

FAITH

FOR A BETTER LIFE

Abdolvahab Süleymanođlu

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Translated and Edited by

Adil Salahi

In the Name of God, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful

Dear Brother, Dear Sister,

Assalām ‘alaykum, peace be to you, along with God’s mercy and blessings.

I am addressing you because we are united by the bond of human fraternity which unites us all. All mankind belongs to one family and they should feel this as a uniting bond.

I am also addressing you by the firm bond that unites us as believers in the Islamic faith, which establishes an everlasting brotherhood between all its followers, as God says: ‘All believers are but brothers’. (49: 10) Every Muslim, wherever he or she happens to be on earth, feels this bond uniting them with everyone who shares their belief in God as their Lord, Muhammad (peace be upon him) as His Messenger, and in Islam as his religion.

We share with you this unifying bond of faith. When we supplicate to God, we feel that our Muslim brothers and sisters also supplicate to Him and when we nurture our love of Prophet Muhammad, whom we believe in and love, we realize that all



our brothers and sisters share this love with us. As we face the *qiblah* in our prayers, we recognize that all our brothers and sisters, wherever they are, face the same *qiblah* and pray in the same way as we pray. Such feelings give every Muslim a vibrant bond of brotherhood with every Muslim on earth, whatever their race or nationality may be.

We congratulate you on having been guided to Islam, and we congratulate ourselves on having you as new members of this superior bond of brotherhood. We present you with our love and some of what we have learnt through our faith. We expect that you will reciprocate this love and you will appreciate this letter as an address starting a close relationship of profound amity.

This letter includes a number of brief outlines of some of the guiding principles of Islam which enable a Muslim to understand the message of life. Through such principles everyone can find the meaning of life and will be able to come out of the wilderness. Ilya Abu Madi⁽¹⁾ wrote a poem starting with the following lines:

I have come here; I do not know from where, but I have come.

I saw a road in front of me and I started to walk.

(1) Ilya Abu Madi (1957-1889) was born in Lebanon, but migrated to Alexandria in Egypt in 1900, and from there he travelled to America in 1911, where he spent the rest of his life. He published several volumes of his poetry. The quoted lines are the opening of his poem, *al-Ṭalāsīm*, i.e. the Enigmas.

I shall continue to walk, whether I like it or not.

How have I come here? How did I see this road? I do not know.

These guiding principles of Islam will further enable a Muslim to realize how life progresses and identify his mission, role, responsibility and achievements in his own span of life. He will be able to see some of what is beyond this life on earth and the meaning of the eternal life. When we receive answers to such questions from divine revelations, we will be on the right track, receiving the truth. Thus we will lead a life of certainty, enjoying a feeling of reassurance and satisfaction in this transitory existence and in the future everlasting one. We realize that we will depart this life listening to God's bidding exhortation: 'Oh soul at peace! Return to your Lord, well pleased and well pleasing. Enter, then, together with My servants! Enter My paradise!' (89: 27-30)

With sincere love and prayers from your brother Abdulvahab Süleymanoğlu.

Istanbul
10 August 2023





One
Our Faith



A Good Life

How grim and depressing life is when it is devoid of faith that gives the believer a direct relationship with God, which enables him to address Him directly and feel His reassuring company. Without faith, life is depressing as people feel lonely, having no relationship with the universe around them. They are total strangers to whatever existed before their birth and know nothing of their destiny after they die. They are aimless, having no idea where to turn or what end they will face. When they think of death, they feel that their end is not much different from that of insects when someone heedlessly steps over them.

Such is the life God describes in the Qur'an: 'He who turns away from My message shall have a straitened life' (20: 124). No matter how rich such a person is, his is a life straitened by depressive thoughts of an aimless present and an unknown destiny. By contrast, a person who experiences the light of faith knows his Lord, believes in Him, turns to Him and dedicates his life work to Him. Such is the first of God's gifts granted in this present life, making it a good life, blessed with reassurance, satisfaction and clear way and direction. He knows from where he has come, the destination he aims to reach and where the end will be. It is as God says: 'That with your Lord is the ultimate end' (53: 42).



When faith is coupled with good deeds, it is rewarded with a good life on earth. It is not necessary that this should be a life of affluence. Indeed, it may be a life of plenty or of limited means, but it will be a good life, because there are many other things that make life pleasant and very satisfactory. A believer's life is blessed with direct contact with God, placing one's trust in Him, as well as the reassurance of enjoying His care. It is a life full of the blessings of serenity, health, contentment, mutual family compassion and love, delight at being able to do good deeds and the pleasant feelings such deeds bring, etc. When a person's heart is enlightened with faith, every aspect of his life will acquire a pleasant and happy feeling. A believer may have limited amenities, but contentment will add a blessing to these amenities.

Anas ibn Mālik narrated that 'When God's Messenger (peace be upon him) went to bed, he would say: "All praise be to God who has fed us, given us our drink, given us enough and provided us with shelter. Many are the ones who have none to give them enough or provide them with shelter"' ⁽¹⁾. In this hadith, the Prophet expresses his heart-felt gratitude for very familiar and daily blessings that are enjoyed by every one of us: a bite of food, a sip of a drink, a means of shelter as well as a blessing which we often overlook. This is the one expressed in the hadith as 'He has given us enough'. This covers what we need to be well in life. Thus it means that He spared us dangers and diseases we might have had to face. How great these blessings are, yet they are renewed whenever we eat, drink, sleep or return home. They are renewed with every feeling of love and every moment of sound health and

(1) Related by Muslim, 2,715.

safety. All these are blessings because they are bestowed by God, granted by His grace. They are the first gifts the believers enjoy in their present life on earth. God says: ‘Whoever does righteous deeds, whether man or woman, and is a believer, We shall most certainly give a good life. And We shall indeed reward these according to the best that they ever did’ (16: 97).

It is a goodly life because it is free of worry and conflict. Hence, God describes a believer’s soul as a ‘soul at peace’, and this peace is always renewed in the present life on earth, at death, resurrection and admittance into Heaven. God says: ‘Oh soul at peace! Return to your Lord, well pleased and well pleasing. Enter, then, together with My servants! Enter My paradise!’ (89: 27-30). Thus is the believer: his soul is at peace, reassured by its faith, free of doubt, assured of its way and experiencing neither fear nor worry. As death approaches, the soul hears this friendly address: ‘Return to your Lord, well pleased and well pleasing’. During your life, you believed in your Lord, and turned to Him in your prayers. It is now time for you to go back to Him. The soul is then given the good news that it will be with God’s devout servants on whom He showered His blessings. These include all prophets and believers who devoted their lives to serving God. Moreover, the soul will be with God in heaven.

How pleasant our feeling is as we listen to God’s words attributing to Himself the believers and their abode in the life to come, saying: ‘Enter with My servants, enter My paradise’. Both the believers and paradise are His, belonging to Him. He wants them to feel that they are in His paradise, near Him. This echoes what that devout woman of ancient times, Pharaoh’s wife, must have felt as she prayed to God: ‘My Lord, build



me a mansion in heaven near You' (66: 11). It is not merely a house; it is a mansion near God. This nearness to God is felt by believers in their life as one of the certainties of faith, and they live it in the life to come as a reality, granted to them as their reward.

Such are God's devout servants. May God make you, brother and sister, among them in this life and in the life to come.



To Know God

Ubayy ibn Ka'b narrated: 'God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: "Abu al-Mundhir, do you know which is the greatest verse of God's Book that is with you?" I said: "God and His Messenger know best". He said: "Abu al-Mundhir, do you know which is the greatest verse of God's Book that is with you?" I said: "God: there is no deity but Him, the Ever-Living, the Eternal Master of all". He patted me on my chest and said: "Congratulations to you on your knowledge, Abu al-Mundhir".⁽¹⁾

A question may be asked: why did this companion of the Prophet select this particular verse stating that it was the greatest in the Qur'an? The Prophet's companions knew that the best and most important knowledge is to know God. The

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- (1) Related by Muslim, 810. The full text of the verse the hadith refers to is rendered in translation as: 'God: there is no deity but Him, the Ever-Living, the Eternal Master of all. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there that can intercede with Him, except by His permission? He knows all that lies open before them and all that lies hidden from them; whereas they cannot attain to anything of His knowledge save as He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not weary Him. He is the Most High, the Most Great'. (2: 255).



verse Ubay selected as the greatest in the Qur'an highlights some of the most important attributes of God, such as His being the Eternal Master of all, the Most High, etc. As such, it is the greatest verse. The Prophet expressed his own admiration of Ubay's knowledge and congratulated him on it.

The Prophet's companions were keen to learn the Qur'an and understand it fully. They learnt what it taught about God and this gave them clear knowledge and genuine love of Him. 'Ā'ishah narrated that 'God's Messenger (peace be upon him) sent a man as a commander of an expedition, and this man was reciting the Qur'an as he led the prayer with his companions and he always finished with "Say: He is God, the One and only God". When they came back, this was mentioned to God's Messenger (peace be upon him). He said: "Ask him why he does this". They asked him and he said: "Because it describes God, the Lord of Grace. I love to recite it". God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said to them: "Tell him that God loves him".⁽¹⁾

Brother and sister! All of us urgently need to know God better. He is our Lord who created us out of nothing, and nurtured us with endless bounties, and then to Him we shall return in the end. 'That with your Lord is the ultimate end'. (53: 42). We need to learn God's names and attributes, realize His greatness and power, and appreciate His benevolence and mercy. The more we know God, the closer we draw to Him and the more we love Him. The best way to learn about God is to understand the verses in which He describes Himself. Here are some of these:

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 7,375; Muslim, 813.

He is God: there is no deity other than Him. It is He who knows all that is beyond the reach of anyone's perception, as well as all that which can be witnessed. He is the Lord of Grace, the Ever-Merciful. He is God: there is no deity other than Him, the Sovereign, the Holy, the Source of Peace, the Giver of Faith, the Guardian over all, the Almighty, the Compeller, to whom all greatness belongs. Exalted is God in His limitless glory above anything they associate as partner with Him. He is God: the Creator, the Maker who gives shape and form to all. His are the most gracious names. Everything in the heavens and earth extols His limitless glory. He alone is the Almighty, the Wise'. (59: 22-24)

God: there is no deity but Him, the Ever-Living, the Eternal Master of all. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there that can intercede with Him, except by His permission? He knows all that lies open before them and all that lies hidden from them; whereas they cannot attain to anything of His knowledge save as He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not weary Him. He is the Most High, the Most Great. (2: 255)

And say, 'All praise is due to God who has never begotten a son; who has no partner in His dominion; who needs none to support Him against any difficulty'. And extol His greatness. (17: 111)

Say: 'He is God, the One and only God, the Eternal, the Absolute. He begets none, nor is He begotten, and there is nothing that could be compared to Him'. (112: 1-4)



Another important thing that increases our knowledge of God is to reflect on His creation and the signs in the world around us that point to Him. When we reflect on the greatness of His creation as though we are seeing it for the first time we will be full of amazement. We need only to cast a reflective look at the great expanse of the universe, its stars and planets, imagine its galaxies, and then look at the earth, its mountains, valleys, seas, trees, animals, etc. we will see an endless panorama of wonderful things and amazing harmony. God says:

In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the vessels that sail through the sea with what is useful for mankind; in the water God sends down from the sky giving life to the earth after it had been lifeless, causing all manner of living creatures to multiply on it; in the movement of the winds, and the clouds that run their courses between sky and earth: in all this there are signs for people who use their reason. (2: 164)

In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are indeed signs for men endowed with insight, who remember God when they stand, sit and lie down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: 'Our Lord, You have not created all this in vain. Limitless are You in Your glory. Guard us, then, against the torment of the Fire. (3: 190-191)

When we have formulated a clear and correct concept of God, we shall love Him with all our hearts. We shall love Him for His majesty, beauty, greatness, absolute power, infinite wisdom, perfect knowledge and His mercy that encompasses all. We shall love Him for the great favours He has bestowed



on us. It is He who has created us out of nothing, honoured us and raised us above many of His creation. He says: ‘We have indeed honoured the children of Adam, and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favoured them far above many of Our creatures’ (17: 70). It is He who has made a great number of His creation in the universe subservient to us, as He says: ‘And He has subjected to you, as a gift from Himself, all that is in the heavens and on earth. In this there are signs for people who think’ (45: 13).

We love God for the great many blessings He has given us. Let us remember His words: ‘Whatever blessing you have comes from God’ (16: 53). ‘Should you try to count God’s blessings, you will never be able to compute them’ (14: 34). One of the greatest blessings He has given us is the guidance He has given us to know Him, when a great many people have gone into error. Hence we say: ‘All praise is due to God who has guided us to this. Had He not given us guidance, we would certainly have not found the right path’ (7: 43).

The blessings God bestows on us include that He gives us our sustenance and grants us health and what is sufficient for life. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to say after he had eaten something: ‘All praise be to God who has fed us, given us our drink, and made us Muslims’.⁽¹⁾ God also said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): ‘Speak of your Lord’s favours’. (93: 11). We should speak of God’s favours to ourselves first of all, reminding ourselves of God’s blessings, and expressing our gratitude to Him for having favoured us with these.

(1) Related by Abu Dāwūd, 3,850; al-Tirmidhī, 3,457.



We love God for His all-encompassing mercy. One aspect of His mercy is that He records our good and bad deeds. When a person does a good deed, God records it as ten good deeds, then multiplies it many times. When a person does a bad deed, he records it as a single deed. If that person repents and seeks God's forgiveness, God will erase that bad deed, replacing it by a good one.

Another aspect of His mercy is that when we turn to Him in repentance, He accepts it; and when we pray for His forgiveness, He forgives us. He says: 'It is He who accepts the repentance of His servants and who pardons bad deeds'. (42: 25). 'God wants to turn to you in mercy'. (4: 27). He will not initiate any punishment for us as long as we remain believers in Him, grateful for His blessings: 'What can God gain by your punishment, if you are grateful and you believe? God is always responsive to gratitude, all-knowing'. (4: 147). God's mercy is great indeed, His forgiveness accommodates everything, and His reward and favours are ever flowing. Hence, believers love God most of all: 'Yet there are people who worship beings other than God, giving them a status equal to His, loving them as God alone should be loved; whereas the believers love God more than all else'. (2: 165).

When a believer reflects on God's abounding grace and flow of favours, his love of God is multiplied and he yearns to the meeting with Him. He thinks well of God's generosity and expects to receive more of His grace.

The better a believer knows God, the more he is in awe of Him. Hence the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'By God, I am the one among you who knows God best and fears Him



most'.⁽¹⁾ A believer's knowledge of God gives him greater confidence and he completely places his trust in Him, as Prophet Jacob said to his sons: 'I know of God what you do not know'. (12: 86). He said it at a moment when he was in extreme distress, as he thought he had lost his two sons, Joseph and his brother. He said to his other sons: 'It is only to God that I complain and express my grief. For I know of God what you do not know. My sons, go and seek news of Joseph and his brother; and do not despair of God's mercy; for none but unbelievers can ever despair of God's mercy'. (12: 86-87). As Jacob knew of God what his sons did not know, his hopes of Him were beyond what they could hope for. When his good thinking of God became reality and he was reunited with his two lost sons, he said to his other sons: 'Have I not said to you that I know of God what you do not know'. (12: 96). A proper and correct knowledge of God is the best and most beneficial knowledge. It is the key to love Him, stand in awe of Him and pin one's hope in Him. To place one's trust in Him and rely on Him is the key to every good thing.

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 6,101; Muslim, 2,356.



Worship is Offered to God Alone

When Prophet Jacob arrived in Egypt, he realized that the majority of its people worshipped beings other than God. When he was on his death bed, the thing he feared most for his children and grandchildren was that they should be influenced by such erring ways and begin to worship other beings. As death approached, he asked his sons: ‘Whom will you worship when I am gone?’ (2: 133) He wanted to emphasize his last wish to them, seeking their pledges to continue to believe in God’s oneness. They replied: ‘We will worship your God, the God of your forefathers Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, the One God. To Him do we submit ourselves’. (2: 133). Jacob was a prophet, and his father Isaac was also a prophet. His grandfather was Abraham, also a prophet. Despite this succession of prophethood and the belief in God’s oneness was well-established among them, yet Prophet Jacob feared that his sons might deviate from the path of prophets, because polytheism was widespread in their new place of residence. He, therefore, re-emphasized his last wish and took their new pledges during his last moments of life. Nothing was greater or more important to him at that moment than the continuity of belief in God’s oneness and that all worship should be addressed to Him alone.



Polytheism and offering worship to beings other than God is the greatest folly ever committed by mankind. Yet this folly continued to be repeated time after time, among different peoples and in many generations. Therefore, God continued to send His messengers to set things right and guide mankind to address all their worship to God alone, with no intermediaries between them and Him. No act or ritual of worship may be addressed to anyone other than God. People may not worship idols, planets, devout people or even prophets. All these are created by God, and none of them is His partner. God says: It is not conceivable that any human being to whom God had given revelation and wisdom and prophethood would subsequently say to people: “Worship me instead of God”. (3: 79). Indeed, every prophet said to his community: ‘My people, worship God alone, you have no deity other than Him’.

The Qur’an exposes the falsehood of paganism and shows that there can never be more than the One God. It says: ‘Had there been in heaven or on earth any deities other than God, both would surely have fallen into ruin! But limitless in His glory is God, Lord of the Throne, and exalted is He above all that they attribute to Him!’ (21: 22) God also says: ‘Never did God take to Himself any offspring, nor has there ever been any deity alongside Him. Had there been any, each deity would surely have taken away his own creation, and they would surely have tried to establish superiority over one another. Limitless in His glory is God, far above all that which they attribute to Him’. (23: 91). None is a partner with God and no one may be worshipped alongside Him. There is no intermediary between God and His creation. He is close to His servants when they worship Him. The Prophet says: ‘The closest a person is to his



Lord is when he is in prostration [during prayer]'.⁽¹⁾ God is also close to His servants when they supplicate to Him. He says: 'If My servants ask you about Me, well, I am near; I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls to Me. Let them then respond to Me, and believe in Me, so that they may follow the right way'. (2: 186).

God issues very strong warnings to mankind against associating anyone with Him in their worship. He makes it clear that this is the gravest sin that will never be forgiven. He says: 'For a certainty, God does not forgive that partners are associated with Him. He forgives any lesser sin to whomever He wills. He who associates partners with God contrives an awesome sin indeed'. (4: 48) To worship anyone other than God is exceedingly repugnant, and its seriousness becomes clearer when we realize that it means setting an equal to God. How can a created being be equal to the Creator? Every created being is weak, while God is almighty: can they be equal? Polytheists will discover how far in error they have been when they are thrown in Hell together with their assumed deities. God says: 'And there, quarrelling with one another, they will say: "By God, we were obviously in error, when we deemed you equal to the Lord of all the worlds. It was only the truly guilty ones who led us astray"'. (26: 96-99).

Every Muslim man and woman worship God, just as prophets Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them all) worshipped Him. They address Him directly, with none interceding between Him and them. He is close to them and He answers their prayers.

(1) Related by Muslim, 482.

Every Muslim man and woman knows that what distinguishes them as Muslims is that they deal directly with God, Blessed and Exalted. When they supplicate, they address their supplication to Him, and when they seek forgiveness, they pray for His forgiveness. When they attend to their obligatory or voluntary prayers, they pray to Him alone. Thus, every Muslim feels that God is very close to him or her, aware of what is in their hearts, and that He is with them wherever they are. He says: ‘He is with you wherever you may be’. (57: 4).



God's Messengers (peace be upon them)

One aspect of God's mercy and benevolence is that He sent messengers to His servants, across many centuries, with a clear mission: '[These] were messengers sent to bring good news and to give warning, so that people may have no argument against God once these messengers [had come]. God is almighty, wise'. (4: 165) 'There was never a community that has not had a warner'. (35: 24)

The successive messages delivered by these messengers were in full agreement, calling on people to worship God alone. However, their codes of law differed as suited different communities and different historical stages. Some confirmed the messages of others. God then sent His final messenger, Muhammad (peace be upon him), to deliver His final message, calling on people to believe, in the same way as all past messengers did: 'Worship God alone; you have no deity other than Him'.

Prophet Muhammad also called on us to believe in all earlier messengers, to love them and believe in their scriptures and the messages they delivered. 'Say [all of you]: We believe in God and in what has been revealed to us, and in what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants, and in what was given to Moses and Jesus, and in what all prophets



have been given by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to God we have surrendered ourselves'. (2: 136). God also says: 'We have sent revelations to you just as We did send revelations to Noah and the prophets after him; as We sent revelations to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron and Solomon, and as We vouchsafed to David a Book of divine wisdom, and as [We inspired other] messengers whom We have mentioned to you previously, as well as other messengers whom We have not mentioned to you. And God has spoken His word directly to Moses. [These] were messengers sent to bring good news and to give warning, so that people may have no argument against God once these messengers [had come]. God is almighty, wise'. (4: 163-165).

In the light of all these Qur'anic verses, we believe in all God's messengers, and we love them all. We believe that they were brethren of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and that he confirmed and complemented all their messages. The Qur'an provides accounts of their histories in confirmation of their messages, and draws lessons from what happened to them. All these histories were useful to strengthen Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as he preached the same message, and needed to persevere in the face of adversity as they persevered. God says: 'All that We relate to you of the histories of earlier messengers is a means by which We strengthen your heart'. (11: 120). 'Remain, then, patient in adversity, just as all messengers endowed with firm resolve bore themselves with patience'. (46: 35).

Some of the earlier messengers are frequently mentioned in the Qur'an. Noah is mentioned by name forty-three times,



Abraham is mentioned sixty-nine times, Moses 136 times and Jesus is mentioned twenty-five times. No woman is referred to in the Qur'an more than the Virgin Mary after whom a complete surah is named.

As such, to believe in Prophet Muhammad's message is to believe in the messages of all earlier prophets. To love him is to love them all.



Loving God's Messenger (peace be upon him)

To love Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is one of the most important principles of believing in him. A person who does not love him does not truly believe in him. He said: 'None of you truly believes unless I am dearer to him than his own parents and children'.⁽¹⁾ Such love is essentially demonstrated through following and obeying him, looking forward to meeting him, and also greeting him.

We love Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) because:

- God loves him.
- He had a sublime character.
- He did us a great favour as he delivered the message of Islam complete and perfect. Shortly before his death, he sought the testimony of people as to the delivery of God's message. During his farewell pilgrimage, he asked the people: 'You shall be asked about me; so what will you say?' They said: 'We testify that you have delivered your message and

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 14.



given sound counsel. He pointed with his forefinger to the sky and to the people, and said: ‘My Lord, bear witness, My lord, bearwitness’.⁽¹⁾

- He loved his community, as God says of him: ‘Indeed there has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves: one who grieves much that you should suffer; one who is full of concern for you; and who is tender and full of compassion towards the believers’. (9: 128).

- He loved us. Prophet Muhammad felt a great desire to see the future generations of his community. He said to his companions: ‘I wish we could see our brethren’. They asked: ‘Are we not your brethren, Messenger of God?’ He said: ‘You are my companions. My brethren are those who have not been born yet’.⁽²⁾

- He greatly worried himself for us, so much so that he could have perished in grief for those of his people who did not believe in God. Hence God said to him: ‘Do not waste yourself sorrowing for them’. (35: 8).

Our love of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) will be strengthened by getting to know him better through reading his authentic biography, knowing his fine character and noble characteristics, remembering that God Himself confirms this as he says of him: ‘Most certainly, you have a sublime character’. (68: 4).

One aspect of loving the Prophet is to love members of his household and his relatives who believed in him, such as

(1) Related by Muslim, 1,218.

(2) Related by Ahmad, 7,993; al-Nasā’ī, 150.

his two uncles Ḥamzah and al-‘Abbās, his cousin and son-in-law ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, all his wives, his four daughters Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthūm and Fāṭimah, and his two grandchildren al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn (may God be pleased with them all). We love them for being the Prophet’s relatives who supported him with patience and withstood different types of hardship to support and protect him. Hence, God praises them in the Qur’an, as He says: ‘God only wants to remove all that is loathsome from you, you members of the [Prophet’s] household, and to purify you fully’. (33: 33).

Likewise, loving the Prophet necessitates that we love his companions who believed in him during his lifetime and steadfastly adhered to his faith after he had passed away. They were the first to believe in God and His Messenger, accompanying the Prophet and striving with him for God’s cause. They also delivered the message of Islam to other communities and continued to spread Islam across many parts of the world. It was only through them that we received our faith, by which we worship God alone. May God reward them richly for their endeavours.

To love the Prophet’s companions is a sign of loving him. They were the people who knew him best and loved him most dearly. They were chosen by God to be His Messenger’s companions who spread His faith. God says of them: ‘As for the first to lead the way, of the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār, as well as those who follow them in [the way of] righteousness, God is well-pleased with them, and well-pleased are they with Him. He has prepared for them gardens through which running waters flow, where they shall abide forever. That is the supreme triumph’. (9: 100). ‘God was indeed well pleased



with the believers when they pledged their allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts and so He sent down tranquillity upon them, and rewarded them with a speedy victory'. (48: 18).



Faith is Conviction and Feelings

Anas ibn Mālik narrated: ‘A Bedouin came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: “Messenger of God, when is the Last Hour?” He said: “What have you prepared for the Last Hour as it will certainly come?” It seemed as if the man felt shy, then he said: “Messenger of God, I have not prepared much in the way of prayer, fasting and charity, but I love God and His Messenger”. The Prophet said: “You are with those you love”’.

Anas said: “We asked if this also applied to us”. The Prophet said: “Yes. It applies to you too”. Anas said: “Having embraced Islam, nothing delighted us more than the Prophet’s words: You are with those you love”’.⁽¹⁾ I love God, His Messenger, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, and I hope to be with them, even though I fall short of what they did”’.

The religion of Islam may be described as a set of logical convictions and sincere feelings. The Qur’an is full of verses that call on people to reflect and use their reason. Many verses cite some aspects of God’s creation and conclude with sentences like: ‘Will you not reflect?’ ‘Do they have no reason?’ ‘So that you may take heed’. God says: ‘Would they never reflect in

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 3,688; Muslim, 2,639.



their own minds? God has not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them other than in accordance with the truth'. (30: 8). 'Say: "I counsel you one thing: stand before God, in pairs or singly, and think: there is no madness in your companion [Muhammad]. He is only a warner to you of awesome suffering to come"'. (34: 46). There is nothing in what God has revealed in His Book or what He has legislated for His servants which will leave the human mind at a loss, or which sound reasoning will reject or find confusing.

Likewise, Islam expresses itself in feelings of the heart. Those who believed in Prophet Muhammad through studying evidence and arriving at conclusions; their belief was soon transformed into profound love of God and His Messenger. Some of the Prophet's companions said to him after having accepted Islam: 'No man's face throughout the world was more hateful to me than your face. Now your face is the one I lovemost'.⁽¹⁾

The Prophet makes clear that such feelings are types of worship that are closely related to belief. He says: 'Three qualities: when combined by a person, ensure that that person will experience, through them, the sweetness of faith: that God and His Messenger are dearer to him than anyone else; that he loves a person for no reason other than for God's sake; and that now that God has saved him from disbelief, he hates to return to it just as he hates to be thrown into the Fire'.⁽²⁾ He also said: 'You shall not be admitted into Heaven unless you [truly] believe; and you will not believe unless you love one

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 4,372; Muslim, 1,764.

(2) Related by al-Bukhari, 16; Muslim, 43.

another. Shall I point out to you something which, if you do it, will generate love between you? Spread the greeting of peace widely among you'.⁽¹⁾

The Prophet (peace be upon him) makes clear that compassion towards God's creation is reciprocated by God's mercy. He says: 'Those who show mercy shall be granted mercy by the Lord of Grace. Be merciful to those who dwell on earth and the One who is Heaven will be merciful to you'.⁽²⁾

Compassion and kindness to animals is an aspect of mercy. A man said to the Prophet: 'I feel compassion towards a sheep I want to slaughter'. The Prophet told him: 'When you show compassion towards a sheep, God will be compassionate to you'.⁽³⁾ The Prophet also said: 'A dog was going round an unbuilt up well, almost dying of thirst, when one of the prostitutes of the Children of Israel saw him. She took off her shoes and drew out water in them and gave it to the dog to drink. She was forgiven her sins for that'.⁽⁴⁾

Since God rewards compassion towards animals in this way, how much greater is His reward for treating people with mercy?

(1) Related by Muslim, 54.

(2) Related by Abu Dāwūd, 4,941; al-Tirmidhī, 1,924.

(3) Related by Ahmad, 15,592.

(4) Related by al-Bukhari, 2,245 ;3,467.



No Injustice on This Day

The requital administered in the life to come is absolutely fair. No one will be unfairly treated. God does not punish anyone for a sin he did not commit, nor will He punish any person more than that person deserves. God is a just arbiter whose mercy always outpaces His wrath. Therefore, He does not inflict punishment on anyone unless that person acknowledges that he or she deserves the punishment. He has explained to all His servants that on the Day of Judgement, requital is on the basis of what everyone has committed. It is the day of absolute justice, when no injustice would be contemplated. God says: ‘the Day when they shall come forth, with nothing about them concealed from God. With whom does sovereignty rest today? With God, the One who holds absolute sway over all that exists. This day each soul will be requited for what it has earned: no injustice will be done today. God is swift in reckoning’. (40: 16-17).

Everyone who is punished on the Day of Judgement will have read their records of what they did during their life on earth. Their deeds are weighed in front of them. God says: ‘We shall set up just scales on the Day of Resurrection, so that no soul shall be wronged in the least. If there be but the weight of a mustard seed, We shall bring it [to account]. Sufficient are We for reckoning’. (21: 47). ‘This Our record speaks of you



in all truth; for We have been recording everything you do'. (45: 29). They will confess their sins: 'They will say: 'Our Lord! Twice have You caused us to die, just as twice You have brought us to life! Now that we have recognised our sins, is there any way out?'' (40: 11)

No one shall be sent to Hell until they have confirmed to the angels that they received the message and knew that they were fully aware of what it required of them. In reference to Hell, God says: 'When they are thrown in it, they will hear it drawing in its breath as it boils up, almost bursting with fury. Every time a group is thrown in it, its keepers will ask them, "Did no one come to warn you?" "Yes", they will reply, "a warner did indeed come to us, but we did not believe him. We said, 'God has revealed nothing. You are in total error'". They will further say, "Had we but listened, or reasoned, we would not now be among the inhabitants of the blazing Fire'". (67: 7-10).

God tells us that He will never punish anyone who remained in life unaware of the divine message. He says: 'We would never inflict punishment [on anyone] until We have sent a Messenger [to give warning]'. (17: 15). '[These] were messengers sent to bring good news and to give warning, so that people may have no argument against God once these messengers [had come]. God is almighty, wise'. (4: 165). This makes clear that whoever was not fully informed of the messages delivered by God's messengers does not incur a punishment. The same applies to those who receive a distorted version of the divine message preventing them from accepting it.

Such people who remained unaware of the divine message, through no fault of their own, may well have embraced it had it



been delivered to them clear. Neither prejudice nor arrogance would have prevented them from accepting it. Such people will suffer no punishment in the life to come. Punishment is only meted out to people who turn away from the truth after they have known it full well. They would have been given clear warnings but they, nevertheless, turned away in arrogance and denied the truth.

None of those who are punished on the Day of Judgement will claim to be unfairly treated, but they will wish to go back to life and rectify their error. God says: ‘If you could but see them when they will be made to stand before the Fire! They will say: “Would that we could return! Then we would not deny our Lord’s revelations, but would be among the believers”. Indeed, that which in the past they used to conceal will manifest itself to them; and if they were to return to life they would go back to that which they have been forbidden. They are indeed liars’. (6: 27-28).

God, Mighty and Exalted, has forbidden injustice to be inflicted by any of His creation. Before that, He has forbidden unjust treatment by Himself. He says in a sacred hadith: ‘My servants, I have forbidden injustice for Myself and have made it forbidden among you. So, do not be unjust to one another’.⁽¹⁾ In the Qur’an, He says: ‘Indeed, God does not do the least wrong to mankind, but it is men who wrong themselves’. (10: 44). ‘It was not God who wronged them, but it was they who wronged themselves’. (16: 33). ‘Indeed God does not wrong anyone by as much as an atom’s weight. And if there be a good deed, He will multiply it, and will bestow a great

(1) Related by Muslim, 2,577.

reward out of His grace'. (4: 40). He multiplies the reward for good deeds, but He does not punish evil deeds by any more than what is strictly fair. He says: 'Whoever does a good deed shall be credited with ten times as much; and whoever does an evil deed will be requited with no more than its like. None shall be wronged'. (6: 160). When a good deed is rewarded by ten times its worth while a bad deed is requited as a single one, then doomed indeed is the one whose single bad deeds outweigh his good deeds by more than ten times.

It is not right that we entertain any doubt about those who will be punished on the Day of Judgement as to whether they have incurred such punishment. God has the final and decisive evidence, and He is the absolutely fair arbiter. His mercy encompasses everything, and it always works ahead of His wrath. Besides, He is the one who knows His creation best, and He is the Ever-Merciful. His punishment will apply only to those whose bad deeds have mounted high and engulfed them totally, as He says: 'Indeed, those who earn evil and become engulfed by their sin are destined for the Fire where they shall abide'. (2: 81).



The Life to Come: A Believer's Outlook

As life goes on, a believer's attention is always on to the life to come and to his destiny after death. It is the second life that is everlasting. Every believer is fully aware that long as his life on earth may be, it remains short. It may give him great wealth, but this remains very little. God says: 'Brief is the enjoyment of this world, whereas the life to come is the best for all who are God-fearing. None of you shall be wronged by as much as a hair's breadth'. (4: 77). To display the nature of the present life most clearly, God compares it to the life to come, which is a settled and permanent life: 'This worldly life is but a brief enjoyment, whereas the life to come is the lasting home'. (40: 39). The planet Earth is small, and life on it is of short duration. Its comforts and pleasures are transitory. Whatever a person owns in this life is in his possession only temporarily: it either goes to someone else while he is alive, or he departs life and leaves it to others.

The true nature of this present life will clearly appear to everyone who has gone through it when such a person is about to die. God says: 'When death approaches any of them, he says: "My Lord! Let me return [to life], so that I may act righteously in whatever I have failed to do". By no means! It is but a word he says. Behind them there stands a barrier till the Day when all will be raised from the dead'. (23: 99-100).



When people are resurrected, they will remember their life on earth and discover that it was of very short duration. God describes their condition: ‘And He will ask: “How many years have you spent on earth?” They will answer: “We have spent there a day, or part of a day; but ask those who keep count”’. (23: 112-113).

God describes the life of this world and compares its real worth to that of the life to come, saying: ‘Know that the life of this world is but a play, a passing delight, a beautiful show, a cause of boasting among you and a quest for more riches and children. It is like the rain that causes the plants to grow, and thus gives delight to the sowers. Then it withers, and you can see it turn yellow, and in the end it crumbles into dust. In the life to come there is terrible suffering, as well as God’s forgiveness and His goodly acceptance. The life of this world is no more than an illusory pleasure’. (57: 20). Both reward and punishment will be only administered in the life to come, as God says: ‘What is with God is much better and more enduring’. (28: 60). ‘Indeed the suffering in the life to come is most severe and most enduring’. (20: 127).

Many are those who live in this world as though it is their permanent abode where they spend their entire existence. They are fully absorbed in the affairs of this life, and they talk about nothing other than matters in this present world. It seems as though all people are chained to the problems of this life, unconcerned with anything that comes after it. They do not give a portion of their time to think about what comes after it, nor do they look up to the One who controls it and conducts all its affairs. They never talk about meeting God, which is inevitable, nor about His requital of both good and



bad deeds, which will never fail. God refers to such people as He says: ‘So, ignore those who turn away from Our message and care only for the life of this world. Such is the sum of their knowledge. Your Lord knows best who strays from His path, and He knows best who follows right guidance’. (53: 29-30).

The present life of this world is only a brief introduction of a voluminous book. In this life, people are subject to the time dimension, but they will move to another life where time does not apply. It is permanent, without an end. Hence, everyone must prepare for this everlasting life: ‘Brief is the enjoyment of this world, whereas the life to come is the best for all who are God-fearing. None of you shall be wronged by as much as a hair’s breadth’. (4: 77).

Happy is the person who faces death, having prepared for it. He thus arrives at the life to come, having got ready for it through his work in this life. On arrival, such people are given good news and they are received with reassurance on the day of great fear. God says of them: ‘The Supreme Terror will cause them no grief, since the angels will receive them with the greeting, “This is your day which you were promised”’. (21: 103). ‘On the Day when you see all believers, men and women, with their light spreading rapidly before them and to their right, [they will be told], “The good news for you today is that you shall for ever abide in gardens through which running waters flow. This is indeed the supreme triumph”’. (57: 12).

The recipients of such great news are the people who continue to look to the future while they are in this life. They are those who prepare for the future life before arriving there. They spend their time on earth considering the life to come as



they look at the following day. They tremble as they consider the hardship of the Day of Judgement. Hence, they express their feelings while they are in this world: “We fear the Day of our Lord: a bleak, distressful day”. God will save them from the woes of that day, and will grant them radiance and joy’. (76: 11). Hence, when they find themselves in the future life, they will say: ‘When we were still living with our kinsfolk, we were full of fear, and so God has been gracious to us, and warded off from us suffering through the scorching wind. (27). We used to pray to Him: He is the Beneficent, the Ever-Merciful’. (52: 26-28). When they are settled in Heaven, they will remember that God provided them with guidance, and they will also remember the promises given them by God’s messengers, and how they prepared for their future life. They will thank God and say: “All praise is due to God who has guided us to this. Had He not given us guidance, we would certainly have not found the right path. Our Lord’s messengers have certainly brought us the truth”. [A voice] will call out to them: “This is the paradise you have inherited by virtue of what you used to do”’. (7: 43).

Throughout his life on earth, a believer looks at the life to come, prepares for it and continues to question himself about being ready for the day when he will face the reckoning of his deeds. God gives us the following advice: ‘Believers, have fear of God. Let every soul consider carefully what it sends ahead for tomorrow. Remain God-fearing, for God is fully aware of all that you do’. (59: 18).

However, the belief that this present life is not a permanent abode, but merely a passage leading to it, and that the meeting with God is inevitable and must be prepared for does not mean



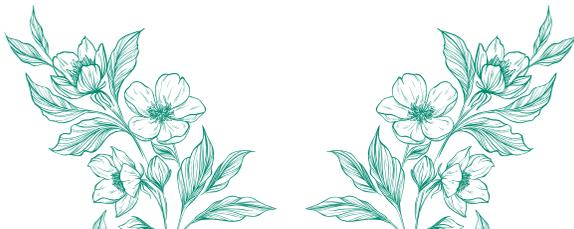
that we should neglect this life without enjoying the good things it offers, or neglect building a sound and worthy human life on it. Such negligence is contrary to what the Qur'an urges us to do and contrary to the Prophet's practice which we should endeavour to emulate. The upper hand is certainly better than the lower hand, and a strong believer is better than a weak believer. The Qur'an outlines for us the correct criterion, as it says: 'Seek instead, by means of what God has granted you, the good of the life to come, without forgetting your rightful share in this world; and do good just as God has done good to you, and do not seek to spread corruption on earth; for God does not love the ones who spread corruption'. (28: 77).





Two

Our Religion of Islam



Questions of Islam

A Bedouin from the Hijaz, where a broad vast desert is surrounded by high mountains which almost appear to be carrying the sky on their tops, undertook a journey. He mounted his camel and rode on for eight days, at the end of which he arrived in Madinah. He had neither a business deal to conclude nor a relative to visit in that city. He only wanted to meet the man who said that he was God's Messenger. He wanted to ascertain for himself the meaning of prophethood and the truth of his message, so that he would make up his mind about it.

Arriving in Madinah, he headed straight to the mosque. There he found many of the Prophet's companions sitting with God's Messenger (peace be upon him). He could not distinguish him. As he reached them, he asked: 'Who of you is 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's son?''⁽¹⁾ The Prophet sat among his companions as one of them, with no obvious mark or condition to distinguish him. They could not find any visible sign to point out to the speaker except the Prophet's shining face. They said: 'He is the

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- (1) Abd al-Muṭṭalib was the Prophet's grandfather, but it was normal for the Arabs to speak of a person as the son of his grandfather, or any of his ancestors, particularly if such an ancestor was held in high respect. The Prophet's grandfather was the chief of Makkah, as were his earlier ancestors. – Translator's note.



bright, reclining man over there'. He advanced towards him and when he was near, he addressed him as he would address anyone else: 'O, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's son!' The Prophet said: 'Yes, I am 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's son'. He asked: 'Muhammad?' The Prophet said: 'Yes'. Needless to say, the man's address was unrefined, but his next speech was even more uncouth. He said: 'I have questions to ask you, and I will be hard on you. Do not take me amiss'. The Prophet, who was the teacher of every goodness, said: 'I shall not take you amiss. You may put any question you have, and I will answer you'. Neither in his faith nor in his teachings was there anything hidden or equivocal. It is all very clear.

The man put his questions which indicated clear thinking and an orderly progressive approach. The dialogue between him and the Prophet was as follows:

The Bedouin: Who created the skies?

The Prophet: God.

The Bedouin: Who created the earth?

The Prophet: God.

The Bedouin: Who erected the mountains and put in them whatever they have?

The Prophet: God.

The Bedouin: I ask you by Him who created the skies and the earth and erected the mountains and whatever they



have; your God and the God of whoever lived before you and whoever will exist after you: Is it God that has sent you as a messenger to all people?

The Prophet: By God, yes.

The Bedouin: I ask you then by Him who has sent you: Is it God who has commanded you that we must worship Him alone and discard the idols our forefathers used to worship alongside Him?

The Prophet: By God, yes.

The Bedouin: I ask you then by Him who has sent you: Is it God who has commanded you that we must offer these five obligatory prayers every day and night?

The Prophet: By God, yes.

The Bedouin: I ask you then by Him who has sent you: Is it God who has commanded you that we must collect zakat from the rich among us and share it among our poor?

The Prophet: By God, yes.

The Bedouin: I ask you then by Him who has sent you: Is it God who has commanded you that we must fast the month of Ramadan every year?

The Prophet: By God, yes.



The Bedouin: I ask you then by Him who has sent you: Is it God who has commanded you that we must offer the hajj to the Ka'bah, if one can undertake the journey?

The Prophet: By God, yes.

The Bedouin: I then declare that I bear witness that there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger. By Him who sent you with the message of the truth, I shall not add to these obligations and shall not omit any of them. My name is Ḍimām ibn Tha'labah, from the Sa'd ibn Bakr tribe. As for those foul practices, we avoided many of them in our days of ignorance.

The last sentence means that the cardinal sins Islam forbids were felt to be unbecoming even during the dark, pre-Islamic days. Therefore, we will be bound by their prohibition in Islam. The man retreated, went back to his camel and untied it. He mounted it and went straight back to his people. He thought he had no further business in Madinah.

When the Bedouin was well on his way, the Prophet said to his companion: 'The man has understood well. If this man with two plaits of hair is true to his word, he will be in Heaven'.⁽¹⁾

The Prophet's companions admired the bedouin's clear thinking and his knowledge. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said: 'I never saw a better and more concise questioner than Ḍimām'.

This Bedouin was aware of what Islam required of its followers and he was convinced that they were right. However,

(1) Related by Ahmad, 2,254; al-Bukhari, 63.



he wanted to find out about the Prophet (peace be upon him). When he saw him, he felt that his face and general condition pointed to his truthfulness. Therefore, he put his questions to him, phrasing them in a way that sought reassurance. His dialogue with the Prophet gave him all he wanted of certainty and he felt fully convinced of the truth of Islam. He, therefore, declared himself a Muslim in front of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and went back home.

When he arrived at his tribe's quarters, his people flocked to meet him. The first thing he said was to shatter the status of the idols they worshipped. He shouted aloud: 'Evil are al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā!' These were two of the greatest idols they worshipped. His people were stunned at his daring attitude, and they warned him that the idols might punish him, causing him some evil. They said: 'Beware Ḍimām, lest you might contract some fatal disease like leprosy'.

However, he had already discarded all that falsehood, and adopted the pure faith of Islam. He said to his people: 'Woe is you! By God, they can cause neither harm nor benefit. God has sent a messenger and revealed to him a Book, saving you from the error in which you have plunged. As for me, I bear witness that there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger. I have just returned from meeting him and brought you what I will advise you to do and to refrain from'. He continued to debate the matter with them until they were convinced. By the evening, every single man and woman in his tribe declared themselves Muslims. The Prophet's companions heard of what he did. Ibn 'Abbās said: 'We never heard of any delegate better than Ḍimām ibn Tha'labah'.



The scene portrayed in the hadith answers many questions which people who wish to learn about Islam would like to ask. It clearly shows that this religion, which God has chosen for mankind, is simple, clear and easy, free of intricate, equivocal or hard principles or requirements. God says: ‘God desires that you have ease. He does not desire that you be afflicted with hardship’. (2: 185).

To embrace Islam does not cause a major shock in the new Muslim’s life, or an upheaval in one’s affairs or relations with other people. It simply means a streamlining of one’s life, clarity and consistency of objectives, and steadfastly following the right way. A Muslim’s objective is stated clearly as addressing worship to God alone. Hence, a Muslim leads a life in which he feels that God is close to him, aware of all what he does in public and private. Thus life is no longer lonely or perplexing. It is guided with clarity, as a Muslim leads a life in which he looks up to God wherever he is. This is how the Prophet (peace be upon him) defines *ihsān*, which literally means ‘doing things well’. He defines it as ‘to worship God as you see Him. While you do not see Him, He sees you’.⁽¹⁾

The Islamic code of law, i.e. the Shariah, is consistent with man’s nature and constitution. God, who created man, is the One who has given him this religion which suits him and appeals to his nature: ‘How could it be that He who has created should not know all? He is above all comprehension, yet is all-aware’. (67: 14). Therefore, the Islamic code of law imposes no hardship and requires nothing that is too hard. God says: ‘God does not charge a soul with more than it can bear. In its favour

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 50; Muslim, 8.

shall be whatever good it does, and against it whatever evil it does'. (2: 286). It does not require abstinence from natural needs or from enjoying the good things in life: 'Say, "Who is there to forbid the beauty which God has produced for His servants, and the wholesome means of sustenance?"' (7: 32).

These pages provide an introduction to the clear and simple Islamic way of life. They also clarify what a Muslim should believe in and how he worships and his conduct in life. It is hoped that they serve as guidance for those who have chosen Islam and are eager to know how to conduct their lives as Muslims. They will see that under God's watchful eye, life is full of certainty and reassurance. It is a goodly life in this world and a life to come full of enjoyment. God says: 'Whoever does righteous deeds, whether man or woman, and is a believer, We shall most certainly give a good life. And We shall indeed reward these according to the best that they ever did'. (16: 97).



Blessed Guidance

Brother and sister, are you aware of the great favour God has bestowed on you when you felt your heart warming to Islam and you started to learn about it, seeking God's guidance? Remember that there are billions of people who spend their lives on earth unaware of the truth of Islam, oblivious of its teachings. When you embrace Islam, you choose to join the great procession of the righteous people and those who provide guidance. The first leader of this procession, which will continue until the end of human life, was our first father, Adam (peace be upon him). This procession includes the greatest individuals in humanity's history such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace be upon them all). It also includes all prophets and their followers who adhered to the truth, the martyrs and the righteous. Congratulations to you on joining this great procession.

All this enables us to feel the great blessing God has given us. It is He who has made His religion easy, free of complications so that hearts open and respond to it. It is God who presents it to us, and thus our hearts welcome it. Neither a person's intelligence, nor his knowledge ensures guidance. Numerous are those who were endowed with superior intelligence, yet continued to remove themselves from faith, and failed to follow His religion and guidance.



Such guidance is granted by God and made appealing to the heart of whoever truly and sincerely seeks it, as He says: ‘As for those who accept divine guidance, God increases them in guidance and causes them to grow in the quality of being God-fearing’. (47: 17). However, those who turn away with conceit are deprived of such guidance, as God says: ‘In this way, God lets many go astray and gives guidance to many others, but none does He leave to go astray except the evildoers’. (2: 26).

When you opened your heart to Islam and felt yourself willing to accept it, God opened for you the gate of guidance. Thus you are going along a way that will take you to a heaven as vast as the earth and skies, where you will meet God’s prophets and devout believers who never swerved from the truth, as well as all righteous people.

When the people of Heaven will be enjoying happiness there, they will say: ‘All praise is due to God who has guided us to this. Had He not given us guidance, we would certainly have not found the right path’. (7: 43). Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) said: ‘If my Lord does not guide me, I will most certainly be one of those who go astray’. (6: 77). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions used to repeat: ‘Our Lord, had it not been for Your guidance we would never have been guided, nor would we have given charity nor prayed’.⁽¹⁾

Because of the great importance of guidance, God has instructed us to pray Him often for it. Hence we say: ‘Guide us on the straight path’. (1: 6). Every Muslim repeats this supplication in prayer at least seventeen times every day.

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 2,837.



Does every Muslim realize the blessing of his situation when he or she made the declaration: ‘I bear witness that there is no deity other than God; and I bear witness that Muhammad is God’s Messenger’? It is this blessing that puts him or her on the right way, following divine guidance. Does he praise God for that, request Him for more of His favours, and pray for help to remain firm in faith? Many are those who live on earth but lead a life of confusion, bereft of guidance. They never experience the sweetness of faith, or the certainty of God’s guidance. They remain lost in the wilderness, or in the pursuit of carnal pleasures. On our part we say: All praise is due to God who has guided us to this. Had He not given us guidance, we would certainly have not found the right path.

Remaining Firm in Faith

‘Ā’ishah noticed that the Prophet used often to pray: ‘My Lord, You are the One who turns hearts. Let my heart remain firm in Your faith’. She wondered at that and asked him why he said it so often. He said: ‘How can I be reassured, ‘Ā’ishah, when all peoples’ hearts are in between two fingers of God, Mighty and Exalted? If He wishes to turn over any person’s heart He will’.⁽¹⁾ God’s Messenger, who directly received God’s guidance, prays to God to remain firm in his faith. He did it frequently in order to show his community that as every believer prays for God’s guidance, he should also pray to Him to keep him firm in following it. A person’s heart is prone to change and it is susceptible to different influences. It can easily change direction, unless God keeps it settled and firm. The Prophet’s companions noted that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) wanted to confirm something by an oath, he said: ‘By the One who turns hearts over’.⁽²⁾ Most often he used this formula to alert people to this fact.

As we pray to God to keep us in health and to protect us and our property, we need to pray to Him to protect what is far more valuable, which is our faith. In this life, everyone is

(1) Related by Ahmad, 26,133; al-Tirmidhī, 3,522.

(2) Related by al-Bukhari, 6,617.



subjected to a great variety of desires, temptations, suspicions, competing views and ideas. These are often seen in deceptive colours and false appearances. Hence, a believer should persist in requesting God to enlighten his insight, protect his faith and keep his heart firm in faith. This is the best help to protect us against being deceived by a false idea or slipping into some erroneous deed.

God mentions the supplication of people endowed with firm knowledge of God: ‘Our Lord, let not our hearts swerve from the truth after You have guided us; and bestow on us mercy from Yourself. You are indeed the Great Giver’. (3: 8)



Islam: a Message for All Mankind

Islam does not belong to a nation or a race or a country. It is a religion for all mankind, calling on them to submit themselves to God, Mighty and Exalted. It makes no distinction between races and nationalities. All mankind may be compared to a tree with all its branches belong to a single stem, as all mankind are the descendants of one father, Adam (peace be upon him). Hence, the Qur'anic address often starts with 'Children of Adam'. It also frequently starts with 'Mankind', followed by an order or a prohibition or a reminder. God tells Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that his message is global, addressed to all humanity, as He says: 'We have sent you to all mankind so that you bring them good news and give them warning; but most people do not understand'. (34: 28).

The tree of humanity has branched out into races and nations so that they will get to know each other, not for each to boast of their own merits and claim superiority. God says: 'Mankind! We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Truly, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most genuinely God-fearing'. (49: 13)

The amazing thing about Prophet Muhammad's preaching of the message of Islam is that those who embraced Islam in its



early days included people who belonged to different nations. These included Khadījah, Abu Bakr and ‘Alī who were Arabs; Bilāl and Umm Ayman who were Africans from Abyssinia; Salmān and Sālim from Persia; Şuhayb who was a Byzantine; ‘Abdullāh ibn Sallām, an Israelite, and others.

Islam abolished all types of race discrimination, and the Prophet announced in his speech during his farewell pilgrimage the equality of all mankind. He said: ‘People, your Lord is One and your father is one. No Arab enjoys any privilege over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab, nor a white person over a black one, nor a black over a white one, except through the fear of God. Truly, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most genuinely God-fearing’.⁽¹⁾

Different nations have embraced Islam without losing or shedding their own nationalities. Islam has welcomed them all and benefited by their achievements. The Muslim community owes much to all Muslim scholars and scientists who belonged to different communities, including Arabs, Persians, Turks, Berbers, Byzantines, etc. Therefore, whoever embraces the religion of Islam and becomes a Muslim need not abandon anything of his national clothing, language, name or country. Islam belongs to all humanity, with all its nations and races.

The essence of this religion of Islam is to turn and submit to God, not to any other bond. All mankind are God’s creation, and He is their Lord whom they should worship. Hence, the criterion by which people’s merit is distinguished is the fear of God: ‘The noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is

(1) Related by Ahmad, 23,489.

most genuinely God-fearing'. When they pray, Muslims stand in one row no matter how different they may be. In the hajj, they wore the same garments. Islam warns its followers against looking down on any person because of his colour or nationality. When he heard someone abusing another on account of his mother's colour, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said to that man: 'Have you reviled him on account of his mother. You are a man with traces of the days of ignorance'.⁽¹⁾ He meant that he had a characteristic that belonged to those dark days.

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 30; Muslim, 1,661.



Relationships after Adopting Islam

Anyone may decide to adopt Islam but his or her parents continue to follow their own religion. However, this should not mean a break with one's own family. Since you have decided to have your own religion, you should be even doubly dutiful to your parents, despite the fact that they continue to adhere to their faith and dislike yours. This is what Islam requires, as God says: 'We have enjoined upon man goodness to his parents: his mother bore him going from weakness to weakness, and his weaning takes place within two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents. With Me is the end of all journeys. Yet should they endeavour to make you associate as partner with Me something of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them, but [even then] bear them company in this world's life with kindness, and follow the path of those who turn towards Me. In the end, it is to Me that you shall all return, when I shall inform you about all that you were doing [in life]'. (31: 14-15).

Dutifulness towards parents is an act of obedience of God which draws one closer to God, whether one's parents are Muslims or not. The same may be said about one's spouse, children and relatives: friendly and compassionate relations should be maintained with them. The Prophet said: 'The best of you are the best to their families, and I am the best of you to my family'.⁽¹⁾

(1) Related by Ibn Mājah, 1,977; al-Tirmidhi, 3,895.



The same may be said about one's relationship with colleagues and friends. The relationship among people is broad, and goodly conduct should govern our dealing with all people. The Prophet said: 'Deal with other people in goodly manner'. The term 'other people' covers Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Good conduct should be the guiding principle in dealing with all people. To maintain good conduct is one way of making other people aware of one's religion and advocating it.

Some new Muslims may be met with hostility by members of one's family or community. They may be subjected to some harassment or ridicule. They should meet this with an attitude of firmness and patience and a gentle approach, realizing that this is only a test of their own patience in adversity and their conviction in their new faith. God says in the Qur'an: 'Do people think that once they say: "We are believers"', they will be left alone and not put to a test? We certainly tested those who lived before them; and so most certainly God knows those who speak the truth and most certainly He knows those who are liars'. (29: 2-3). 'You shall most certainly be tried in your possessions and in your persons; and you shall hear much hurting abuse from those who were given revelations before you and from those who set up partners with God. But if you persevere and continue to fear God - that is indeed a matter requiring strong resolve'. (3: 186). God mentions that the followers of earlier prophets said to their people who ill-treated them: 'We will bear with patience all your persecution. In God alone let all those who trust place their trust'. (14: 12). God also said to His Messenger (peace be upon him): 'Endure, then, with patience, remembering always that it is only God who helps you to be patient; and do not grieve over them, nor be distressed by their intrigues. God is indeed with those who remain God-fearing and those who do good'. (16: 127-128).



Personal Responsibility

When people become aware that you have adopted Islam as your faith, they will read all your actions and behaviour as representing Islam. Therefore, beware lest you become the wrong advertisement of Islam through unbecoming behaviour. Every Muslim should realize their responsibility to represent Islam, by adhering to its manners and moral values, which are indeed forms of the worship of God:

- To say the truth is an act of worship.
- To fulfil one's trust is an act of worship.
- To do one's work with sincerity is an act of worship.
- To maintain good manners in dealing with people is an act of worship.

Therefore, you should endeavour that people around you realize that your new faith has made you a better person.



Introducing Islam to People

Since God has granted you the favour of showing you the way to Islam, you should feel your responsibility towards your faith. You should realize that you are sent with the same message delivered by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Just as he delivered God's message to us, every generation of Muslims has the responsibility of delivering the Islamic message to the world at large and to future generations.

Had it not been for this way of transmitting the message of Islam, neither you nor I would have been aware of this religion. The Prophet (peace be upon him) informed his companions that they were sent with the same message entrusted to him. They were sent to all people and successive generations in this vast world. He said to his companions: 'You are sent to make things easy, not difficult'.⁽¹⁾ He thus makes them messengers, because they were the ones to transmit to mankind what he had delivered of guidance and light. They would carry on his mission of advocating Islam.

One of the kindest deeds a Muslim can do to others is to show them the right way and guide them to Islam. This was the mission of God's messengers and their followers. The Prophet

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 220.



said to one of his companions: ‘By God, to be the means by which God guides one person is better for you than the best of this world’.⁽¹⁾

Prior to embracing Islam a person may be in a situation of worry and loss. He might have had an inspiring experience in getting to know about Islam. Relating his experience may be a good way of presenting Islam to others, particularly if he compares his situation before and after embracing Islam. In this context, we may remember how the Prophet’s cousin, Ja‘far ibn Abi Ṭālib, described to Negus the conditions of the Arabs prior to Islam and how Islam brought about a total change in their way of life. He said:

Your Majesty, in our recent past we were ignorant people: we worshipped idols, ate carrion, committed all sorts of sins, attached little value to maintaining good relations with our kinsfolk and behaved badly to our neighbours. Our maxim was that might was right. This continued to be our situation until God sent us, from among ourselves, a Messenger whose good name, honesty, sincerity and integrity were well known to us. He called on us to believe in God, the one and only God, and to stop worshipping all idols which we and our forefathers used to worship alongside Him. He commanded us always to speak the truth and be honest, to be good to our relatives and neighbours, to preserve life and shed no blood, to refrain from sin, perjury, robbing the property of orphans entrusted to our care, and making false accusations against honourable women. He also commanded us to devote our worship to God alone, ascribing to Him no partners of any sort. He further commanded

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 2,942.

us to pray regularly, to pay zakat [the obligatory charity] and to fast, [and he outlined other Islamic duties]. We gave him a favourable response, believed in him and gave him our full support and followed his guidance. We began to worship God alone, associating no partners with Him. We refrained from what He forbade us and accepted what He made lawful for us.⁽¹⁾

This comparison of their conditions before and after Islam clarified the effect of Islam in removing confusion and error, replacing these by good conduct, clear vision and a settled way of life.

Everyone of us should fulfil this role of introducing Islam and making its truth clear to people around us. The first that should be made aware of it are one's family, friends and neighbours, then others. Each person should do what they can. God says: 'Who speaks better than he who calls people to God, does what is right, and says, "I am one of those who have surrendered themselves to God?"' (41: 33) 'Say: "This is my way. I call [all mankind] to God on the basis of sure knowledge, I and all those who follow me. Limitless is God in His glory. I am not one of those who associate partners with Him"'. (12: 108).

(1) Related by Ahmad, 1,740.



Men and Women

My brother, my sister, it is an aspect of God's infinite wisdom that He created us as men and women. He says of Himself: 'It is He who creates the two sexes, male and female'. (53: 45). He states that the relationship between man and woman is one of mutual complementation so that life on earth flourishes and progresses with successive generations. God says: 'Mankind, fear your Lord, who has created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the two of them spread abroad so many men and women'. (4: 1).

He makes clear that the relationship between husband and wife is based on love and compassion, as He says: 'And among His signs is that He creates for you spouses out of your own kind, so that you might incline towards them, and He engenders love and tenderness between you. In this there are clear signs indeed for people who think'. (30: 21).

In the Qur'an, God makes clear that reward for people's deeds is granted on an equal basis for both men and women: 'Their Lord answers them: "I will not suffer the work of any worker among you, male or female, to be lost. Each of you is an issue of the other"'. (3: 195). He states that good deeds are required of both men and women, and that good qualities are equally present in both. He says: 'For all men and women



who have submitted themselves to God, all believing men and believing women, all truly devout men and truly devout women, all men and women who are true to their word, all men and women who are patient in adversity, all men and women who humble themselves before God, all men and women who give in charity, all men and women who fast, all men and women who are mindful of their chastity, and all men and women who always remember God – for them all God has prepared forgiveness of sins and a mighty reward’. (33: 35).

God singles out two noble women and states that they provide an example for all believers and should be emulated by men and women who believe. He says: ‘God has also given examples of believers: Pharaoh’s wife, who said: “My Lord! Build me a mansion in heaven near You, and save me from Pharaoh and his doings, and save me from the wrongdoing folk”. And Mary, the daughter of [Imran, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed of Our spirit into her. She accepted the truth of her Lord’s words and His revealed Books. She was truly devout’. (66: 11-12).

One of the longest surahs in the Qur’an, Surah 4, is entitled ‘Women’, and another surah is given the name of the Virgin Mary (peace be upon her).



An Easy Religion

Some new Muslims may experience a wave of enthusiasm to offer voluntary worship, hoping to compensate for what they have missed of good deeds. They drive themselves hard, but this may lead them to extremism and undertaking what they cannot maintain for long.

What is important to realize is that the religion of Islam is easy, and that God loves that people maintain an easy approach in all matters. The Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke against doing too much in the way of voluntary worship. He said: ‘People, do only what you can comfortably do. God is not bored until you are bored’.⁽¹⁾ ‘Ā’ishah narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) was asked: ‘Which action does God love best?’ He said: ‘The one done regularly, even though it is little’.⁽²⁾

It is important to realize that God has given mankind the religion of Islam to remove thereby all hardship from them. He says: ‘It is He who has chosen you, and has laid no hardship on you in [anything that pertains to] religion’. (22: 78). It is God who wills to make things easy for us, as He says: ‘God desires

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 1,151; Muslim, 782.

(2) Related by al-Bukhari, 6,464; Muslim, 783.



that you have ease. He does not desire that you be afflicted with hardship'. (2: 185).

God's Messenger (peace be upon him) instructs us to maintain proper balance in doing our duties. He said: 'Your body has a claim against you; your Lord has a claim against you; your guest has a claim against you and your family has a claim against you. Give to everyone with a claim what is due to them'.⁽¹⁾

It is very important, then, to maintain balance, and to ensure that we are able to maintain continuity in our voluntary worship. We must keep in mind that this religion of Islam is easy and involves no hardship.

(1) Related by al-Tirmidhī, 2,413.



Maintain Your Success

Maintaining balance in one's life is important for everyone, particularly for new Muslims. One aspect of such balance is to maintain success in one's life affairs, as long as they are permissible. Indeed a new Muslim should be even more determined to excel so as to be noted for his success. The Prophet (peace be upon him) highlights this, stating that a strong believer is better than a weak believer. It is very important not to give an impression that accepting Islam leads to failure in life affairs. The Prophet (peace be upon him) says: 'A strong believer is better and dearer to God than a weak believer, but there is goodness in both. Make sure to have what benefits you, seeking God's help. Do not feel helpless'.⁽¹⁾

One aspect of this is to continue in your work, or your studies and to excel in these, trying always to learn more and acquire better skills. All this adds to your strength. It is also important to realize that embracing Islam does not require a person to discard one's hobbies or activities that brings pleasure or comfort, as long as they do not involve anything forbidden. To be religious is to interact with life, not to isolate oneself.

The Prophet's companions had their own hobbies as well as their pastimes and enjoyments. One aspect of this was that he

(1) Related by Muslim, 2,664.



shared with his wife the celebration of Eid in her compartment. On one of these occasions, as he was with her, he heard some celebration and singing outside. He found out that it was those who had recently arrived from Abyssinia have just come into the open area of the mosque, carrying their spears and leather shields. They were doing their folklore dance and singing in their own language inside the mosque. It was a pleasant and joyful sight. He asked his wife whether she wished to watch them. She said that she would love to watch. He stood close to the door of her compartment, and she stood behind him. She placed her head on his shoulder, with her cheek touching his cheek. He covered her with his upper garment, as both of them kept watching the Abyssinians. He even encouraged them to do more, and told them: ‘Carry on Banī Arfidah’, (which was their nickname in Arabic). They felt encouraged when they realized that the Prophet was pleased with their show. They could only express themselves in their own language. The Prophet enquired what they were saying and he was told that they said, ‘Muhammad is a good servant of God’. ‘Ā’ishah said that she could only gather their saying, ‘Abu al-Qāsim ṭībā’.

As this show was in progress, ‘Umar came into the mosque and saw something that was very unfamiliar. He felt that it was unacceptable in the mosque. He picked up some pebbles and threw them at the Abyssinians. The Prophet said to him: ‘Leave them alone, ‘Umar. These are Banū Arfidah’, pointing out that this was their method of expressing their feelings. He then went up to them and said: ‘Safe you are Banī Arfidah’. He reassured them that they could continue without a problem. ‘Umar was unaware that their conduct was blameless. The Prophet continued to encourage them and said: ‘Continue with your show, so that the Jews and Christians learn that our



religion is easy and accommodating. I have been sent with a pure and tolerant message'.⁽¹⁾

(1) Related by Ahmad, 24,855 & 12,540; al-Bukhari, 2,907.

Good Manners

Jarīr al-Bajalī joined the Prophet in Year 7 after his migration to Madinah, which means after twenty years of the start of the Islamic message. He was greatly impressed by the Prophet's fine manners and he used to speak about this. He said: 'God's Messenger (peace be upon him) never denied me entry ever since I embraced Islam; nor did he ever see me without giving me a smile'.⁽¹⁾ Jarīr thus emphasised the Prophet's cheerful smile, as though it was a gesture the Prophet especially did on meeting him, because his smile was bright and full of joy. Yet this was the Prophet's common practice, whenever he saw anyone of his companions. 'Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Jaz' said: 'I never saw anyone smiling more often than God's Messenger (peace be upon him)'.⁽²⁾ Indeed, the Prophet's cheerful face as he smiled on meeting his companions made everyone feel that he was favoured with it.

Such was the Prophet's practice with one who joined his message late. How can we imagine his treatment of his companions who accepted Islam in its early days? With what warm feelings he must have met every one of them? This is one aspect of the Prophet's superior manners which God has

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 3,035; Muslim, 2,475.

(2) Related by Ahmad, 17,713 & 17,704; al-Tirmidhī, 3,641.



granted him. God says to the Prophet: ‘Most certainly, you have a sublime character’. (68: 4).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Prophet used to urge his companions to maintain good manners, confirming their importance as one of the best characteristics a Muslim should have. He said: ‘Those of you who are the best in manners are among those I love best and who will be seated closest to me on the Day of Judgement’.⁽¹⁾ He also said: ‘Nothing will be heavier in a believer’s scales on the Day of Judgement than goodmanners’.⁽²⁾

The difference between Muslims and others in their social manners is that when a Muslim behaves well with all others, he does not consider his behaviour as a public relations exercise. He does it as an act of worship which he offers to God. He does not look for reciprocation or reward by others. He knows that his reward comes from God only, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘What admits most people into Heaven are righteousness and maintaining good manners’.⁽³⁾

Maintaining good manners in dealing with people is first of all an act of worship. Hence the Prophet said: ‘To meet your brother with a smile is a *ṣadaqah* [i.e. a charity]; to help someone onto his mount so as to ride or lift his luggage on it is a *ṣadaqah*; and a good word is a *ṣadaqah*’.

The Qur’an urges people to give their charity in secret so as not to embarrass the recipients. It says: ‘If you give your

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 6,035.

(2) Related by al-Tirmidhī, 2,002.

(3) Related by Ahmad, 9,694; al-Bukhari in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 289; al-Tirmidhī, 2,004.

charity openly, that is well; but if you give it to the poor in private, it is even better for you, and will atone for some of your bad deeds. God is aware of all you do'. (2: 271).

Moreover, the people who have the first claim to be treated with good manners are one's relatives and those who are close to him such as his neighbours and colleagues at work. Hence, God gives His command to be dutiful towards one's parents and treat them most kindly. He says: 'Your Lord has ordained that you shall worship none but Him, and that you must be kind to your parents. Should one of them, or both, attain to old age in your care, never say "Ugh" to them or chide them, but always speak gently and kindly to them'. (17: 23).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'The best of you are the best to their families, and I am the best of you to my family.'⁽¹⁾ He also said: 'Whatever you give away [in kindness] counts as a *ṣadaqah*, even when you put a bite in your wife's mouth'.⁽²⁾ In reference to a woman who gave her two daughters a few dates she had, leaving nothing for herself: 'As she has been so compassionate to her two daughters, God has decreed that she will be in Heaven'.⁽³⁾

The order to treat neighbours kindly is given by God as He says: 'Be kind to your parents and near of kin, to orphans, the needy, the neighbour who is related to you and the neighbour who is a stranger'. (4: 36). The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should be kind to his neighbour'.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Related by Ibn Mājah, 1,977; al-Tirmidhī, 3,895.

(2) Related by al-Bukhari, 2,742; al-Tirmidhī, 2,116.

(3) Related by Muslim, 2,630.

(4) Related by Muslim, 47.



Good behaviour is extended by a Muslim to all people with whom he comes in contact, whether they are Muslims or not. God says: ‘God does not forbid you to deal kindly and with full equity with those who do not fight you on account of your faith, nor drive you out of your homes. God loves those who behave equitably’. (60: 8). Whoever is not hostile to Muslims deserves to be treated kindly and honourably.



Who Represents Islam?

A newcomer to Islam will soon find that there are many different groups, each of which claims to present the true Islam. There are, however, two most important things that ascertain the correct and true Islam. These are:

1. To address all worship to God alone. To offer any type of worship to any being other than God means deviation from the worship of God and adoption of worshipping someone else. No matter to whom such worship is addressed, whether a devout person, or a prophet, or a relative of God's Messenger, or God's Messenger himself: none can be offered any worship except God alone. It is God's Messenger himself who said: 'Do not extol me as Christians have elevated Mary's son. I am merely a servant of God. Therefore, always say [of me]: God's servant and messenger'.⁽¹⁾

Whatever one sees in many Muslim countries of graves or shrines where people do their supplication or perform some act of worship is totally unacceptable. Indeed all prophets have forbidden such acts. They all called on people to worship God alone. God has no partner. It is absolutely wrong to supplicate to or worship anyone other than God. He states in the Qur'an:

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 3,445.



‘Your Lord says: “Call on Me, and I shall answer you. Those who are too proud to worship Me shall enter hell humiliated”’. (40: 60).

2. All acts and types of worship are derived from what God has legislated and shown to us by His Messenger (peace be upon him). Any worship that the Prophet did not point out to us is unlawful. God is worshipped only according to what His messengers have shown. It is not right for anyone to add a new type of worship which he thinks to be right or suitable. Therefore, Islamic worship which we practise today is exactly the same as the Prophet and his companions offered.

In short, no worship may be addressed to anyone other than God alone, and God may not be worshipped except as shown by His Messenger (peace be upon him).

It is very important that religious practice should remain clear and free of any invented addition. The religion of Islam is implemented only as God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) has stated and shown. When you meet people from whom you benefit, and you feel that with them, your faith is strengthened and your knowledge is increased, and you become kinder to people, then maintain your relationship and cooperation with them. If your association with some people does not strengthen your faith or increase your love of your Muslim brothers and kindness to other people, then you should know that they do not follow the guidance of prophets. You should look for other people to associate with.

We should always affirm the unity of all Muslims and beware of preoccupation with matters that cause conflict and division.

God says: ‘Hold fast, all of you, to the bond with God and do not be disunited’. (3: 103). He also says: ‘This community of yours is one single community, and I am your only Lord. Therefore, fear Me alone’. (23: 52). ‘Tell My servants that they should always say that which is best. Satan tries to sow discord between them. Satan is indeed man’s open foe’. (17: 53).



Islam and the Present Conditions of Muslims

Numerous as Muslims are today, approaching two billion, they vary in their commitment to the faith to which they claim to belong. They differ in implementing its teachings. Hence, a person who looks at their conditions may be shocked as he realizes that some of them have gone away from what Islam requires. He is further shocked at seeing them practising what is unacceptable, and at the backwardness of many of their countries.

What is important is to attribute such failings and errors to those who commit them, not to the religion itself.

The proper way to know the truth of this religion is to refer to its real sources, namely, God's revealed Book, the Qur'an, and the authentic hadiths attributed to His Messenger (peace be upon him).

People's deeds and behaviour are human actions which are liable to stem from ignorance, or to be wrong or merely short of what is required.





Three

Islamic Worship



Our Worship is Our Life

God sent us the religion of Islam so as to be our constitution for life. He says: ‘Believers, respond to the call of God and the Messenger when he calls you to that which will give you life’. (8: 24). What God’s Messenger called for brings and sustains life.

Religion is not a mere item of human life; it encompasses the entire life and interacts with all its activities. God says: ‘Say: My prayers, my worship, my living and my dying are for God alone, the Lord of all worlds’. (6: 162).

The entire expanse of life is an interaction with God, as the Prophet says: ‘Whatever you spend, seeking God’s pleasure, will earn you a reward, even for what you place in your wife’s mouth.’⁽¹⁾ The Prophet (peace be upon him) expands the scope of good deeds, as he says: ‘Every person’s every joint should perform a charity [i.e. *ṣadaqah*]. Every glorification of God [i.e. *subḥān Allah*] is a *ṣadaqah*; every *takbīr* [i.e. *Allah-u akbar*] is a *ṣadaqah*; every praise of God [i.e. *alḥamd lillāh*] is a *ṣadaqah*; and every statement of God’s oneness [i.e. *lā ilāha illa Allah*] is a *ṣadaqah*. An exhortation to do good is a *ṣadaqah*; an objection to any wrong action is a *ṣadaqah*’.⁽²⁾

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 56.

(2) Related by al-Bukhari, 2,891; Muslim, 1,009.



It is very important, then, that everyone's life should be full of good deeds. Doing good is a way of life which applies to our dealing with everyone and everything. A Muslim should do good throughout his life in dealing with people, animals and the environment. He should steer away from what corrupts life. One of the good deeds a person does is his work through which he earns his livelihood and looks after his family. To do one's work well and sincerely is a good deed.

The area of good deeds is very broad and comprehensive. It includes the proper upbringing of one's children, looking after them with kindness and compassion. It also includes maintaining good relations with people, extending kind treatment to all people and wishing everyone well, and to do to others what we like them to do to us. The Prophet says: 'None of you [truly] believes unless he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself'.⁽¹⁾ Doing good deeds is a transaction with God, Mighty and Exalted. Doing business with God, the Most Benevolent, is highly profitable and will never incur a loss. God says: 'Their Lord answers them: "I will not suffer the work of any worker among you, male or female, to be lost. Each of you is an issue of the other. Therefore, those who migrate and are driven out of their homes and suffer persecution in My cause, and fight and are slain [for it] - I shall indeed efface their bad deeds and admit them to gardens through which running waters flow, as a reward from God. With God is the best of rewards"'. (3: 195). 'Whoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it then, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it then also'. (99: 7-8). 'To those who believe and do good deeds, He will grant their reward in full, and will give them yet more out of His bounty'. (4: 173).

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 13; Muslim, 45.

For whoever does good deeds in this present life God will grant a great, rich reward in the life to come, as is amply evident in the following Qur’anic verses. God says: ‘To those who believe and do good deeds give the good tidings that they shall reside in gardens through which running waters flow’. (2: 25). ‘Those who believe and do righteous deeds are destined for Paradise where they shall abide’. (2: 82). ‘But anyone, be it man or woman, who does good deeds and is a believer, shall enter paradise and shall not suffer the least injustice’. (4: 124). ‘God has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds that they shall have forgiveness of sins and a rich reward’. (5: 9).

Everyone who feels they are about to die will wish to go back to life, but not to earn more money or to enjoy something they have missed, but to do something good they omitted to do. God says: ‘When death approaches any of them, he says: “My Lord! Let me return [to life], so that I may act righteously in whatever I have failed to do”’. (23: 99-100).

When a person embraces Islam, they should endeavour to attain a higher standard in all life affairs, as well as their general conduct and their worship, so that every new stage in their life should be better than its previous ones. In every stage of life, we gain better knowledge and better vision. The most important incentive for us to do even better and to add to our good deeds is the feeling that we are growing older and that we will soon depart this life. This is the reason why we are ordered to think about this inevitable event and prepare for it. God says: ‘Believers, have fear of God. Let every soul consider carefully what it sends ahead for tomorrow. Remain God-fearing, for God is fully aware of all that you do’. (59: 18). ‘Give, then, out of what We have provided for you, before death comes to any of you, and then he says, “My Lord, if You would grant me a delay for a short while, I would give in charity and be one of the righteous”’. (63: 10).



The Importance of Prayer

One day the Prophet (peace be upon him) put the following question to his companions: ‘Suppose that a river runs close to a person’s house, and he washes himself in this river five times every day. Do you think there will be any dirt left on him?’ They said that this would not leave any dirt on such a person. The Prophet said: ‘This is the same as the five daily prayers. With them God erases a person’s sins’.⁽¹⁾ How clean and how pure do prayers leave a person, as they wash off his sins in the same way as bathing in a nearby running river removes all physical dirt? In this hadith, the Prophet gives us a splendid picture of the effect of prayers and how they leave a worshipper clean of sin and mentally pure.

Prayer is the means of contact between a Muslim and his Lord. The five prayers are the periods of closeness to God, Mighty and Exalted. The Prophet says: ‘The closest a servant of God draws to his Lord is when he is in prostration. Say more supplication then’.⁽²⁾ Prayer is a light that shines in a person’s heart, and a light in this present life and in the life to come. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘Prayer is a light’.⁽³⁾

(1) Related by Ahmad, 8,924.

(2) Related by Muslim, 482.

(3) Related by Muslim, 223.



Because people have a great need for prayer, God has made five daily prayers compulsory for us, and they are spread across the day and night. He says: ‘Attend regularly to your prayers, particularly the middle prayer, and stand up before God in devout obedience’. (2: 238). ‘Indeed, prayer is a time-related duty, binding on all believers’. (4: 103). Thus, Muslims always renew their contact with their Lord, purify themselves from sin, and supplicate to God as they turn to Him and remain close to Him.

When a person attends regularly to his prayers, he protects his faith and ensures that he remains on the right track. Prayer is the main pillar of Islam. Due to its exceptional status, prayer is the first aspect of a person’s deeds he is questioned about on the Day of Judgement. If they are fine and acceptable, he is successful and in a good position. If it is not, he is a loser and in a bad position. If his obligatory prayer falls short in some way, God will say [to the angels]: ‘Find out whether this servant of Mine has any voluntary prayers to make up for what he missed of obligatory prayers’. The rest of his deeds will be on the same footing.⁽¹⁾

Prayer gives life a feeling of expanse, liveliness and blessing. Without prayer, life feels narrow and depressing. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘Prayer has been made the apple of my eye’.⁽²⁾

Is there a better indication of the importance of prayer than the fact that it was the last thing the Prophet urged his

(1) Related by al-Tirmidhī, 2,002; al-Nasā’ī, 465.

(2) Related by Ahmade, 12,293; al-Nasā’ī, 3,939.



community to keep up. As he was in his last moments in this life, he continued to say: ‘Prayer! Prayer!’, meaning ‘I urge you to maintain prayer’. Is there any more critical moment in life? Yet it did not distract him from urging his community to maintain it. This was the last thing he urged us to always observe.



Prayer and Reassurance

Prayers are appointments we have with God, giving us a continually renewed meeting between a worshipper and his Lord. It is a halt we make for religious refreshment, spiritual renewal, comfort and reassurance, and also a cool shade protecting us from the intensive heat of life. The deeper it is settled in a person's life the greater is its influence on his life.

When a prayer falls due it is time for God's servant to receive His gifts. When he performs the ablution, his sins drop away from the organs he is required to wash in the same way as the drops of water do. He receives the Prophet's testimony that he is a believer, as the Prophet says: 'Cleansing is half the faith'.⁽¹⁾ The Prophet also said: 'Only a believer keeps up ablution'.⁽²⁾ When he is on his way to the mosque, he is God's guest. The Prophet says: 'For whoever goes frequently, morning and evening, to the mosque, God will prepare a home in Heaven, whenever he goes morning or evening'.⁽³⁾ He walks to the mosque in the same way as a guest heads towards his host's house. As he goes along, his steps are recorded. God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: 'Whoever performs the

(1) Related by Muslim, 810.

(2) Ahmad, 22,378; Ibn Mājah, 277.

(3) Related by al-Bukhari, 662; Muslim, 669.



ablution in his home then walks to one of God's houses where he wants to fulfil one of the obligations God requires, one of his two steps erases a sin from him and the other raises him a degree'.⁽¹⁾ If the obligatory prayer he is joining is a night prayer, i.e. 'Ishā or Fajr, a prospect of receiving light on the Day of Judgement is recorded for him. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Give those who walk to a mosque in the darkness of the night the happy news that they shall have perfect light on the Day of Judgement'.⁽²⁾ When he is inside the mosque, the angels greet him and pray for him. The reward for prayer is recorded for him as long as he is waiting for the prayer. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'The angels pray for anyone of you as long as he remains in the position where he prayed, unless he invalidates his ablution. They say: "Our Lord, bestow mercy on him. Our Lord, forgive him. Our Lord, bestow mercy on him". Anyone of you is considered to be in prayer as long as the prayer is keeping him [in the mosque]'.⁽³⁾ Such are God's gifts as one is on his way to the mosque. What can be said about His gifts when His servant stands before Him in prayer?

Prayer itself is an act of drawing close to God, speaking to Him and being in contact with Him. Whoever maintains prayer and regularly attends to it will feel God's closeness and that He watches him. This will ensure that his general conduct is right, as he steers away from all sin and whatever may incur God's wrath. He actually renews his commitment to fulfil his duties in every prayer, as God says: 'Prayer restrains people from loathsome deeds and from all that is evil'. (29: 45).

(1) Related by Muslim, 666.

(2) Related by Abu Dāwūd, 561; al-Tirmidhī, 223.

(3) Related by al-Bukhari, 659; Muslim, 273.

If God enables you to attend to your prayers, try to appreciate this blessing and let your heart rejoice at being in contact with God, who has drawn you closer to Himself and enabled you to stand before Him. Be sure that He has brought you this far in order to welcome you and He has invited you because He wants to give you. As you place your head low for His sake, He raises you. Therefore, feel the ecstasy of reciting His address and let your heart feel His greatness as you extol His limitless glory. Be sure that as you supplicate to Him and request Him, He will shower His grace on you.

Be certain that it is impossible that you go forward towards Him and He rejects you, or that you request Him and He denies you. He is the One who is self-sufficient, benevolent, compassionate and merciful.

When you finish your prayer, feel grateful to God and rejoice at His guidance and help. He has enabled you to pray and enjoy the blessing and comfort of prayer, while many people have slackened and were oblivious of their duty to pray. You have found it easy to pray because you are a believer and certain that you shall be meeting your Lord. God says: ‘Seek strength in patient perseverance and in prayer, which is indeed a demanding task except for the devout, who know that they shall meet their Lord and to Him they shall ultimately return’. (2: 45-46).

Rejoice at having offered your prayer and look forward to what God may send you. Praise Him for having guided you. You are to be congratulated and you should be certain of a good prospect.



God's Remembrance

A man said to the Prophet: ‘Messenger of God, Islamic teachings are too numerous for me. Point out to me something to which I can hold on’. The Prophet said to him: ‘Let your tongue be always fresh with the remembrance of God’.⁽¹⁾ The Prophet points out to this man something that embraces all good deeds, which is the remembrance of God, glorifying and praising Him, reiterating one’s belief in His oneness and supplicating to Him. As the Prophet says, God’s remembrance is a manifestation of life: ‘A person who frequently mentions his Lord and one who does not mention Him may be compared to one who is alive and one who is dead’.⁽²⁾

To remember God is to be in contact with, and close to Him. The Prophet says: ‘God, Mighty and Exalted, says: I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he mentions Me. If he mentions Me to himself, I mention him to Myself; and if he mentions me in an assembly, I mention him in a better assembly. If he draws towards Me a hand’s span, I draw towards him an arm’s length; and if he draws towards Me an arm’s length, I draw towards him a fathom’s length. If he comes towards me walking, I go to him at speed’.⁽³⁾

(1) Related by Ibn Mājah, 3,793; al-Tirmidhī, 3,375.

(2) Related by al-Bukhari, 6,407.

(3) Related by al-Bukhari, 7,405; Muslim, 2,675.



What an honour for man and what grace is bestowed on him so that God, the Lord of all the worlds mentions him in the Supreme Society! To what high grade man, a mere little creature who passes through the world within a glimpse, is raised so as to be mentioned in the highest heaven, as God, Mighty and Exalted, mentions him to His noble angels? God says: ‘Remember me, then, and I will remember you’. (2: 152).

To remember and mention God is the best and easiest type of worship. Hence, God’s devout servants remember Him in all situations, as He describes: ‘They remember God when they stand, sit and lie down’. (3: 191).

It is the act of worship God has commanded us to do frequently, as it is easy and earns great reward. He says: ‘Believers! Remember God always, and glorify Him morning and evening’. (33: 41-42). ‘And all men and women who always remember God – for them all God has prepared forgiveness of sins and a mighty reward’. (33: 35).

The best formulae of God’s remembrance are what God has taught us of the most comprehensive statements of praising and extolling His glory, such as:

- There is no deity other than God, the One who has no partner. To Him belongs all dominion and all praise. He is able to do everything. In Arabic: *Lā ilāha illa Allah, waḥdahū lā sharīka lah. Lahul-mulk wa lahul-ḥamd, wa huwa ‘alā kulli shay’in qadīr.*

- Limitless is God in His glory. All praise belongs to God. There is no deity other than God, God is supreme. In



Arabic: *Subhān Allah, wal-ḥamd lillāh, wa lā ilāha illa Allah, wa Allahu akbar.*

- Limitless is God in His glory, and in His praise. All glory belongs to God the Supreme. In Arabic: *Subhān Allah wa biḥamdih, Subhān Allah al-‘Aẓīm.*

- ‘A Bedouin came to God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) and said: “Teach me some words that I should say”. The Prophet said: “Say: There is no deity other than God, the One who has no partner; God is Supreme, truly Supreme; and all praise is due to God; Limitless is God, the Lord of all worlds, in His glory. No power operates except by the will of God, the Mighty, the Wise”. The man said: “These are for my Lord. What about words for myself?” The Prophet said: ‘Say: “My Lord, forgive me; bestow mercy on me; guide me and give me my provisions”’. In Arabic: *Lā ilāha illa Allah, waḥdahu lā sharīka lah. Lahul-mulk, Allahu akbar kabīrā wal-ḥamd lillāh kathīrā. Subhān Allah rabbi-l-‘ālamīn. Lā ḥawla wa lā quwata illa billāh al-‘azīz al-ḥakīm.*

Allāhumma ighfir lī warḥamnī wahdinī warzuqnī.

Supplication as an Act of Worship

When a believer supplicates to God, he is doing an act of worship for which he will be rewarded. When His servant makes a request of Him and urges his cause, God will respond with benevolence and kindness. One aspect of God's compassionate attitude to His servants is that He has ordered them to supplicate to Him, promising them to answer their prayers. He said: 'Your Lord says: "Call on Me, and I shall answer you. Those who are too proud to worship Me shall enter hell humiliated"'. (40: 60). He also says: 'If My servants ask you about Me, well, I am near; I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he calls to Me. Let them then respond to Me, and believe in Me, so that they may follow the right way'. (2: 186).

It is not possible that a believer turns to God and supplicates to Him, but He lets him go back empty-handed. However, answering a prayer is left to God's knowledge and infinite wisdom. He may delay the fulfilment of what His servant requests because such a delay serves that person's interests better. He may also give him better than what he has requested. Alternatively, God may keep that supplication in store with Him until the Day of Judgement when He gives it in the form of reward, which that person will be in great need of. The Prophet said: 'Whenever a Muslim says a prayer which is free of sin or severance of relations with kinsfolk, God will respond to him in



one of three ways: 1) that his supplication is promptly answered; 2) that God keeps it in store for him until the life to come; or 3) God spares him an equivalent harm'. People said: 'Then we will supplicate much'. The Prophet said: 'God has more'.⁽¹⁾

Every supplication we address to God is an act of worship and He rewards us for it. It is an act of submission to our Lord and He responds by raising our standing. Every Muslim should be certain that when he says a prayer, he is requesting God, the most benevolent Lord who does not begrudge anyone anything, and whose dominion is never diminished, and who is most powerful, able to do everything. The Prophet quotes Him as saying: 'My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you to rise up in one place and make requests of Me, and were I to give everyone what they have requested, that would not decrease what I have any more than a needle decreases the sea if dipped into it'.⁽²⁾

(1) Related by Ahmad, 11,133.

(2) Related by Muslim, 2,577.

The Qur'an

Jubayr ibn Muţ‘im was still an idolater when he travelled from Makkah to Madinah. He said: ‘I entered the mosque while the Prophet was leading the Maghrib Prayer. I heard him reciting these verses: “Were they created out of nothing? Were they the creators? Did they create the heavens and the earth? No. They have no faith. Do they possess your Lord’s treasures? Or are they in ultimate control?” (52: 35-37). When I heard them I felt my heart almost deserting me’.

These verses shook him to the heart and made him seriously question his convictions. He was strongly affected by their clarity and powerful argument. This is the feeling he described as his heart almost deserting him. Hence he said much later: ‘That was the first touch of faith I felt in my heart’.

Jubayr embraced Islam several years after this occasion, but his listening to these short verses was the start of his guidance to the truth. This is due to the superior style of the Qur’an, its clear argument, powerful proof and the very strong effect it has on people’s hearts and minds.

The Qur’an is God’s own word which He revealed to His Messenger (peace be upon him). It states the truth that admits neither doubt nor hesitation. It is as God describes: ‘This is



the Book, there is no doubt about it: a guidance for the God-fearing'. (2: 2). It guides to the true religion and the right path, as God says: 'Surely this Qur'an shows the way to that which is most upright. It gives the believers who do good deeds the happy news that theirs will be a rich reward'. (17: 9).

God revealed His Book, the Qur'an, in a superb, concise and fine style. No one can produce anything that matches it in its powerful and superior style. God challenges the unbelievers to produce anything like it. He says: 'If you are in doubt as to what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce one surah comparable to it and call upon all your witnesses, other than God, if what you say is true. But if you fail, as you will certainly do, then guard yourselves against the Fire, fuelled by human and stones, prepared for the unbelievers'. (2: 23-24).

God has guaranteed that He will ensure that it remains intact forever. Thus, it has remained across all the past centuries exactly the same as it was when God revealed it to His Messenger. The manuscripts of the Qur'an, written in different ages and in numerous countries are exactly the same, without any differences.

This magnificent book, the Qur'an, is full of discussion of life's great issues. It includes God's presentation of Himself so that we get to know Him through His fine names and superior attributes. It makes clear that He alone deserves to be worshipped, without any partner. The Qur'an also emphatically confirms the resurrection and gives a detailed account of the life to come, painting images and scenes of it, showing Heaven and its splendid life and Hell and its torments. It includes accounts of the earlier prophets and their histories with their

peoples. It gives orders to do the best deeds and shows the best moral values and good behaviour.

Reciting the Qur'an and understanding its verses and message is an act of worship of God. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Whoever recites a letter of God's Book earns a good deed, and a good deed is credited with the reward of ten times its value. I do not say that *alif lām mīm* is one letter; rather, *alif* is a letter, *lām* is a letter, and *mīm* is a letter'.⁽¹⁾ [*Alif lām mīm* represent the Arabic letters a, l and m. They are one form of the separate letters that occur at the beginning of several Qur'anic surahs to indicate that the Qur'an is composed of Arabic letters and words, yet it is superior to anything that is already written or will be written in that language].

God revealed the Qur'an to us so that it will remain part of our life. We should recite it every day, implement it and keep it as our life guide. The stronger our bond with the Qur'an is, the better we know God and the closer we are to Him.

(1) Related by al-Tirmidhī, 2,910.





Four

Our Errors



Slips and Sins

Every Muslim knows that embracing Islam means taking up the right guidance to our Creator and following the right way to Him. This is the straight path that takes us to God's acceptance and to admittance into Heaven.

However, every Muslim is human and a human being is liable to commit errors and to neglect duties assigned to him by God Himself. It is very important to emphasize the following points.

First, there is no intermediary between any one of us and God who can help in obtaining God's forgiveness. No human being is appointed for us to confess to him our slip-ups and mistakes, or to request him to appeal to God for our forgiveness. What we should do is to keep such errors and sins a private matter, known only to God and ourselves. We admit them to Him alone and declare to Him our repentance and intention not to commit them again. He says: 'It is He who accepts the repentance of His servants and who pardons bad deeds. He knows everything you do'. (42: 25).

Secondly, we should know that God is ever-merciful and His forgiveness is boundless. If we sincerely turn to Him in repentance, He is certain to accept our repentance. He will



forgive us when we declare our regret of having committed a sin and request His forgiveness. He bestows mercy on us when we genuinely regret our sins. Whenever we regret having committed a sin and pray for God's forgiveness, He will forgive us and erase our sin.

Thirdly, we must be well aware that Satan's greatest ploy which he uses against a person is to make him despair of receiving God's mercy. Satan aims to keep him away from God. To foil Satan's attempts and leave him a miserable failure we must be clear in our minds that God is more merciful to us than our own mothers, His forgiveness is greater than our sins and He is pleased with us when we turn to Him pleading for His forgiveness. He says: 'Say: "[Thus speaks God]: You servants of Mine who have transgressed against their own souls! Do not despair of God's mercy: God forgives all sins; He alone is much-forgiving, ever-merciful"'. (39: 53). 'When those who believe in God's revelations come to you, say: "Peace be upon you. Your Lord has committed Himself to bestow grace and mercy: if any of you does a bad deed out of ignorance, and then repents and mends his ways, He will be much-forgiving, ever-merciful". (6: 54).

God also says: 'He who does evil or wrongs his own soul, and then prays to God to forgive him, shall find God much-forgiving, ever-merciful'. (4: 110). This clearly means that whenever you pray for forgiveness, you will find out that God forgives you your sin and bestows mercy on you.



Persistent Sins

A newcomer to Islam may find it difficult to get rid of some habitual erroneous deeds he used to do before becoming a Muslim. He must do his best to get rid of these. However, in some cases this may not be enough. Some habits may be very difficult to change. If the new Muslim finds himself in such a situation, he should realize that to face God as a Muslim committing such sins is far better than facing Him as an unbeliever committing them.

When a person commits such a sin, Satan may whisper to him that Islam is too hard to follow and maintain. This may cause some people to revert to their earlier condition, prior to their adoption of Islam. It is important to realize that to remain a Muslim, regardless of how grave one's sinful action is, is much better for him than to face God as an unbeliever, turning away from His faith which He has given to all mankind. God forgives all sins, regardless of how numerous they may be, but He never forgives turning away from His faith in disbelief. He says: 'For a certainty, God does not forgive that partners are associated with Him. He forgives any lesser sin to whomever He wills'. (4: 48). Miserable indeed is the one who disbelieves in God after having known Him. We should not forget that this was the case of Satan himself who knew God and believed in Him, and subsequently went into disbelief.



God mentions the case of those who vacillate in their attitude to religion. He says: ‘Those who come to believe, then reject faith, and again come to believe, and again reject the faith, and thereafter grow hardened in their disbelief, God will not forgive them, nor will He guide them in any way’. (4: 137). He also says: ‘Tell them of the man to whom We give Our revelations, and who then discards them. Satan catches up with him and he strays, like many others, into error. Had We so willed, We would have exalted him by means of those [revelations], but he clings to the earth and succumbs to his desires’. (4: 175-176).



Can Sin Be Inherited?

We must realize that God has created us pure, free of sin. We come into this world with a clean sheet and no blemish. All of us begin life with the natural disposition God has instilled in mankind. We inherit no sin and bear no responsibility for any sin we have not done ourselves. The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to compare the situation of purity from sin to the moment of a child's birth. He says that a person who performs the hajj properly, so as to make it acceptable to God 'returns as pure from sin as on the day of his birth'.⁽¹⁾ In other words, he returns with a clean sheet, absolutely pure from sin.

God will not hold us responsible for the error of our first father, Adam (peace be upon him). Nor will He hold us responsible for the sin of our immediate parents.

In His absolute justice and infinite wisdom, God holds no one accountable except for their own sins. None share responsibility for another person's sin. He says: 'And that no soul shall bear the burden of another; that man will only have what he strives for'. (53: 38-39).

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 1,521; Muslim, 1,350.



Sins Committed before Accepting Islam

‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ came to the Prophet to declare himself a Muslim after he had spent twenty years opposing and fighting against Islam. When he sat facing the Prophet (peace be upon him), he said: ‘Put out your right hand so that I can give you my pledge of allegiance’. The Prophet put out his hand, but ‘Amr withheld his hand. The Prophet said: ‘‘Amr, what is the matter?’ He said: ‘I want to stipulate a condition.’ He asked: ‘What sort of condition?’ He said: ‘That I shall be forgiven.’ The Prophet said: ‘Do you not know, ‘Amr, that [the acceptance of] Islam wipes off all that was before it’.⁽¹⁾

The Prophet told ‘Amr that his acceptance of Islam and repentance of his past sins mean that all his past sins have been erased. His repentance means that he is now born again and resumes life from the beginning.

What a happy news for you, brother and sister. Now that you have accepted Islam, the sins you committed prior to this date will be, by God’s grace, transformed into good deeds, as a gift from God to His servants. This means that a person who prior to accepting Islam committed any type of sin, such as drinking alcohol, fornication, etc. and who repents of these

(1) Related by Ahmad, 17,777.



sins and becomes a Muslim, shall be given two things: 1) forgiveness of these sins without any further accountability for them, and 2) the transformation of these sins into good deeds.

God says: ‘And who never invoke any deity side by side with God, and do not take any human being’s life – [the life] which God has willed to be sacred – except for a just cause, and do not commit adultery. Whoever does any of this will face punishment, and on the Day of Resurrection his suffering will be doubled, and he will abide therein in ignominy. Excepted, however, shall be they who repent, attain to faith and do righteous deeds, for God will transform their bad deeds into good ones. God is indeed much-forgiving, ever-merciful’. (25: 68-70). All that a new Muslim has to do is to be a good Muslim, abiding by Islamic rules and fulfilling his duties as a Muslim. Thus, the new Muslim makes sure of having all his deeds being recorded in his favour in his overall balance sheet.

One’s good deeds done before accepting Islam will also be kept in his record and accepted from him. One of the Prophet’s companions asked him about his own benevolent deeds which he did prior to becoming a Muslim. The Prophet told him: ‘When you become a Muslim, you keep the good actions you have already done’.⁽¹⁾ This means that you receive the reward of the good deeds you did before becoming a Muslim. God’s favours are great indeed. His bounty which he grants to a new Muslim is superior: his past good deeds are accepted and rewarded, while his past sins are forgiven and transformed into good deeds.

(1) Related by Muslim, 123.



The Prophet also mentions that a Jew or a Christian who believes in Prophet Muhammad and follows him shall have a double reward, because he originally believed in the earlier prophets, i.e. Moses or Jesus, then believed in Prophet Muhammad. As such, he believed in two prophets and earns a double reward.



Divine Mercy

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was sitting with a number of his companions when they saw a woman approaching with urgency. Her eyes were wondering everywhere, and her hair was dishevelled. She was perturbed looking for a baby she had lost. As she continued to look around, she spotted the child. She rushed to pick him up, hugged him and wept. She then put the child to her breast to feed him. It was a very emotional scene, with all those present of the Prophet's companions affected as they realized how the mother was worried about her baby and her compassion when she found it. The Prophet used the incident to put to his companions a surprising question: 'Can you imagine this woman casting her baby in the fire?' They said: 'By God, no'. The Prophet said: 'God is more compassionate to His servants than this woman to her child'.⁽¹⁾

This scene portrays an aspect of God's mercy as it is shown in the woman's compassion towards her baby. What are we to say when we realize that this merely a small fraction of God's mercy. The Prophet describes it thus: 'God divided mercy into one hundred parts. He retained ninety-nine parts and placed one single part on earth. It is through this single part that

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 5,999; Muslim, 2,754,



creatures are merciful to one another, to the extent that a mare may lift its hoof so that she would not kick her foal'.⁽¹⁾

God's infinite mercy is the best thing to which we attach our hopes. God has informed us about His mercy, stating: 'My grace encompasses all things'. (7: 156) He describes Himself as 'the Lord of Grace, the Ever-Merciful'.

When we realize the extent of this divine mercy, we feel reassured and we entertain great hopes, feeling that God will grant us mercy as He is more compassionate to us than our own mothers. Hence, we hope nothing but good from Him. This makes us eager to receive His bounty and to meet Him.

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 6,000; Muslim, 2,752.

The Forgiveness of Sin

The Prophet (peace be upon him) portrays an image of God's pleasure when a servant of His turns to Him repenting his past sins. He gives us a full scene of how God receives the sinner's repentance and accepts it, welcoming this servant of His as he regrets his past errors. The Prophet says: 'God is more delighted with His believer servant turning to Him in repentance than one travelling through a barren, dangerous land, having his camel which carries his food and drink and what he needs. He loses his camel and sets out, looking for it everywhere, but he gets extremely exhausted. He thinks: I better go back to the place where I lost it, and sleep until death overtakes me. He returns there and is overtaken by sleep. He then wakes up to find his camel standing close and carrying his food and drink and belongings. He holds its rein, then feeling overjoyed, he says: "My Lord, You are my servant and I am Your Lord". He mistakenly says this out of extreme delight. God is more delighted with the repentance of His believing servant than such a person is delighted to have back his mount and supplies'.⁽¹⁾

How should a repentant sinner feel when he realizes that God is very pleased with his repentance? God accepts his

(1) Related by Muslim, 2,744.



repentance, forgives him and purifies him of sin so that he is like one born anew.

Many and grave as our errors and sins may be, they should not set a barrier between God and ourselves, provided that we turn to Him regretting our errors and seeking His forgiveness. He is the one who accepts repentance and pardons evil deeds. He says: ‘Who but God can forgive sins?’ (3: 135) He is the One who says: ‘I certainly forgive all sins for anyone who repents, believes and does righteous deeds, and thereafter keeps to the right path’. (20: 82). He also says: ‘When those who believe in God’s revelations come to you, say: ‘Peace be upon you. Your Lord has committed Himself to bestow grace and mercy: if any of you does a bad deed out of ignorance, and then repents and mends his ways, He will be much-forgiving, ever-merciful’. (6: 54).

God has nothing against His servants to avenge, and He has no wish to punish anyone, as long as people turn to Him and seek His forgiveness. The Prophet quotes God saying in a sacred or *qudsī* hadith: ‘Son of Adam, so long as you appeal to Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you whatever you have done, and I shall not mind. Son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds in the sky and were you then to pray to Me for forgiveness, I would forgive you. Son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, associating no partners with Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as the earth’.⁽¹⁾

(1) Related by Ahmad, 21,472; al-Tirmidhi, 3540.



Five

Guidance from the Qur'an



From the Opening Surah⁽¹⁾

In the Name of God, the Lord of Grace, the Ever-Merciful
(1) Praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds, (2) The Lord of
Grace, the Ever-Merciful, (3) Master of the Day of Judgement.
(4) You alone do we worship and to You alone do we turn for
help. (5) Guide us on the straight path, (6) The path of those on
whom You have bestowed Your favours, not those who have
incurred Your wrath, nor those who have gone astray. (7)

Al-Fātiḥah means ‘the opening’, and it is the first surah of
the Qur’an. It is a short surah, but it is called the ‘Mother of
the Book’, and the greatest surah in the Qur’an. Sa’īd ibn al-
Mu’allā reported that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him)
said to him: ‘Shall I teach you the greatest surah in the Qur’an
before I leave the mosque.’ He then took my hand. When he
wanted to go, I reminded him. He said: “All praise be to God,
the Lord of all the worlds. This is the oft-repeated seven verses
and the sublime Qur’an I have been given”⁽²⁾.

Short as it is, this surah outlines Islamic beliefs very briefly
and states a firm pledge between mankind and their Lord,

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- (1) I am giving here a summary from Sayyid Quṭb’s *In the Shade of the Qur’an*, and Muhammad al-Ghazali’s *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur’an*.
 - (2) Related by al-Bukhari, 4,703.



establishing their mission in life, and their hopes that God will show them the right way and grant them success and His acceptance.

It starts with God's name. Such a start is the proper behaviour God revealed to His Messenger in the first revelation of the Qur'an, as He said to him: 'Read in the name of your Lord'. (96: 1). It is consistent with the belief that 'God is the First and the Last, the Outer and the Inner'. (57: 3). All glory belongs to God, He is the true Lord from whom all existence is derived and in whose name is every beginning.

Immediately after this beginning in God's name, the surah states that all praise belongs to God and describes Him as the 'Lord of all the worlds'. Praise is the feeling that fills a believer's heart at the mere mention of God. Every human being's existence is merely an act of God's bounty for which praise and thanks are due. At every moment, God's blessings and favours are bestowed and benefit all His creation, particularly mankind. Hence, praise should be offered to God at the beginning and at the end, as He says: 'He is God, other than whom there is no deity. To Him all praise is due at the first and at the last'. (28: 70).

The last part of this verse states that God is 'the Lord of all the worlds'. He is the Owner who exercises all control. He is the Master of all worlds: heaven and earth, the animal kingdom and the world of plants, angels and humans. A 'world' refers to everything other than God Himself, Mighty and Exalted. Every other being is under God's control and in need of Him. Therefore we say: 'All praise is due to God, the Lord of heavens, the Lord of the earth and the Lord of all the worlds.

His alone is all supremacy in the heavens and the earth. He alone is the Almighty, the Wise'. (45: 36-37).

The Lord is the Creator and Sustainer of all creation. Limitless He is in His glory. Having created the universe, God did not leave it without care. He continues to control and manage it and He looks after it. All worlds and all creation are sustained by the care of God, the Lord of all worlds. The bond between the Creator and His creation is permanent and active at all times and in all conditions and situations.

This shows that the Islamic faith is an actual act of mercy bestowed on man's heart and mind, because it is simple and beautiful, clear and consistent. It has a direct and profound interaction with human nature.

The surah then reiterates God's attributes *al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, translated as 'the Lord of Grace, the Ever-Merciful'. This description covers all meanings, conditions and spheres of mercy and grace. *Al-Raḥmān* is a superlative adjective indicating the greatness and scope of mercy, while *al-Raḥīm* is a superlative adjective indicating the continuity and permanence of mercy.

Mercy is the distinctive feature of God's total Lordship, defining the permanent bond between the Creator and His creation. It is the bond of mercy that invites praise and gratitude. Praise is the natural response to overflowing mercy.

The surah then describes God as the 'Master of the Day of Judgement'. This represents the most profound and great belief which greatly influences all human life, namely the belief



in the life to come. The Day of Judgement is the day when everyone receives the outcome of their deeds in life. God is the Master of both the present life and the life to come, but He mentions here that He is the Master of the Day of Judgement, because it is the day when all temporary types of ownership and sovereignty are removed. Mankind will stand before their Lord having nothing of what they owned in this life, as God says: ‘And now, indeed, you have come to Us individually, just as We created you in the first instance; and you have left behind all that We conferred on you’. (6: 94). All sovereignty then belongs to the only true Master: ‘The Day when they shall come forth, with nothing about them concealed from God. With whom does sovereignty rest today? With God, the One who holds absolute sway over all that exists’. (40: 16).

‘You alone do we worship and to You alone do we turn for help’. This is the fundamental belief that is the proper and natural outcome of the earlier beliefs. No worship may be offered to anyone other than God, and no one else is asked for help.

This fundamental belief serves as a declaration of the total liberation of all mankind from the worship of confused thoughts, idols and tyrants. Since God alone is to be worshipped and appealed to for help, then man’s conscience is free from all types of worship offered to anyone other than God, the Mighty and Exalted.

The last two verses of the surah say: ‘Guide us on the straight path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your favours, not those who have incurred Your wrath, nor those who have gone astray’.



‘Guide us on the straight path’. This is a supplication appealing to God to let us know the straight path that leads to the ultimate goal, and having known this path to steadfastly follow it. Both knowledge of the right path and remaining on it are the outcome of God’s guidance, care and mercy. To appeal to Him for this is the outcome of the belief that He alone is the One who helps. This supplication states the most important and greatest request of help a person puts to his Lord. Guidance on the straight path is what guarantees certain happiness in both this life and the life to come.

It seems that this supplication is the central issue in the surah. All that it includes before it leads to it, and what comes after it continues from it. The first part of the surah praises and glorifies God, appealing to Him by His oneness, then comes this supplication, ‘guide us on the straight path’. What comes next is a clarification of this path and the worst types of deviation from it. Thus, this opening surah appears to be one of guidance, sought and outlined.

Those who took the right path and followed it diligently, without swerving from it, did so because God bestowed His favours on them, giving them guidance and help. Without God’s guidance, they would not have known it or followed it. Therefore, we pray to God who guided them to bestow His favours on us and guide us as He guided them. This is the straight path, not the path of those who incurred God’s wrath because they swerved from the truth after having known it, or those who went astray and did not get to the right path in the first place.

This shows that sticking to the correct, straight path requires true information, action and worship based on sure knowledge.



God says: ‘Say: ‘This is my way. I call [all mankind] to God on the basis of sure knowledge’. (12: 108) Going wrong is the result of a fault in either requirement. A person who receives the knowledge but does not act on it incurs God’s wrath, and the one who acts without proper knowledge will go far astray. He becomes one of the greatest losers, whose action in this life is misguided but nonetheless thinks that what he does is right. On the other hand, the one who steadily follows the right path is guided towards God: ‘Straight indeed is my Lord’s way’. (11: 56).

This straight path is the only way that takes its travellers to their abode in Heaven. Therefore, when the people of Heaven take up their dwellings there, they will be full of gratitude for the divine guidance that took them along that way leading them to their destination. They will say: ‘All praise is due to God who has guided us to this. Had He not given us guidance, we would certainly have not found the right path’. (7: 43).

We should repeat this supplication for guidance along the straight path in the same way as we always wash different parts of our bodies, because the reasons for such repetition are around us. Personal tempting desires and Satan’s whisperings and promptings never end. Hence, it is necessary to often repeat this supplication and urgently pray for God’s guidance.

In a few lines, the only possible relationship between human beings and their Lord is given in detail. It is a relationship that acknowledges and glorifies Him, commits man to prepare for meeting his Lord and states his pledge to always worship Him alone. It also appeals to Him to enable us to be as He likes.

This is the surah chosen to be repeated in every prayer. Short as it is, it contains all these fundamental concepts of the Islamic faith. Highlighting its exceptional status, the Prophet tells us: ‘God, the Exalted, said: “I have divided prayer in two halves between Myself and My servant. My servant shall have what he requests. When God’s servant says: ‘All praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds’, God will say: ‘My servant has praised Me’. When he says: ‘the Lord of Grace, the Ever-Merciful’, God will say: ‘My servant has extolled Me’. When he says: ‘Master of the Day of Judgement’, God will say: ‘My servant has glorified Me’. (In one narration: My servant has submitted himself to Me.) When he says: ‘You alone do we worship and to You alone do we turn for help’, God will say: ‘This is between Myself and My servant. My servant shall have what he requests’. When he says: ‘Guide us on the straight path, the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your favours, not those who have incurred Your wrath, nor those who have gone astray’, God will say: ‘This is granted to My servant, and My servant shall have what he requests’.’⁽¹⁾

(1) Related by Muslim, 395.



Guidance from Other Surahs

Believers, seek strength in patience and prayer. God is with those who are patient. (2: 153).

The case of those who spend their property for the cause of God is like that of a grain that brings forth seven ears, each bearing a hundred grains. God gives manifold increase to whom He wills. God is munificent, all-knowing. (261) Those who spend their property for the cause of God and do not follow their spending by vaunting their own generosity, or by hurting others, shall have their reward with their Lord. They have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve. (262) A kind word with forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury. God is free of all wants, clement. (263) Believers, do not render your charitable deeds worthless by vaunting your generosity and hurting others'. (2: 261-264).

He who seeks a religion other than self-surrender to God, it will not be accepted from him, and in the life to come he will be among the lost. (3: 85).

Believers! Fear God as you rightly should, and do not allow death to overtake you before you have surrendered yourselves truly to Him. (3: 102).



Indeed, God bestowed a favour on the believers when He sent them a messenger from among themselves, to recite to them His revelations, and to purify them, and teach them the Book and wisdom, whereas before that they were surely in plain error. (3: 164).

Every soul shall taste death, and you shall be paid on the Day of Resurrection only that which you have earned. He who shall be drawn away from the Fire and brought into paradise shall indeed have gained a triumph. The life of this world is nothing but an illusory enjoyment. (3: 185).

Mankind, fear your Lord, who has created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the two of them spread abroad so many men and women. Fear God, in whose name you appeal to one another, and be mindful of your ties of kinship. Indeed, God is ever watching over you. (4: 1).

For a certainty, God does not forgive that partners should be associated with Him, but He forgives any lesser sin to whomever He wills. He who associates partners with God has indeed gone far astray. (4: 116).

Help one another in furthering righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in furthering evil and aggression. Have fear of God, for God is severe in retribution. (5: 2).

Believers, be steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity. Never allow your hatred of any people to lead you away from justice. Be just, this is closer to righteousness. And remain God-fearing. Surely, God is aware of all that you do. (5: 8).



Whoever does a good deed shall be credited with ten times as much; and whoever does an evil deed will be requited with no more than its like. None shall be wronged. (6: 160).

Say: My prayers, my worship, my living and my dying are for God alone, the Lord of all worlds. (162) He has no partner. Thus have I been commanded, and I shall be the first of those who surrender themselves to Him. (6: 162-163).

Say, ‘Who is there to forbid the beauty which God has produced for His servants, and the wholesome means of sustenance?’ Say, ‘They are [lawful] in the life of this world, to all who believe – to be theirs alone on the Day of Resurrection’. Thus do We make Our revelations clear to people of knowledge. (32) Say, ‘My Lord has only forbidden shameful deeds, be they open or secret, and all types of sin, and wrongful oppression, and that you should associate with God anything for which He has given no authority, and that you attribute to God anything of which you have no knowledge’. (7: 32-33).

Your Lord is God who has created the heavens and the earth in six aeons, and is established on the throne. He covers the day with the night in swift pursuit. The sun, the moon and the stars are subservient to His command. Surely all creation and all authority belong to Him. Blessed is God, the Lord of the worlds. (54) Call upon your Lord with humility, and in the secrecy of your hearts. He does not love those who transgress the bounds of what is right. (55) Do not spread corruption on earth after it has been so well ordered. Call on Him with fear and hope. Truly, God’s grace is ever near to the righteous. (7: 54-56).

Make due allowance for man's nature, and enjoin the doing of what is right; and turn away from those who choose to remain ignorant. (7: 199).

Indeed there has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves: one who grieves much that you should suffer; one who is full of concern for you; and who is tender and full of compassion towards the believers. (9: 128).

Mankind, there has come to you an admonition from your Lord, a cure for all that may be in your hearts, and guidance and grace for all believers. (57) Say: 'In God's bounty and grace, in this let them rejoice; for this is better than all that they may amass'. (10: 57-58).

Tell My servants that I alone am much-forgiving, ever-merciful; (49) and also, My punishment is indeed the most grievous suffering. (15: 49-50).

God enjoins justice, kindness [to all], and generosity to one's kindred; and He forbids all that is shameful, all reprehensible conduct and aggression. He admonishes you so that you may take heed. (90). Fulfil your covenant with God whenever you make a pledge. Do not break your oaths after you have confirmed them, and have made God your surety. God certainly knows all that you do. (16: 90-91).

Call people to the path of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly manner. Your Lord knows best who strays from His path and who are rightly guided. (16: 125).



Whoever chooses to follow guidance does so for his own good, and whoever goes astray does so to his own loss. No soul shall be made to bear the burden of another. We would never inflict punishment [on anyone] until We have sent a Messenger [to give warning]. (17: 15).

We have indeed honoured the children of Adam, and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favoured them far above many of Our creatures. (17: 70).

Say: 'I am but a human being like yourselves. It has been revealed to me that your God is the One and only God. Hence, whoever expects to meet his Lord [on Judgement Day], let him do what is right, and in the worship due to his Lord admit no one as partner'. (18: 110).

We have sent you as a [manifestation of Our] grace towards all the worlds. (21: 107).

Mankind! Have fear of your Lord. The violent convulsion at the Last Hour will be awesome indeed. (1) On the Day when it comes, every suckling mother will utterly forget her nursling, and every woman heavy with child will cast her burden; and it will seem to you that all mankind are drunk, although they are not drunk. But severe indeed will be God's punishment. (22: 1-2).

Believers, have fear of God. Let every soul consider carefully what it sends ahead for tomorrow. Remain God-fearing, for God is fully aware of all that you do. (59: 18).



And say, 'All praise is due to God who has never begotten a son; who has no partner in His dominion; who needs none to support Him against any difficulty'. And extol His greatness. (17: 111).



Guidance from the Prophet

1. Abu Hurayrah narrated: ‘God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: “A strong believer is better and dearer to God than a weak believer, but there is goodness in both. Make sure to have what benefits you, seeking God’s help. Do not feel helpless. If something happens to you, do not say: had I done this, such-and-such would have happened. Rather, say: This is God’s will and whatever God wills shall happen. Expressions of regret open the gate for Satan’s work”.

2. Abu Dharr al-Ghifari reports: ‘God’s messenger (peace be upon him) said to me: “Fear God wherever you are, and follow up a bad deed with a good one and it will wipe it out. Behave well towards people.”⁽¹⁾

3. ‘Abdullāh ibn Sallām said: ‘When God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) arrived in Madinah, people gathered to meet him, and it was said that God’s Messenger arrived. I came along with other people to look at him. When I clearly saw God’s Messenger’s face, I realized that his was not the face of a liar. The first thing he said: “People, spread the peace greeting, maintain your ties with your kinsfolk, give food to

(1) Related by Ahmad, 21,354; al-Tirmidhi, 1,987.



other people, and offer night prayers when other people are asleep, so that you will safely be admitted into Heaven”’.⁽¹⁾

4. Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: ‘Beware of injustice, because injustice will be layers of darkness on the Day of Judgement. Beware of miserliness. It was the ruin of communities before you’.⁽²⁾

5. Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘This religion is easy. No one shall pull against this religion but will be defeated. Therefore, seek what is right and what is close to it, and be happy. Seek the easier two ends of the day and a portion of the night’.⁽³⁾

6. Abu Hurayrah narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: ‘The duties owed by a Muslim to a Muslim are six’. He was asked: ‘What are they, Messenger of God?’ He said: ‘Greet him when you meet him; if he invites you, accept; if he seeks your advice, give him sincere counsel; if he sneezes and praises God, bless him; if he falls ill, visit him; and when he dies, follow his funeral’.⁽⁴⁾

7. Abu Sa‘īd al-Khudrī narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: ‘Whatever I have of good things, I shall not withhold from you. Whoever shows self-restraint God will give him enough; whoever is content, God will give him what is sufficient; and whoever endures in patience, God

(1) Related by al-Tirmidhī, 1,855.

(2) Related by Muslim, 2,578.

(3) Related by al-Bukhari, 39.

(4) Related by Muslim, 2,162.



will help him to endure. No one has been given anything better and more plentiful than patient endurance'.⁽¹⁾

8. Jarīr ibn ‘Abdullāh narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: ‘God, Mighty and Exalted, will not be merciful to one who is not merciful to other people’.⁽²⁾

9. Anas ibn Mālik narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: ‘Whoever loves to have his provisions made plentiful and his term of life extended should foster his ties of kinship’.⁽³⁾

10. Abu Hurayrah narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: ‘God is pleased for you to have three qualities and displeased if you have three others. He is pleased when you worship Him alone; associate no partners with Him; and when you hold fast together to your bond with God without breaking into disunity. He is displeased if you engage in idle talk, ask too many questions and squander your property’.⁽⁴⁾

11. Abu Dharr narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said to me: ‘Do not despise any kindness, not even meeting your brother with a cheerful face’.⁽⁵⁾

12. Abu Hurayrah narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: “Do not envy one another; and do not help to ensnare others [in sales]; and do not hate each other; and do not

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 1,469; Muslim, 1,053.

(2) Related by al-Bukhari, 7,376; Muslim, 2,319.

(3) Related by al-Bukhari, 5,986; Muslim, 2,557.

(4) Related by Muslim, 1,715.

(5) Related by Muslim, 2,626.

turn your back on one another. Let none of you outbid another in a sale transaction. Servants of God, always be brothers. A Muslim is a brother to every Muslim: he is neither unjust to him, nor does he let him down nor treat him with contempt”. Pointing to his chest, he said three times: “God-fearingness is here. Sufficient evil it is in a person to despise his Muslim brother. All that a Muslim has is forbidden to another Muslim: his blood, property and honour”’.⁽¹⁾

13. ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: ‘Always state the truth. Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Heaven. A person will continue to tell the truth and make sure of the truth until he is recorded with God as truthful. Do not lie. Lying leads to transgression, and transgression leads to Hell. A person will continue to lie and make sure of lying until he is recorded with God as a liar.’⁽²⁾

14. Abu al-Dardā’ narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: ‘Nothing will be heavier in the scales [on the Day of Judgement] than good manners’.⁽³⁾

15. Abu Hurayrah narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) used to say: ‘My Lord, make my faith the right faith as it is the pillar of my affairs. Set my present life to right as it is where I have my livelihood. Set my future life to right for it is the one to which I return. Make life an increase of every good thing for me, and make my death a stop of all that is evil forme’.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Related by Muslim, 2,564.

(2) Related by al-Bukhari, 6,094; Muslim, 2,607.

(3) Related by Abu Dāwūd, 4,799; al-Tirmidhī, 2,003.

(4) Related by Muslim, 2,720



16. Al-Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr said that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: ‘In their mutual love, compassion and sympathy, believers are like a single body: when any of its organs suffers a complaint, the rest of the body will share its sleeplessness and fever’.⁽¹⁾

17. Abu Hurayrah narrated that God’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: ‘Whoever believes in God and the Last Day must cause no harm to his neighbour; and whoever believes in God and the Last Day should be hospitable to his guest; and whoever believes in God and the Last Day should say what is good or remain silent’.⁽²⁾

(1) Related by al-Bukhari, 6,011; Muslim, 2,586.

(2) Related by al-Bukhari, 6,018; Muslim, 47.



Epilogue

It is important for every new Muslim to have a good understanding of Islam. They should endeavour to learn the Islamic rules and teachings, as well as their purposes. They should try their best to increase their knowledge of their new religion, through reading, study and attending reliable scholars who have good knowledge of Islam.

If a newcomer to Islam finds in himself the aptitude to become an Islamic scholar, and the necessary facilities are available to him, then his desire and ambition are commendable. Islam opens its gates wide to all its followers, including newcomers, and enables them to dip into all branches of Islamic scholarship. There is no special knowledge that applies to those born into Muslim families which is denied to new Muslims. Islamic history testifies to this fact.

It is also important to know that Islam is not mere knowledge to be acquired and gathered. It is a way of life given by God, and every Muslim man and woman are required to implement it in their lives, so that they will be true Muslims in word and deed. What is very helpful to achieve this includes:



- Having good company which helps in whatever is good, and to join congregational prayers, as often as possible, in a nearby mosque.
- Maintaining contacts with other Muslims in mosques and Islamic centres, as well as reliable social media groups, and Islamic satellite channels. Such contacts help you to maintain your enthusiasm and learn more about Islam, in addition to benefiting from the experience of other Muslims. It is important in this regard to consult your reliable brethren, because today, the internet gives a great multitude of information, some of which is good while some is bad indeed.
- Reading an authentic translation of the Qur'an in your own language, and reflecting on the verses with very clear message, such as the verses that extol God's attributes or give accounts of earlier prophets. It is also important to understand the verses that enjoin good behaviour and moral values as well as those which state what is forbidden.
- Keeping up voluntary worship, such as the recommended *sunnah* prayers, remembrance of God, reciting the Qur'an and giving *ṣadaqah* or charity, making these as part of your daily practice. It is important to tailor these as is suitable to you and your circumstances, so that you can keep it up. The Prophet (peace be upon him) says: 'The deed God loves best is the one that lasts longest, even though it is but little'.⁽¹⁾
- There is no point in entertaining negative thoughts, such as regretting what one might have done in the past, or ru-

(1) Related by Muslim, 2,818.

minating on sins committed before receiving God's guidance and becoming a Muslim. Such negative thoughts will only prevent or delay good, positive action. Stop all such thoughts and look forward, devoting your time and effort to your new life. This is the best way to compensate for lost time.

- Do not try to do too many good things, as this may become problematic or confusing for you. You may find yourself unable to decide which way to turn first and this may lose you the enjoyment of the best moments of your new life under God's guidance. It is best to choose the best good deeds which suit you and are within your ability. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Keep a steady course, but you shall not be able to do everything. Learn that prayer is the best of your deeds and that only a believer keeps up ablution'.⁽¹⁾

- Maintain your special bond with God, by keeping up your prayers as you have learnt them and as you can do. Maintain the remembrance of God and your supplication to Him. Know that God will not abandon you as you head along towards Him.

Here I conclude this letter to you, brother and sister, by telling you that we love you and we feel our close bond of brotherhood with you. We pray for your success in life and for the strengthening of your faith. We pray that all of us shall in the life to come meet with all prophets and their followers who adhered to the truth, the martyrs and the righteous. What a splendid company that is!

(1) Ahmad, 22,378; Ibn Mājah, 277.



Our Lord, bestow Your peace and blessings on Muhammad, the last of Your prophets and messengers, as well as all members of his household and his companions, and also on his brethren who were Your prophets and messengers. All praise is due to God, the Lord of all the worlds.

Peace be to you all, together with God's mercy and blessings.

Your brother,

Abdulvahab Süleymanođlu



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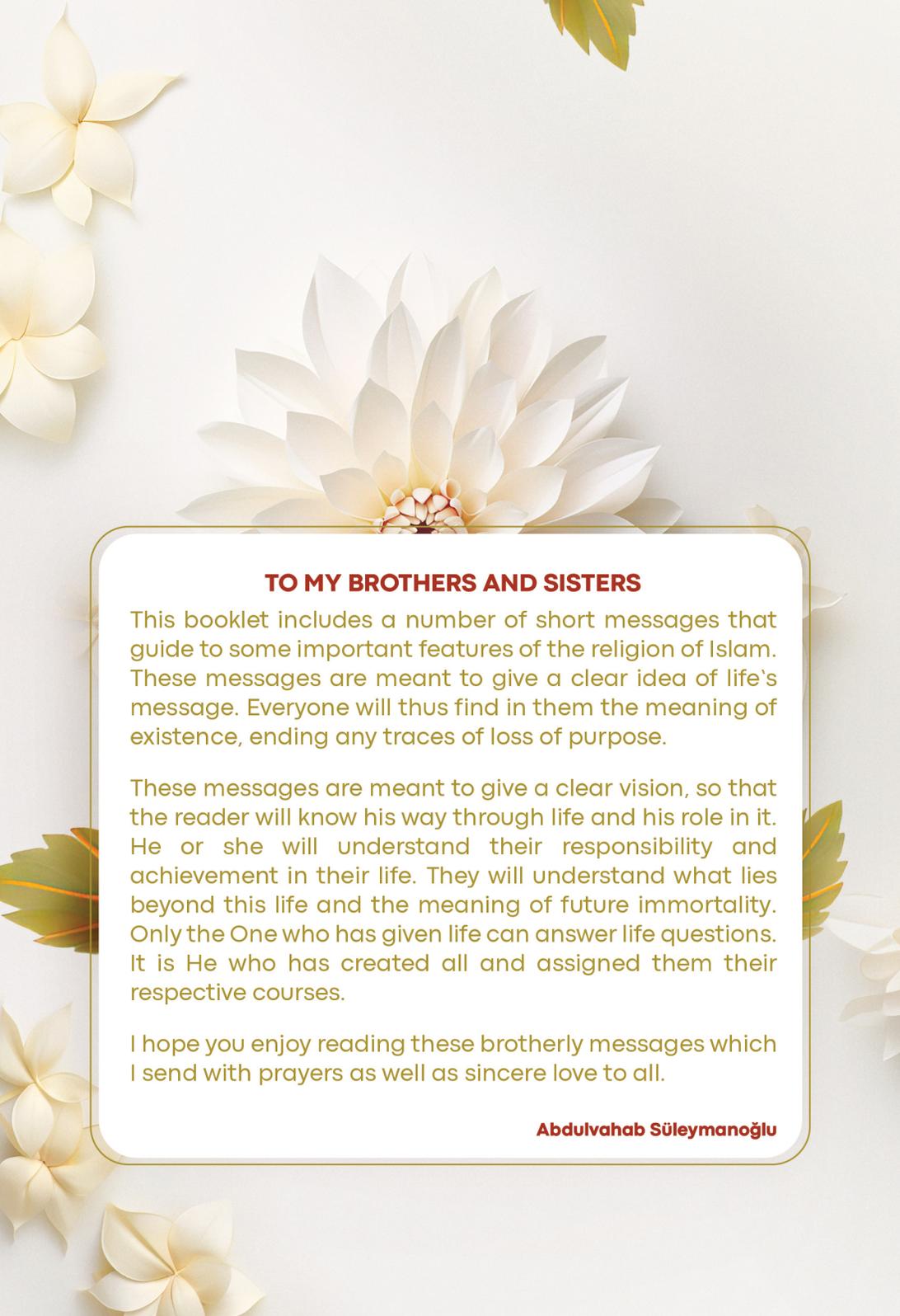
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TO MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS

This booklet includes a number of short messages that guide to some important features of the religion of Islam. These messages are meant to give a clear idea of life's message. Everyone will thus find in them the meaning of existence, ending any traces of loss of purpose.

These messages are meant to give a clear vision, so that the reader will know his way through life and his role in it. He or she will understand their responsibility and achievement in their life. They will understand what lies beyond this life and the meaning of future immortality. Only the One who has given life can answer life questions. It is He who has created all and assigned them their respective courses.

I hope you enjoy reading these brotherly messages which I send with prayers as well as sincere love to all.

Abdulvahab Süleymanođlu