).﴾ [Al-‘An‘am 6: 13-18]

In moments of need, weakness, or affliction, who else other than Allah is sufficient for mankind? The Sole Creator of everything, the Sole Provider of sustenance, the Causer of harm, the Bringer of benefit, the Omnipotent, the Subduer Who is able

to change anything but remains unchangeable, Whose Strength can never turn into weakness, or His Richness into poverty, or His Knowledge into ignorance.

Yet, authority, wealth, or knowledge may intrigue some people into seeking help from them instead of Allah. They forget that any power, whether in the hands of individuals, groups, or nations, when sought instead of Allah is like relying on or taking refuge in a spider's web! *«The likeness of those who take (beings or forces) other than Allah for Awliya' (supporters, protectors, helpers) is that of a spider that takes for itself a house. Surely, the spider's house is the frailest house, if they but knew.»* [Al-'Ankabut 29: 41]

Anything other than Allah is but helpless. *«They have taken besides Him gods that create nothing, but are themselves created, and possess not for themselves any harm or benefit, and possess not (power to cause) death, life, or resurrection.»* [Al-Furqan 25: 3] *«Verily, those on whom you call besides Allah cannot create (even) a fly, even if they combine together for the purpose. And if the fly snatched away a (tiny) thing from them, they could never recover it from the fly. Weak are (both) the seeker and the sought.»* [Al-Hajj 22: 73]

Allah (Exalted be He) alone is near, hears, and responds. *«Is it not He (and He alone) Who responds to the distressed one, when he calls on Him, and removes the evil, and makes you inheritors of the earth, generation after generation? Is there any god with Allah? Little do you remember!»* [An-Naml 27: 62]

Peace and tranquility ensue, as the natural result, when people's direction and anchor become one; *«It is Allah Who is the Lord in the heavens and is the Lord on the earth. And He is the All-Wise, the All-Knower»* [Az-Zukhruf 43: 84] and their destination known; *«Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return.»* [Al-Baqarah 2: 156]

Allah likens it to someone grasping a firm handhold; as long as they continue holding on to it, they will be secure. *﴿Whoever submits his face (himself) to Allah, and is a doer of good, has grasped indeed the most trustworthy handhold. And with Allah rests the end and decision of all affairs.﴾* [Luqman 31: 22]

Tawhid (belief in the Oneness of Allah) then permeates the various aspects of a person's character with Islamic standards and ethics, influencing the workings of the mind and body, and unifying their direction.

With this redirection, requests should be made to Allah alone, and to no other. Help should be sought from Him alone, and from no other. Hope should be put in Him alone, and in no other. Fears will come from Him alone, and from no other. Reliance should be on Him alone, and on no other, with the certainty that He is Capable of anything.

The Prophet's first concern was that these components of *Tawhid* develop into an attitude of life toward Allah, and become ingrained into the very texture of Muslims' thoughts and feelings, making up the essence of who they are. Once instilled, they have the power to free and purify souls from any form of *Shirk* (associating others with Allah in His Divinity or worship) that may pressure people into subjugation to, fear of, or hope in someone or something other than Allah.

"My boy, I am teaching you words," said the Prophet, *"Guard (the Commands and Prohibitions of) Allah, and He will guard you. Guard (the Rights of) Allah, and you will find Him before you. When you ask, ask Allah. When you seek help, seek it from Allah. Know that if people gather together to benefit you with something, they will not benefit you except with something that Allah has destined for you. And if they gather together to harm you with something, they will not harm you except with something that Allah has destined for you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried."* [That is, all destinies are already inscribed and decided.] (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

﴿They indeed are losers who denied their meeting with Allah until, when the Hour (signs of death) comes upon them all of a sudden, they say, "Alas for us that we gave no thought to it," while they shall bear their burdens on their backs (on the Day of Resurrection); and evil indeed is that which they bear. This worldly life is nothing more than play and diversion, and the abode of the Hereafter is far better for those who fear Allah. Will you not, then, use your reason?﴾ [Al-An'am 6: 31-32]

Death coming suddenly upon disbelievers is not the end; it is just the beginning of unending losses, when that which they have derided and denied actually happens to them, and they begin to reap what they have sown in their lives and face up the consequences of their choices. *﴿And if you could but see when the wrongdoers are in the overwhelming pangs of death, while the angels are stretching forth their hands (saying), "Yield up your souls! Today you shall be requited with the torment of degradation because you used to say about Allah other than the truth and arrogantly reject His Ayat (signs and revelations).﴾﴾* [Al-'An'am 6: 93]

Regrets shall be uncontrollable. Entirely dismissing the prospect of ever meeting Allah has given them boldness to sin and commit abominations, which will turn into physical burdens weighing down their backs on the Day of Judgment.

Regrets shall be perpetual. Whatever they have done or possessed in this fleeting life pales into nothing in comparison to what they have wasted forever. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, *"This world compared to the Hereafter is only like one of you dipping his finger into the sea; let him see with what (how much water) it returns."* (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

«There is not a moving (living) creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but that they are communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book; then to their Lord they shall be gathered.» [Al-An'am 6: 38]

Animals, birds, and every moving creature exist as communities, unified by a common nature, common needs, common fears, and common goals, as humans are.

They are provided with sustenance and shelter as humans are; all are predestined by the All-Knowing God, under His Will and Watchfulness as humans are. «*No (moving) living creature is there on earth but its provision rests on Allah. He knows its dwelling place and its deposit (grave). All is in a clear register.*» [Hud 11: 6]

Each has been created with a specific purpose, either to benefit humans directly or to recognize in them the magnificence of the Creator. «*Verily, in the cattle, there is a lesson for you. We give you to drink of that which is in their bellies, from between excretions and blood, pure milk; pleasant to those who drink it.*» [An-Nahl 16: 66]

Misuse or abuse of any of them in this world, by people or one against another, will not be missed or forgotten by Allah «*We have neglected nothing in the Book.*» Regarding the interpretation of this verse, Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Allah shall gather on the Day of Resurrection all creatures: animals, beasts, birds, everything; and Allah's Justice on that Day shall reach such an extent that He will give retribution to the hornless sheep from the horned sheep (that butted it). He will then command them, 'Be dust.' This is when the disbeliever will say, «*Woe to me! Would that I were dust.*» [An-Naba' 78: 40]

﴿Say (to the disbelievers), "Tell me, if Allah should take away your hearing and your sight, and set a seal upon your hearts, who is the god other than Allah who could restore them to you?" See how variously We explain the *Ayat* (signs and evidence of Allah's Oneness), yet they turn away.﴾ [Al-An'am 6: 46]

The vividness, the seriousness, and the truth of the scene which this verse spreads before the eyes surely penetrate the innermost recesses of the human soul. It brings it face-to-face with the fact of utter human powerlessness and limitation against Allah's unlimited Power on one side, and the absurdity of the gods that humans assign as partners with Allah on the other side. Human beings, no matter how outwardly skeptical, know deep inside that their Creator has the power to deprive them, at any time, of their sight, hearing, and heart. And that if He does, there is no other god who can stop Him and restore them. But, amazingly, despite the abundant signs of Allah's Infinite Ability versus the finitude of humans, they walk away ungrateful and in denial!

﴿Say (O Muhammad), "I do not tell you that with me are Allah's Treasures or (that) I know the Unseen; nor do I tell you that I am an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me."﴾ [Al-An'am 6: 50]

Thus was the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) ordered by his Lord to present himself to people; just as a human being, free from the myths and illusions about the extraordinary nature of prophets and prophethood that prevailed during the pre-Islamic time. *﴿Say (O Muhammad), "I possess no power of benefit or harm to myself except as Allah wills. Had I knowledge of the Unseen, I would have availed myself*

of much that is good, and no evil would have touched me. I am but a warner and a bringer of glad tidings to people who believe.”﴾ [Al-A’raf 7: 188]

And thus was he ordered to communicate to them the religion, without any attractions, wealth, or titles; just a faith conveyed by a Messenger, who received guidance from Allah that illuminated the path for him; only following what was revealed to him, teaching him what he did not know; only a human Messenger, without claims of secret powers or superhuman qualities, and the creed alone, in its pure, clear, and simple form. ﴿Say (O Muhammad), “I am only a human like you, to whom it has been revealed that your God is one God. So whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous work and not associate anyone (or anything) in the worship of his Lord.”﴾ [Al-Kahf 18: 110]

﴿With Him are the keys of the Unseen; none knows them except Him. He knows that which is in (or on) the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but He knows it. And not a grain in the darkness of the earth, and not a thing, moist or dry, but is written in a clear record.﴾ [Al-An’am 6: 59]

The mind, in the span of this one short Qur’anic verse, is expanded beyond the horizons of the known and the familiar into new infinite dimensions of time and space, bringing the past, present, and future together in a splendid scene of unfathomable expanse. Here, the imagination is deeply awakened to Allah’s Omniscience and released to observe every leaf falling from every tree, every grain hidden in every land, and everything wet or dry all over the earth since the beginning of time and through endless ages. To count or keep a record of these occurrences is neither thinkable nor possible to the human mind, yet Allah knows and preserves them all in minute detail.

﴿It is He Who takes your souls by night (when you are asleep), and knows what you have done by day; then He raises (wakes) you up again so that a term appointed (your life period) may be fulfilled. Then to Him shall you return. Then He will inform you what you used to do. He is the Irresistible Subduer over His servants, and He sends guardians (angels who record all your good and bad deeds) to watch over you until, when death comes to one of you, Our Messengers (the angel of death and his assistants) take your soul; and they never neglect their duty. Then they (who have died) are returned to Allah, their true Lord. Surely, His is the judgment and He is the Swiftest of reckoners. Say (O Muhammad), "Who is it that rescues you from the darkness of the land and sea? When you call upon Him humbly and secretly, 'If He (Allah) only saves us from this (danger), we shall surely be among the grateful.'" Say, "Allah rescues you from it and from all (other) distresses, and yet you associate others with Him."﴾ [Al-An'am 6: 60-64]

The entire life experience of humanity, with its various phases (awakening and sleep, death and resurrection, assemblage and judgment), is under the sovereign Power, Knowledge, and Control of Allah alone. Daily passage from wakefulness to sleep and vice versa reveals the full extent of human powerlessness. Allah's Will alone brings humans back to life after the daily semi-death experience of sleep, to proceed with their lives under Allah's Ever-Watchful Eye; His Knowledge encompasses and His angels record whatever good or bad deeds they have done during the day. This continues until their destined time of death, to be followed by resurrection and judgment.

That is the reality of human life in the dominion of Allah. There is no escape from Him, except to Him; the truth of which becomes evident during times of hardship and calamity. At such times, hearts spontaneously turn only to Allah and fervently implore His Help, with recognition of the absurdity of *Shirk*. But once delivered by Allah from danger, the ardent commitments and promises made to Allah in the moment are not kept. *«Allah rescues you from it and from all distresses, and yet you associate others with Him.»*

«Say (O Muhammad), "Come, I will recite what your Lord has forbidden you. (He commands) that you associate not anything with Him; to be good and dutiful to your parents; kill not your children out of fear of poverty – We will provide for you and them; come not near immoralities – those of them which are open (or outward) and those which are hidden (or inward); and kill not the soul which Allah has forbidden (to be killed) unless for a just (legal) cause. This He has enjoined you with that you may understand (and practice). And approach not the property of the orphans, except to improve it, until they attain the age of maturity. And give full measure and full weight with justice. We burden not any person with that but which he can bear. And whenever you give your word (i.e., judge between people or give evidence, etc.), say the truth, even if a close relative is concerned, and fulfill Allah's Covenant. This He enjoined you with that you may remember. This (Allah's Commandments) is My Path, a straight one, so follow it. Follow not other paths; they will separate you from His (Allah's) Path. This He has enjoined you with that you may become Allah-conscious."» [Al-An'am 6: 151-153]

Ten Commandments, terse and obligatory in tone, reach every area of life and mold it according to Allah's Design. They are based on a pattern of key duties attached to the relationship of each person to Allah, family, and community. When fulfilled, they will ensure the welfare of not just Muslims, but of everyone. First, is the greatest obligation to Allah (to worship only Him). Second, is the greatest intergenerational obligation (to honor parents). Third, is the greatest obligation to future generations (to protect their right to life). Fourth, is the greatest obligation to community (to abstain from all public and private immoralities). Fifth, is forbearance from the gravest injury to a person (murder). Sixth, is forbearance from the gravest injury to property (appropriation of an orphan's property). Seventh, is forbearance from the gravest injury to transactions (fraudulent measure or weight). Eighth, is forbearance from the gravest injury to justice (false statements, verdicts, or testimonies). Ninth, is the greatest commitment (to keep Allah's Covenant). Tenth, is the greatest command (to follow Allah's Path).

"This is Allah's Path," the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, then drew some lines and continued, *"and these are separate paths, on each of which is a devil calling people to (pursue) it."* Then he recited: *«This is My Path, a straight one, so follow it. Follow not other paths; they will separate you from His (Allah's) Path.»* (Sunan Ad-Darimi)

«Verily, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of existence. He has no partner. Of this I have been commanded (*Tawhid*), and I am the first of those who submit (to Allah).» [Al-An'am 6: 162-163]

There is more to life than the narrow and shallow purposes in which most people are trapped, distracted from what lies underneath by material things. *«Did you think that We created you in play (without a purpose), and that you would not be*

brought back to Us?﴾ [Al-Mu'minun 23: 115] Appearances blind them from seeing the great realities, forgetting that Allah has created them for a purpose, to live a life on earth for a limited period, assigned during it with certain duties, after which there shall be a grand meeting to ask them about every word they said and every deed they did. ﴿Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart – about each of those you will be questioned (by Allah).﴾ [Al-Isra' 17: 36]

Shifting the attention from trivialities to substance, the Noble Qur'an sets before people the high purpose of their lives; ﴿I (Allah) did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me (alone).﴾ [Adh-Dhariyat 51: 56] It reminds them of what they have forgotten; ﴿Fear a Day when you shall be returned to Allah. Then every soul shall be paid what it earned, and they will not be wronged.﴾ [Al-Baqarah 2: 281] It warns them against what they have been deceived by; ﴿Follow not the footsteps of Satan. Verily, he is to you an open enemy.﴾ [Al-Baqarah 2: 168] It tells them of the provisions they need for the meeting with their Lord; ﴿And take provisions, indeed, the best provision is fear of Allah.﴾ [Al-Baqarah 2: 197] And it shows them the shortest distance from where they are to where they belong; ﴿Jesus said, "Verily, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him (alone). This is the straight path."﴾ [Maryam 19: 36]

With an awareness of the clear and focused purpose of human existence and the path for reaching it, every motive of the heart and every movement of the body should subsequently arise out of devotion to Allah, and around it should revolve the totality of a person's existence – the life of this world, death, and what is beyond. ﴿Verily, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the existence.﴾

7-Al-A'raf

﴿And We (Allah) have placed you with authority on earth, and made for you therein ways of livelihood. Little thanks do you give. And surely, We created you (your father Adam) and then gave you shape (the noble shape of a human being), then We told the angels, "Prostrate to Adam," and they prostrated, except Satan, who refused to be among those who prostrate.﴾ [Al-A'raf 7: 10-11]

Contrary to the notion of man conquering nature, the Qur'an reminds us that it is Allah Who subjected nature to the service of mankind; otherwise, we would never have been able to exist. It is the features and elements that Allah has placed on earth for the survival of humans that allow the life and authority of mankind on earth. In turn, Allah has imbued mankind with compatibility and affinity with earth, and the ability to discover and utilize its natural laws. But it is the sin of ingratitude that is mankind's downfall; it started with Satan and was passed by him, cunningly and deliberately, to Adam and Eve (may Allah bless them and grant them peace).

﴿Allah said, "What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?" Satan said, "I am better than him (Adam). You created me from fire and created him from clay." Allah said, "Get down from it (Paradise). This is no place for you to be proud. Get out; indeed you are of those humiliated and disgraced." Satan said, "Grant me respite till the Day they are resurrected." Allah said, "You are of those granted respite." Satan said, "Because You have sent me astray, surely I will sit in wait for them (human beings) on Your Straight Path. Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them, and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them thankful (to You)." Allah said (to Satan), "Get out of it disgraced and expelled. Whoever of them (mankind) will follow you, then surely I will fill Hell with you all."﴾ [Al-A'raf 7: 12-18]

Satan did not have a knowledge or a belief problem; he had a gratitude problem; a dissatisfaction with Allah's Will that thrust him from a worshiper to an outcast, and he vengefully swore to drag down mankind to the same level, through the same sin. He wants to keep mankind, through unrelenting attacks, restless and dissatisfied. He whispers evil to humans from all sides, except for two, above and below. Allah shut these two against Satan, as they are the directions in which prayer ascends, divine mercy descends, and prostration is made, which, when resorted to, place mankind safely beyond the reach of Satan.

"O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and both eat from wherever you please, but do not approach this tree, lest you both be among the wrongdoers." But Satan whispered suggestions to them both, to reveal to them that which was hidden from them of their private parts. He said, "Your Lord has only forbidden you this tree lest you become angels or become of the immortals." And he (Satan) swore by Allah to them both, "Indeed, I am one of your sincere advisers." So he made them fall, through deception. And when they tasted of the tree, that which was hidden from them of their private parts became apparent to them, and they began to stick together the leaves of Paradise over themselves. Their Lord called out to them, "Did I not forbid you that tree and tell you that Satan is to you an open enemy?" They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will certainly be among the losers." Allah said, "Descend, enemies to one another (mankind and Satan); and on the earth you will have a dwelling place and provisions until the appointed time." He (Allah) said, "Therein you shall live, therein you shall die, and from it you shall be brought out (i.e., resurrected)." [Al-A'raf 7: 19-25]

Humans have weak points (desires) through which Satan gains access, once they loosen their hold on Allah's Commands. Oblivious to Satan and his devices, they err. But, unlike Satan, they are not too proud to realize and regret their errors, and turn to Allah for forgiveness and help.

Their rock of refuge from this relentless seducer attacking them in their weakened state, tempting them to succumb to their desires, is remembrance of Allah. But if they do succumb and then remember, slip and then want to get up, yield to seduction and then feel remorse, they will always find Allah's Door wide open. Whenever they turn to Him in repentance, Allah will accept their repentance and help them out. By persistence in Allah's Direction, Allah will change their sins into good deeds. *«Except for those who repent, believe, and do righteous deeds. For them Allah will replace their bad deeds with good deeds. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.»* [Al-Furqan 25: 70]

There is no eternal or inherited sin. Allah is willing, without any mediation, to forgive all sins. *«Say, "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves (by sinning)! Despair not of Allah's Mercy, verily Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.»* [Az-Zumar 39: 53]

Adam forgot and disobeyed, after which he repented, sought Allah for forgiveness, and was forgiven. *«Then Adam received words (of guidance) from his Lord, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, it is He Who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful.»* [Al-Baqarah 2: 37] The first sin ended at that point. No consequent curse was placed upon Adam or his descendants because of his disobedience. All that remained of it was the experience gained and the lessons learned that would help his posterity in their long struggle against their sworn enemy.

﴿O children of Adam, We have bestowed on you clothing to cover your private parts and as adornment. But the clothing of piety – that is best. This is among Allah’s Signs, that perhaps they will remember. O Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you as he brought your parents (Adam and Eve) out of Paradise, stripping them of their clothing to show them their private parts. Surely he sees you, he and his soldiers (offspring), from where you cannot see them. Indeed, We made the devils allies to those who do not believe.﴾ [Al-A’raf 7: 26-27]

Divestment of clothing was the consequence of Adam’s sin, against which Allah warns his posterity. He reminds humans that the gift of clothing He bestowed on them is not only physical, to cover their nakedness, but, more importantly, spiritual, to shield them from evil. This is what is best and protective in this and the next world. Any holes made by Satan in their external clothing will eventually rend their moral clothing. Physical nudity is the weapon Satan uses to progressively achieve moral nudity in words, behavior, and actions, until mankind is reduced to the condition of brutes.

To defend and close down such avenues, Allah therefore protectively ordered that the gaze be lowered. For seduction begins with a glance. *﴿Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from sexual immoralities and sex outside of marriage). That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is All Aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze, and protect their private parts, and not to make a display of their adornment except that which is (ordinarily) apparent.﴾* [An-Nur 24: 30-31]

﴿Indeed, your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then He rose over the Throne (in a manner compatible with His Majesty). He covers the night with the day, each pursuing the other in rapid, incessant succession; and the sun, the moon, and the stars are subjected to His Command. Surely, His is the Creation and the Command. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of existence.﴾ [Al-A'raf 7: 54]

For anything to happen, Allah needs only to say, "Be!" and in a twinkling, it is. *﴿Verily, His Command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, "Be!" and it is!﴾* [Ya-Sin 36: 82] Yet Allah created the heavens and earth not suddenly, or in a moment, but in six days. And He began the creation of man from clay, then his progeny from a drop of semen; *﴿Then We (Allah) made the Nutfah (mixed drops of male and female sexual discharge) into a clot, then We made the clot into a little lump of flesh, then We made bones out of that little lump of flesh, then We clothed the bones with flesh, and then We brought it forth as another creation (from non-living to living when the soul is breathed into it). So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators.﴾* [Al-Mu'minun 23: 14]

Once conceived, the passage from one phase of development to another does not cease until birth into this world, as a baby who knows nothing. *﴿It is Allah Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers knowing nothing.﴾* [An-Nahl 16: 78] The more he grows up, the stronger his faculties and sensibilities become: *﴿And He gave you hearing, sight, and hearts (intellect) that you might give thanks (to Allah).﴾* [An-Nahl 16: 78] Incessant transition continues from childhood, to adolescence, to adulthood, to old age and, ultimately, to the grave, returning to dust until resurrection – and back to life again.

This is Allah's Plan for His universe, creation, and the law of His Messenger – step-by-step progression until perfection is

reached. *«And (it is) a Qur'an which We have divided (into parts), in order that you recite it to people at intervals. And We have revealed it in stages.»* [Al-Isra' 17: 106] This means that the Qur'an was revealed little by little, in portions, over the course of twenty-three years, consistent with the manner in which Allah created the universe and has given to mankind.

Similarly, in harmony with the rhythm of creation, transmission of Islam should proceed gently and gradually. When the Prophet sent Mu'adh bin Jabal to Yemen, he instructed him to inform people of the rules of Islam little by little. The first rules are *Tawhid* (belief in the Oneness of Allah) and renouncing *Shirk* (associating others with Allah in His Divinity or worship). If people respond favorably, the *Da'y* (caller to Islam) may teach them the rest of the five pillars of Islam, one after the other, in order of priority. *"You are going to a group of the People of the Scriptures. Call them to testify that there is no god but Allah and that I am the Messenger of Allah. If they obey you in this, tell them that Allah has enjoined on them five prayers to be performed throughout the day and night. If they obey you in this, tell them that Allah has enjoined on them obligatory charity to be taken from the rich among them and given to the poor among them. And if they obey you in this, be cautious not to take their best (dearest and most valuable) properties (as obligatory charity)."* (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

Knowledge is the keystone for building monotheistic faith in mankind. *«Know that there is no god but Allah.»* [Muhammad 47: 19] This is followed by outward submission to that recognized truth, namely Islam, by the tongue uttering (1) the testimony of faith in Allah and His Messenger, and the body physically performing the rest of the five pillars of Islam; (2) offering the five daily obligatory prayers; (3) paying obligatory charity; (4) fasting during the month of Ramadan; and (5) going on pilgrimage to Allah's House (the Ka'bah in Makkah) once in a lifetime.

Outward submission gradually deepens into inward submission and acceptance; that is, belief and acknowledgment within the heart. It shapes and directs cognition and feelings towards Allah – glorification, love, fear, hope, want, humility, reliance, trust, passion, and zeal for Allah.

When light continues to flow into the heart, belief continues to grow, and the heart becomes brighter and brighter. Its health improves and reflects positively on a person's interests and behavior. *«Those who remember Allah, standing, sitting, or lying down on their sides, and think deeply about the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying), "Our Lord, You have not created (all) this without purpose.»* [Al-'Imran 3: 191] *«They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin good and forbid evil; and they hasten in all good works. Those are among the righteous.»* [Al-'Imran 3: 114] When full light takes over the heart, awareness of Allah and the desire to do whatever pleases Him becomes overwhelming. We find Muslims challenging obstacles, bearing hardships, and sacrificing their souls for Allah's Sake. *«Of people are those who sell themselves, seeking Allah's Pleasure. And Allah is full of kindness to (His) servants.»* [Al-Baqarah 2: 207]

«And Moses said, "O Pharaoh, verily I am a messenger from the Lord of existence. It is only right for me to say nothing except the truth about Allah. I have brought you a clear sign from your Lord. Let, then, the Children of Israel depart along with me." Pharaoh said, "If you have come with a sign, show it forth, if you are of those who speak the truth." Then Moses threw his staff, and behold! it was a serpent, plainly visible. And he drew out his hand, and behold! it was white (with radiance) to the beholders. The chiefs of Pharaoh's people said, "This is indeed a knowledgeable (skillful) sorcerer who wants to drive you out of your land." Pharaoh said, "So what do you advise?"» [Al-A'raf 7: 104-110]

«They said, "Put him and his brother off for a time, and send summoners to the cities to bring you every skillful sorcerer." The sorcerers came to Pharaoh and said, "Shall we have a reward, if we are the victors?" Pharaoh said, "Yes, indeed; and you shall certainly be of those who are near (to me)." They said, "O Moses, either you throw (your staff) first or we will be the first to throw." Moses said, "You throw first." So when they threw, they bewitched people's eyes, and struck terror into them, and produced mighty sorcery. And We inspired Moses, "Throw your staff." And at once, it swallowed up all their deception." Thus the truth prevailed, and all that they were doing became null. They were vanquished there, and they (Pharaoh and his people) turned abased. And the sorcerers fell down prostrate (to Allah), saying, "We believe in the Lord of existence, the Lord of Moses and Aaron." Pharaoh said, "You have believed in Him (Allah) before I gave you permission. Surely, this is a plot which you have plotted in the city to expel its people from it, but soon you shall come to know (the consequences). I will surely cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, then I will crucify you all. They said, "Verily, we are returning to our Lord. You take vengeance on us only because we believed in the signs of our Lord when they came to us. Our Lord, pour upon us patience and let us die as Muslims (submitted to You).» [Al-A'raf 7: 111-126]

Before Moses (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) threw his staff, the attention of Pharaoh's sorcerers was completely drawn to money. «*Shall we have a reward, if we are the victors?*» Their hopes relied on Pharaoh, swearing by his might. «*By Pharaoh's might, it is we who will certainly win!*» [Al-Shu'ara' 26: 44] That was their logic before faith entered their hearts.

But once they had tasted the sweetness of faith, their only reply, despite threats and intimidation, was simply and resolutely: *«Never will we prefer you over what has come to us of clear signs by He Who created us. Decree whatever you desire to decree. You can only decree for this worldly life.»* [Taha 20: 72]

Their attention was no longer focused on the worldly life, but on the Hereafter: *«Verily, we have believed in our Lord that He may forgive us our sins, and the magic to which you did compel us. And Allah (His Reward) is better and (His Punishment) more lasting.»* [Taha 20: 73]

Their oaths were no longer by Pharaoh's might, but by Allah's Might: *«...by He who created us.»* Their hope in other than Allah was gone, and hope in Allah alone took over. Their fear from other than Allah was gone, and fear from Allah alone took over.

Their direction was changed, their logic was changed, their behavior was changed, even their words and expressions were changed, as though they were no longer the people they had been only minutes before.

True faith thus works its effect on the heart, followed by the gift of steadfastness from Allah.

With faith, the soul is elevated above earthly powers and does not pause to ask what it would take or leave, pay or be paid, gain or lose, what hardships, sufferings, or sacrifices it would face along the way. This small group, who minutes before were seeking Pharaoh's favor and asking him for reward if they triumphed, were now holding themselves above Pharaoh, undaunted by his threats and intimidation, and went ahead, patient and steadfast, to persecution and crucifixion. Their fears simply dissipated and were replaced by a strong faith that proceeded resolutely on its way, without turning back, wavering or swerving. *«They said, "No harm! Surely, to our Lord we shall return. Only, we hope that our Lord will forgive us our sins because we are the first of the believers."»* [Al-Shu'ara' 26: 50-51]

﴿Do they associate with Him (in Allah’s Divinity or worship) those who create nothing and they themselves are created? And they have no power to help them, nor help themselves. And if you call them to guidance, they will not follow you. It is all the same for you whether you call them or you keep silent. Verily, those whom you call upon besides Allah are creatures like you. So call upon them and let them answer you, if you are truthful. Do they have feet by which they walk? Or do they have hands by which they strike? Or do they have eyes by which they see? Or do they have ears by which they hear? Say (O Muhammad), “Call your (so-called) partners (of Allah) and then plot against me, and give me no respite. Indeed, my protector is Allah, Who has sent down the Book; and He protects the righteous.”﴾ [Al-‘Araf 7: 191-195]

Far below humans are stones; even sculpted or carved into images or icons, they remain lifeless stones. Nothing more. Totally devoid of senses, abilities, or volition. Powerless to do anything for themselves, let alone for their worshippers. ﴿By Allah, I (Ibrahim) shall devise a plan against your idols after you have gone away and turned your backs. So he broke them to pieces, (all) except the biggest of them, that they (the worshippers of idols) might turn to it. They said, “Who has done this to our gods? Surely he is one of the wrongdoers.” They said, “We heard a youth talking against them, who is called Ibrahim (Abraham).” They said, “Bring him (here) before people’s eyes that they may bear witness.” They said, “Are you the one who has done this to our gods, O Ibrahim (Abraham)?” He (Ibrahim) said, “Nay, this one, the biggest of them (idols) did it. Ask them, if they can speak!”﴾ [Al-Anbiya’ 21: 57-63]

Abraham’s purpose was thus accomplished to his satisfaction, and a large audience was gathered, which allowed him to confront all his people with the absurdity and foolishness of worshipping idols: ﴿Do you worship what you yourselves carve, even though Allah created you and what you make?﴾ [Al-

Saffat 37: 96] ﴿Things that can neither benefit you at all, nor harm you? Fie (expression of disgust or disapproval) upon you and upon that which you worship instead of Allah! Will you not use reason?﴾ [Al-Anbiya' 21: 66-67]

But instead, pride took his people further downwards into sin and idolatry. ﴿They said, "Burn him (Ibrahim) and support your gods - if you are to take action.﴾ [Al-Anbiya' 21: 68]

8-Al-Anfal

﴿O you who believe, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. And know that Allah intervenes between a person and his heart, and that to Him you shall be gathered. And fear an affliction that smites not in particular (only) those of you who are unjust (but it may afflict all – the good and the bad), and know that Allah is severe in punishment.﴾ [Al-Anfal 8: 24-25]

As rust builds upon rust, and dust settles on dust, so does heedlessness and procrastination upon hearts. ﴿No, indeed; but what they had been earning (sins and bad deeds) has rusted upon their hearts.﴾ [Al-Mutaffifin 83: 14] And, Allah can, when He pleases, turn such hearts the contrary way.

Anas, the Prophet's servant, narrated, "The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) would often supplicate, 'O You Who turns the hearts, keep my heart steadfast in your religion.' I (Anas) asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, we believe in you and in that (Message) which you have brought. Do you fear for us?' He replied, "Yes. Hearts are between two of Allah's Fingers. He turns (changes) them as He wills." (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

﴿Our Lord, let not our hearts deviate (from the truth) after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from You. Truly, You are the Bestower.﴾ [Al-Imran 3: 8]

The more sensitive and submissive to Allah people become, the more alive they become. Contrastingly, they are dead, but walking among the living, when they are unresponsive to Allah and His Messenger.

Responsiveness should be on both levels, individual and collective, as taught by the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) with the analogy of a ship that is affected by its passengers. *"Those abiding by Allah's Laws in comparison to those who violate them are like people who drew lots for their seats on a ship. Some of them got seats on the upper deck and some on the lower. When the ones below needed water, they had to go to the upper deck to get it (which troubled those on the upper deck), so they said, 'Let us make a hole in our part of the ship to get water and save those above us from trouble.' If the people on the upper deck allow them to do what they have suggested, everyone on the ship will drown; but if they prevent them, all the people will be safe."* (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

The upper deck passengers, the righteous who live within the bounds of Allah's Law, will go down with the lower deck passengers, the sinners who violate Allah's Law, if they sit passively by while they are being violated. That is, if they allow them to make a hole in the integrity of their society and do not prevent it. The ship with a hole will drown them all. *«And fear an affliction that smites not in particular (only) those of you who are unjust.»*

Everything one does as an individual affects the whole. An individual is not just one person free to do as they please without legal or moral authority – just a drop in the ocean – for a drop of poison can cause the death of the body.

It is imperative to take the initiative and not wait for others to act first. Evil, whenever it manifests itself, is to be resisted; injustice is to be removed; and truth is to be spoken, as the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) commanded: *"Anyone of you who sees something evil, let them*

change it with their hand (by taking action); if they cannot, then with their tongue (by speaking out); and if they cannot, then with their heart (by hating it and feeling that it is wrong); and that is the weakest of faith." (Sahih Muslim)

﴿And when Our Verses (of the Qur'an) are recited to them, they say, "We have heard this (the Qur'an). If we wish we can say the like of this. This is nothing but the tales of the ancients." And (remember) when they said, "O Allah! If this (the Message of Muhammad) is indeed the truth (revealed) from You, rain down upon us stones from the sky or bring us a painful torment." But Allah would not punish them while you (O Muhammad) are among them, nor will He punish them while they seek (His) forgiveness.﴾ [Al-Anfal 8: 31-33]

This is a sample of the response that some disbelievers of the past – and still today – gave. To them, the Qur'an was nothing more than tales of the ancients, and they would rather be damned than follow it.

Although the disbelievers of Makkah deserved the damnation and punishment they called for, Allah (Exalted be He) did not bring them down upon them. He (Exalted be He) has given respite as long as the mercy He has sent continues to survive among people, in person during the Prophet's life, and in principles and practice after his death (the Qur'an and Sunnah).

In the past, the disbelieving nations who rejected their prophets and remained corrupt were totally destroyed. From the time of Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) until the end of this world, humanity is protected from total annihilation, even if there are many who are corrupt, and even if there are many who do not believe.

Allah sent Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) as a mercy for all of humanity, whether they believe or disbelieve. *«We have only sent you as a mercy to the worlds.»* [Al-Anbiya' 21: 107] Anyone who believes in him will attain mercy in this life and in the Hereafter, whereas people who choose not to believe in him will be saved from suffering the fate of total destruction in this world, as happened in the past to the disbelieving nations of Nuh (Noah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace), Lut (Lot, may Allah bless him and grant him peace), and the people of Pharaoh.

«And when Nuh's (Noah) people denied the Messengers, We drowned them, and We made them as a sign for mankind.» [Al-Furqan 25: 37]

«And We made the highest part (of Sodom) its lowest and rained upon them stones of fire-baked clay.» [Al-Hijr 15: 74]

«They belied the Signs of their Lord, so We destroyed them for their sins, and We drowned the people of Pharaoh. They were all wrongdoers.» [Al-Anfal 8: 54]

But the pagans of Makkah did not appreciate the magnitude of this mercy, nor were they grateful. Instead, they invoked Allah to hasten their share of punishment: *«And they say, "Our Lord, hasten for us our share (of the punishment) before the Day of Reckoning!"»* [Sad 38: 16]

9-At-Tawbah

«Say (O Muhammad), "If your parents, your offspring, your siblings (brothers or sisters), your spouses, your kindred, the wealth that you have gained, the commerce in which you fear a decline, or the dwellings in which you delight are dearer to you than Allah, His Messenger, or striving in His Cause, then wait until Allah brings about His Command (torment). And Allah guides not the rebellious."» [At-Tawbah 9: 24]

At the crossroads of faith and life, faith should prevail. Not in the sense of exiling oneself from society and leading a monastic life, but in the sense of devotion to Allah, His Messenger, and His Cause transcending anything else. Faith of such depth becomes the law dominating and ruling one's life, and the power motivating and steering one's actions. Thus, whenever put in a situation to having to choose between the demands of faith and earthly ties (family, wealth, work, or dwelling), one is ready to renounce the latter the moment they conflict with loyalty to faith.

﴿Whatever thing you have been given is but a passing enjoyment for this worldly life; but what is with Allah is better and more lasting for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord.﴾ [Ash-Shura 42: 36] However hard Allah's Decree may be, the moment the heart is at peace with it, Allah sends relief. As when both Abraham and Ishmael (may Allah bless them and grant them peace) resigned themselves to Allah's Will and were ready for the sacrifice, Allah told Abraham he had fulfilled the vision, and sent down a ram to be sacrificed instead. ﴿Then, when they had both submitted themselves (to Allah's Will), and he (Abraham) had laid him (his son) down on his forehead (for slaughtering), We (Allah) called out to him, "O Abraham, You have fulfilled the vision (dream)." Thus do We reward the righteous.﴾ [As-Saffat 37: 103-105]

﴿If you do not help him (Muhammad), Allah already helped him when those who disbelieved drove him out (of Makkah), the second of two. When the two were in the cave, he said to his companion, "Do not grieve; indeed, Allah is with us." Then Allah sent down His *Sakinah* (calmness, tranquility, peace) upon him, and strengthened him with forces (angels) which you saw not, and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowermost, while Allah's Word is that which is the uppermost. And Allah is Exalted in Might, All-Wise.﴾ [At-Tawbah 9: 40]

Certainty, trust, and submission to Allah's Will were the provisions of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) along the path of emigration from Makkah to Al-Madinah, a path filled with strife, sacrifice, and heading into danger and the unknown for Allah's Sake. *«Those who believed, emigrated, strove hard, and fought in Allah's Cause with their wealth, and their lives are far higher in degree with Allah. They are the successful.»* [At-Tawbah 9: 20]

By earthly measures, it was a struggle of one against all. The enemies were many, and the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was just one man, pursued and alone, except for a single companion, Abu Bakr, emigrating secretly with him after a Divine Command was given to him to emigrate to Al-Madinah.

Quraish, as is always the case with tyrannical forces, could no longer endure the presence of Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), could no longer resist the truth he brought. They conspired to kill, expel, or imprison him. *«And (remember) when the disbelievers plotted against you (O Muhammad) to imprison you, kill you, or expel you (from your home, i.e. Makkah). They plan, and Allah too plans; and Allah is the Best of the planners.»* [Al-Anfal 8: 30]

Horsemen, infantry, and trackers set off in hot pursuit after the two men, spreading out over the mountains, valleys, hills, and plains. The rapid, feverish pace of the pursuers drew them nearer and nearer until they reached the mouth of *Thawr* Cave, in which the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) and his Companion, Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him), were taking refuge. Nothing stood in the way of the pursuers finding their targets but to look under their feet.

In that difficult moment, Abu Bakr lifted his head and saw the feet of the pursuers above their heads. Pitying his companion

and his sacred Message, he said to the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), *"If any of them looked down his feet, he would certainly see us."* To which the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) answered, *"O Abu Bakr, what do you think of two when Allah is their third?"* (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

Whatever will happen, let it happen; the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) was certain that Allah was enough for them. *«If Allah helps you, none can defeat you; and if He forsakes you, who is there after Him that can help you? In Allah, then, let the believers put their trust.»* [Al-Imran 3: 160]

«Say, "Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us; He is our Protector." And in Allah let the believers put their trust.» [At-Tawbah 9: 51]

The feeling that nothing whatsoever in this universe can slip from Allah's Grasp pours peace and tranquility into the heart of a Muslim. No matter how troublesome the circumstances are or how dark the situation is, they remain under Allah's Will. *«Allah's Will prevails, but most of mankind knows not.»* [Yusuf 12: 21]

Only when contented with what Allah has ordained, accepting the worst that could happen as His Decree from which there is no escape, will souls experience belief and find peace. The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, *"No slave of Allah will truly believe until he believes in predestination, the good and the bad thereof, and until he realizes that what has befallen him was not going to miss him and that which missed him was not going to befall him."* (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

The stronger the belief in predestination, the greater is the relief from anxieties. Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) said, *"From the happiness of the son of*

Adam is his acceptance of what Allah has decreed for him, and from the misery of the son of Adam is his rejection of what Allah has decreed for him." (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

Without it, souls are empty of Allah, and events are seen as waves ebbing back and forth, in which some drown and some survive. Yet it must be emphasized that submission and resignation begin when circumstances are beyond the ordinary will of control and outside the domain of free choice. There should be no hiding behind fate when something can be done. *"O Messenger of Allah, should I tie my camel and put my trust in Allah (for its protection), or leave it untied and put my trust in Allah?"* To which the Messenger of Allah replied, *"Tie your camel, and put your trust in Allah."* (Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

Discernment of Allah's Work in all happenings, as a fruit of belief in predestination, keeps emotions from fluctuating high and low, and renders them temperate in joy and sorrow, and overall reactions, meeting that which is pleasant or unpleasant with calm feelings. This is the gist of Allah's Words: *«No calamity happens on the earth or in yourselves but it is inscribed in the Book of Decrees, before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor rejoice in what has been given to you. Allah likes not prideful boasters.»* [Al-Hadid 57: 22-23]

«Do. Allah will see your deeds, and so will His Messenger and the believers. And (in the end) you will be brought back to the All-Knower of the unseen and the seen, and He will inform you of what you used to do.» [At-Tawbah 9: 105]

There must be alignment between creed and deed. Deeds have an outward reality, witnessed in this world by Allah, His Messenger and the believers; and an inward reality, known only

to Allah, which He will reveal in the Hereafter. Each person will know the truth of all their actions, from the tiniest to the largest, which of them was sincere and which was hypocritical, which was truly obedience and which was disobedience. Then each will get what they deserve – good for good and bad for bad. *﴿The record of deeds will be placed (open), and you will see the criminals fearful of that within it. They will say, "Woe to us! What is this book that leaves nothing small or great without recording it?" And they will find everything they did presented before them. And your Lord treats no one with injustice.﴾* [Al-Khaf 18: 49]

This feeling of Allah's Presence and Knowledge evokes the simultaneous emotions of relief and fear. Regardless of whether idle or busy, the consciousness that Allah is there, seeing and hearing, knowing and recording... Allah Himself, with all His Power and Glory, Who created this entire universe with ease, and controls its every detail. It causes a shudder of awe, yet it also brings comfort and assurance. Humans are not aimless specks left to wander in the vast cosmos without supervision or care. Allah is there with them. *﴿Whatever you (O Muhammad) may be doing, and whatever portion you may be reciting from the Qur'an, and whatever deed you (mankind) may be doing (good or evil), We are Witness thereof, when you are doing it. And not an atom's weight on the earth or in the heaven is hidden from your Lord, nor what is less or greater than that, but is (written) in a clear record.﴾* [Yunus 10: 61]

﴿There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is your suffering, anxious about you, and to the believers he is kind and merciful.﴾
[At-Tawbah 9: 128]

Knowing the punishment awaiting those people who avoid and deny Allah kept a relentless pressure on the Prophet's soul,

which was only relieved by Allah's Solace. *«Perhaps you will kill yourself with grief because they do not believe.»* [Al-Shu'ara' 26: 3] Do not be grieved. *«If We willed, We could send down to them from the heaven a sign for which their necks would remain humbled.»* [Al-Shu'ara' 26: 4]

Stubborn persistence in error and enmity on their part was met with patience, perseverance, and deliverance of the message on his part, even if the disbelieving soul was on the brink of dying. "O uncle, say, 'There is no god but Allah,' a word with which I can witness in your favor before Allah," the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) kept repeating to his dying uncle, Abu Talib, who rejected it each time and died adhering to *Shirk*. (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

On hearing of the worsening illness and approaching death of a Jewish boy who used to serve him, the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) hurried to visit him, hoping the boy would accept Islam. He sat near the boy's head and said to him, "*Submit to Allah (alone). Say, 'There is no god but Allah.'*"

The Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) repeated, "*Submit to Allah (alone). Say, 'There is no god but Allah,'*" as if racing against the remaining breaths of the boy's life. Overcome by his sincere importunity, the Jewish father at last yielded and said to his son, "*Obey Abul-Qasim (the Prophet's nickname).*" The boy embraced Islam and then died. The Prophet came out saying, "*All thanks and praise to Allah Who rescued him through me from the Fire.*" (Sunan Abu Dawud)

Anything that might turn people away from their religion, make them feel burdened by its obligations, or put them into hardship was seen by the Prophet as violating his merciful guidance so much that he supplicated, "*O Allah, whoever is given charge over any matter of my Ummah (universal nation) and is hard upon them, be You hard upon him. And whoever is given charge over any matter of my Ummah and is kind to them, be You kind to him.*" (Sahih Muslim)

His feelings thus varied between pity and mercy for believers and grief and anxiety for disbelievers, strongly sensed in his words, *"My similitude is that of a man who has kindled a fire, but when it lit all around him, moths and such insects that fall into fire start falling into it. He starts to prevent them, but they overpower him and burst into it. This is my similitude and your similitude. I am grasping you by your waistbands away from the Fire (crying), 'Away from the Fire! Away from the Fire!' but you overpower me and burst into it."* (Sahih Muslim)

10- Yunus

﴿Verily, the likeness of (this) worldly life is as water (rain) which We send down from the sky, so by it arises the intermingled produce of the earth of which mankind and cattle eat until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified, and its people think that they have power over it, Our Command comes to it, by night or by day, and We make it like a clean-mown harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday! Thus do We explain the signs in detail for people who give thought.﴾ [Yunus 10: 24]

Here is water falling down from the sky. Here are the plants absorbing it, and growing into profuse varieties of vegetation, transforming the land into a delightful garden, filling its owners with pride. They think that because of their will and work, it flourished. They believe themselves to be the sole disposers and masters of it, without contention. But in the middle of this overwhelming scene of fertility, joy, and confidence, *﴿Our Command comes to it, by night or by day, and We make it like a clean-mown harvest.﴾* In a flash, it is ruined, stated with the same level of intensity and brevity as the event.

Such is worldly life. It has no peace, stability, or permanence.

Such is worldly life for people who are satisfied only with it, who stop at it and do not look forward to what lies beyond it, to what is more honorable and everlasting.

Wholly consumed and completely intoxicated by it, they forfeit their entire afterlife for the transient pleasures of this life. *﴿Know that the life of this world is but play, diversion, adornment, mutual boasting among you, and rivalry for wealth and children. It is like plants that spring up after rain; their growth (at first) delights the sowers, but then you see them wither away, turn yellow, and become debris... the life of this world is only an illusory pleasure.﴾* [Al-Hadid 57: 20]

﴿And Allah invites (you) to the Home of Peace and guides whom He wills to a straight path.﴾ [Yunus 10: 25]

There is a wide difference between an illusion of happiness and real happiness, between a destructible home, able to be destroyed in a moment, and the home of everlasting peace to which Allah is calling us. *﴿Verily, the home of the Hereafter, that is the life indeed, if they but knew.﴾* [Al-'Ankabut 29: 64]

"The day and night are two mounts. Ride them well to the Hereafter. Beware of procrastination (of repentance); death comes suddenly. Do not be deluded by Allah's Forbearance; Paradise and Hellfire are closer to you than your shoelace." (Related by Ibn 'Abbas) Then Prophet Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) recited, *﴿Whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.﴾* [Az-Zalzalah 99: 7-8]

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