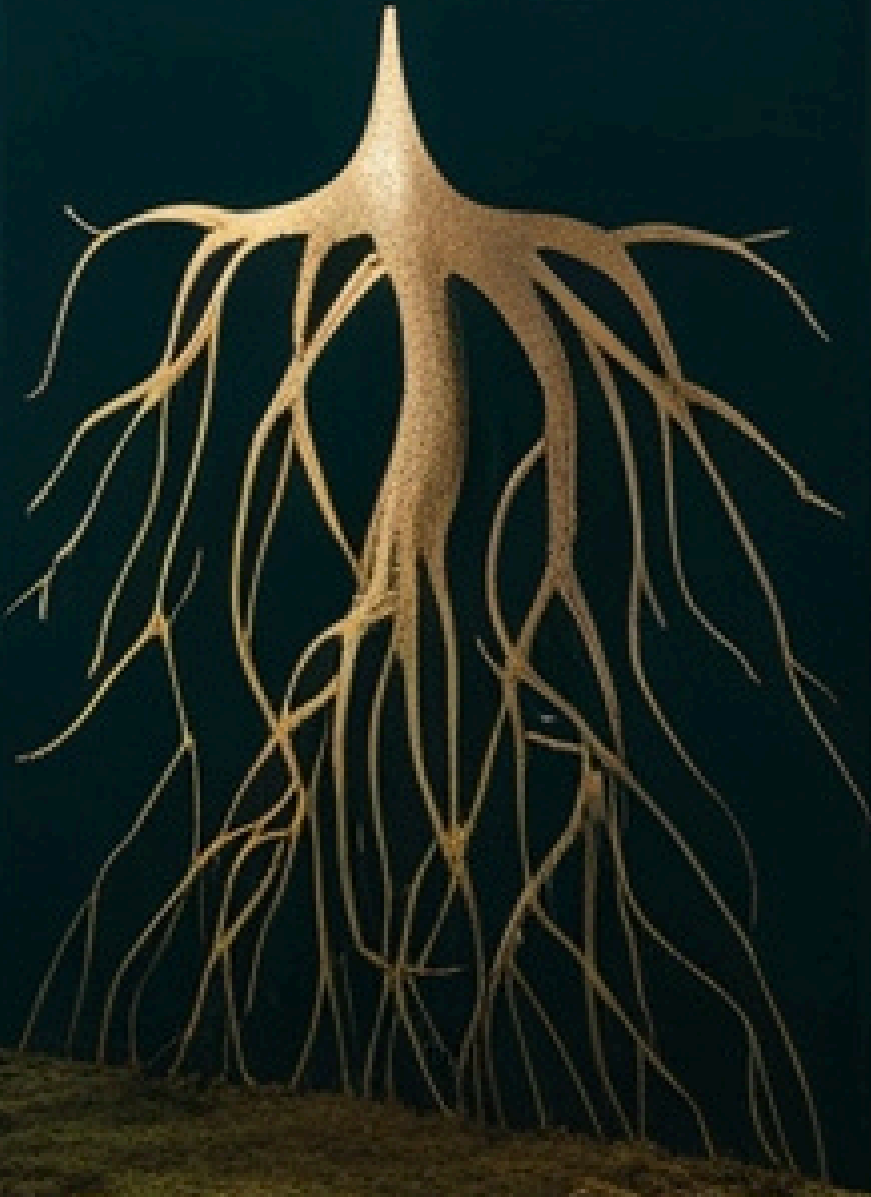


THE
ROOTS OF
RELIGION



THE Roots of Religion

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NOOR-E-ISLAM

Second Edition, 1406/1986

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BISMILLAHHIR RAHMAN NIR RAHIM.

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Now with the Grace of Almighty, and the blessings of the grandson of the Holy Prophet of Islam (S.A.W.), the only surviving Divine Hujjat from the Ahle-Bait (A.S.) Imam-e-Asr (A.T.F.S.) (Peace be on all of them), we are given an opportunity to publish the work in English.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

INTRODUCTION

Contrary to what some people say that ideological matters do not have any effect on human life, we think that these are the matters which form our way of living and lead it according to our ideas and beliefs. Someone who does not believe in the Source of the universe, the God of the world, and in Resurrection and the Day of Judgement will not have any relation with God, nor can he open an account in the next world to derive the benefit of his deeds. He will find himself without any obligation and will do such things which a man believing in God and the next world will not do. He can neither be unrelated to God nor indifferent to God's guidance or the guides who have come from Him to human beings.

Even the social relations of man are linked to ideological matters. Someone who believes in God and the Day of Judgment will not indulge in crimes, cheating, unjust dealings, oppression or the exploitation of others.

Because of this deep relation between ideological matters and human life, it is necessary for everyone to study them. In order to place at the disposal of our sisters and brothers, who are seekers of truth, such ideological matters, we have prepared a set of thirty lessons in which these problems have been propounded and solved in a simple and short way. It can even be used as a text book in religious classes for youngsters. We hope you will find them beneficial and effective. Any question or comment to improve them will be welcomed.

May Allah help all the seekers of truth and reality.

NOOR-E-ISLAM

LESSON ONE

1. Why Religion?

There are some people who maintain that they have no obligation to investigate the acquisition of religion. They think: What need provokes us to consider religion?

We aim to show the flaw in this argument by means of the following explanations, and we shall demonstrate in two ways the necessity of enquiry into religion.

1. Wisdom dictates that every man should give thanks for those benefits which he has received.
2. Wisdom also dictates that he acknowledge the need to prevent every kind of possible danger or harm.

So now let us consider each of these two points.

1. The Obligation of Thanksgiving:

It is our good fortune to benefit from all the excellencies of life in this world: our digestive system, respiratory apparatus, the heart and other organs of the body. Each one of these is in

its turn greater than the limit of our knowledge and even our imagination. Likewise the light of the sun, the existence of plants, the mines and resources hidden deep in the heart of the earth; all of them are great benefits which, by the knowledge and power that has been given to him, man can make use of.

Greater than all of these, however, is the genius and understanding of man himself, which can break a mighty mountain into pieces and create from water and iron the most enormous power and the most delicate objects.

Now this question poses itself: Should we not engage ourselves in research and enquiry until, if there is a benefactor, we acknowledge that benefactor, so as to fulfil our duty and offer him our thanks?

Suppose a benevolent and charitable man adopts a baby who has lost his father and mother, and provides for him every kind of sustenance for life and growth. He arranges for the child to be brought up, and when he is ready for education provides him with the best teachers and books. Similarly he puts every possibility within his reach, and, in short, provides in every way for his welfare. Does this child not then have an obligation to try to find out first who this man is, and secondly, about his great generosity, his whole soul overflowing with thanks for his benefactor?

It is the same in the field of existence, and we are obliged to engage in enquiry till we discover the Benefactor and Creator Himself and render our thanks.

Making effort to acquire the true religion is also a command of wisdom. He who has not yet found the right way, and is wandering without direction must not rest his feet until he has found the way of Truth and the true religion, satisfied by enlightening proofs and clear evidence. And when he has reached the source of spiritual life and the true religion, his heart full of peace and rejoicing, he should begin to give his thanks to the Creator Himself.

2. The Prevention of Possible Danger and Harm:

If a child were to come and tell you that he saw a poisonous snake go into the room you were in, you would immediately jump up from where you were and undertake a thorough search of every nook and cranny until you found it, or were satisfied that it was not there.

Similarly, if, while travelling by night in a dangerous country, you learnt that bandits were waiting on the road ahead to ambush you, without doubt you would wait until the way ahead was clear of danger, and would not take a single step forward until then.

In these two examples it has been made clear that we are compelled by reason to investigate conceivable dangers. It is possible that some of the harmful things may turn out to be nothing at all, and other people may not pay any attention to them, but if an injury carries the price of a human soul, and a life is destroyed, it cannot be ignored.

The Most Dangerous Harm:

In the history of mankind, we learn of people who were famous for telling the truth and acting honestly. They claimed that they were messengers of God, and they called people to have faith in God and to act in a certain way. As a result of the efforts and the persistent sufferings of these special people in all corners of the world, many groups had faith in them. Thus the birth of Jesus became the beginning of the Christian calendar and the migration of the Prophet Muhammad started the Muslim calendar.

Now, we see that these messengers attracted men to religion and to follow particular rules, caused them to fear punishment for their bad deeds and made them sure that they would be tried in the Great Court of Justice before the Righteous and Wise Judge. They trembled at the hardships and perils of Resurrection and the harshness of the punishment there, and made men fearful of these things. The question is, do their warnings make us realise

the possibility of harm and danger in the same way as did the warning of the small child?

Is it right that we should ignore the words and deeds of the real religious people of this world, when it is they who, in their belief and faith stood watch over the soul, and spared themselves no kind of sacrifice?

Clearly, the words of the messengers, if they do not make a man certain, at least provoke him to think: perhaps what they say is true. Then what in fact is our duty, if it is correct that the messengers tell the truth? What answer will we give in the Court of Justice of God?

Here reason reckons the necessity of preventing this "at least possible" harm, and religion urges us to follow.

What is more, these messengers call man to a healthy and civilised life, and they also say that after death an extensive new world and everlasting blessings await one who has performed his duty, and give glad tidings that in that place is another existence overflowing with peace of mind and certainty of spirit, where there is no disease, distress, agitation, anguish or fear. Does reason allow us to ignore this important message?

Must we not give weight to the fears and threats of the messengers, who say that sins and transgression have their penalty, and follow religion and give our thought to it?

LESSON TWO

2. Experiment Beyond Sensation

Whenever we see a beautiful building of great splendour, and design, we can easily understand that its architect, master builder and mason was each one an expert in his own craft, and we discover, from observing such a well-proportioned building, the knowledge and science of its builder. Similarly, by looking at a car, an aeroplane, a computer or any other well-designed artifact, we are invariably guided to well-informed and knowledgeable inventors, discoverers and makers, and we are made aware of their skill and learning. In none of these instances is it necessary to actually see the constructor of the building or other object with our own eyes to testify to his existence. What is more, when observing all these things, it is not with any of our external senses that we perceive his knowledge and skill.

But, nevertheless, we believe in his science and knowledge. Why? Because that same orderliness which we perceived in the artifacts, forces us to recognise the knowledge of their constructors. And from this we reach to the conclusion that it

is in no case necessary that something whose existence we wish to believe in should be visible or tangible. How many facts there are which are not perceptible to our external senses, but of whose existence we become aware through paying care and attention to what effects they produce. For every wise man understands, without exercising too much attention, that there can be no effect without a cause, nothing orderly without wise and knowledgeable designer.

On this basis we can divide the things of this world into two categories:

1. Things which are evident to one or more of the five senses; we observe visible things with the eyes, we hear sounds with the ears, and we become aware of pleasant and unpleasant smells, bitter and sweet tastes, hot and cold, rough and smooth, with our nose, our tongue, and the skin of our body.
2. Things which are not perceived by any one of the five senses, but whose existence we can deduce by considering their effects. These facts are not all of one kind, some are material and some are non-material (i.e., they are without material limits or properties). We shall mention here a few of them.

* Electricity. We can never, merely by looking at two wires, one of which is electrified, determine which of them has an electric current. We can only discover the existence of this current from the effect of the electricity, e.g. a lamp being lit. So electricity is something which exists although our eyes cannot directly see it.

* Gravitation. If you let go of the book which you now have in your hand, it will fall to the ground, i.e. the ground will pull the book towards itself. This power is something which we do not directly perceive through our senses. Gravitation is again one of

those things which is not visible, but of whose existence we feel sure through observing the falling of bodies - which is its result.

* Magnetism. We place a magnet beside a piece of iron. Externally there is nothing except what we see, but when the iron is pulled towards the magnet we understand that in the space around the magnet the phenomenon of magnetism exists.

* Invisible radiation. If we shine white sun-light through a prism we see on the other side of the crystal six colours (the spectrum) which are: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. This side of red and beyond violet no more colours are to be seen. However, scientists have discovered that in the place where the eyes see no more light, further 'colours' exist which have heating and chemical properties. These 'lights' are called infra-red and ultra-violet.

In the year 1800 A.D. a physicist and astronomer called Herschel conceived the idea of researching into whether radiation existed beyond what the eye can see. He gradually altered the position of a thermometer placed on a screen on which the six-coloured spectrum (from red to violet) was projected, and exposed it to the various colours, measuring the heating effect of each of them. When he got beyond the red, he discovered that the thermometer indicated greater heat from this. He then became certain of the existence of invisible radiation - called infra-red radiation - which produced more heat than visible light, and this same heat, which is a result of the radiation, convinced people of the existence of infra-red radiation.

At the same time, another scientist called Wollaston put a quantity of the chemical compound silver chloride in the place beyond the violet end of the spectrum, and, contrary to his expectation, discovered that in the place where light did not reach the eye there existed a factor which caused the silver chloride to darken. Later still, scientists found out that the changing of the colour of the skin on exposure to sun-light was due to the chemical

influence of this radiation.¹

It thus became certain that beyond violet light there was another radiation which was invisible, and it was named ultra-violet.

* Inaudible sounds. There are many sounds which we do not hear. These are called supersonic sounds, and we discover their existence by examining their effects; they are used in medicine and technology.

* Intelligence. All of us are aware of ourselves, i.e. we perceive that we exist, and we can also arrive at concepts in a gradual manner concerning matters outside ourselves which we explain by this kind of statement:

'I solved the most difficult mathematical problem.'

'I pondered a lot over such-and-such a theory until I came to the conclusion that it was correct.'

Also, man is aware of his own knowledge, i.e. he knows that he knows. Intelligence is not something visible or audible in the sense that man can see it with his eyes or hear it with his ears, but in fact, although it is intangible, everyone finds it in himself in addition to the powers of sight and hearing and the other external faculties. Other people cannot learn about my intelligence through the five senses, but must deduce its existence from the effects it produces. For example, when a scientist is expounding on a problem, it becomes clear that he has understood it, and also, if we ask a scientist if he is familiar with mathematical problems or not, and he says that he is informed about them, we understand that he is aware of his own understanding and knowledge, i.e. he knows that he understands the problems of mathematics.

* The Constructs of the Mind. People can construct in their own minds any form that they wish, e.g. a tower similar to the Eiffel

1. *Understanding Light* by Tanonbaum, Spillman.

Tower whose construction in the external world required many years, a thousand sorts of different building materials and substances, and hundreds of workers; this can be built in the mind in an instant. Maybe thousands of similar ones can be built, and it is possible to imagine in the mind things which have no existence in the outside world at all, thus we may create a monster with many heads, hands and feet. It is clear that others cannot be informed directly of the creations of our minds, because they are not visible and audible, but they can discover their existence from their consequences or from our speech.

* Love, Hate and Determination. Everyone has, on the one hand, a liking for some things, and, on the other hand, an aversion to other things. Also, throughout his life he is in need of determination. For every task that he likes to do he determines to accomplish it, and for every task that he does not like to do he leaves it on one side and determines not to do it.

No-one can understand directly the determinations of someone else, and what he likes and what he does not like, unless from the effects and reactions to it, because love, hate and determination are not visible, audible or tangible things which can be perceived through the external senses.

* Life. A fine chicken, moving towards the water, falls into a pond, and, before we can rescue it, it dies. In the organisation of the life of this animal at this very moment, what change has taken place, and between its present condition and one moment before when it had been alive, what difference is there that it no longer moves, plays or eats?

We must of necessity say that there is something which exists in the live chicken, which does not exist in the dead - life itself. Life is not an object of the senses. We only perceive the effects of it which are movement, feeding, etc., and from these effects we discover its existence.

The established scientific facts mentioned above make it thoroughly clear that over and above the beings which we perceive with our sensory organs, there are also things which we do not directly perceive, but which we know about only because of the effects they produce.

Thus we draw the conclusion that it is not right for us to reject something which we do not see only because it is not visible, because being not visible is different from not existing, and the way of discovering something is not confined to the eyes or other external senses. Reason can discover somethings by means of the effects of those things, as we saw in the case of the existence of scientific facts that are known through their results, and which are not denied or doubted by any competent person.

We do not wish to say that God is similar to these facts, because God is a truth higher than these, to which nothing is equal or comparable, but our intention is to say that in the same way as we discover the existence of these things through their effects, we can discover the existence of God through His signs.

Thus those who observe only with their physical eyes, and deny the existence of God because they cannot see Him with these eyes, are blind as far as their eye of wisdom and contemplation is concerned, since we know, by the dictates of wisdom, through the precise regulation of creation - which is one of the signs of God - that His Existence can be discovered.

To these people we say, with the poet:

“Open thy heart’s eye your soul to see,
And what is invisible will be manifest to thee.”

Because in every creature there is a sign of God.

A more precise point, and a more important matter, is that a study of the results of the Power of the Lord - that is to say the world and its creatures - in addition to that which guides us to His Existence, also demonstrates that, since all the world and its

creatures are signs of Him, and His sign is not confined to one special instance or locality, and since all and every phenomenon is one of His signs, He Himself is another reality to which none of the creatures of the world are equal or comparable. Rather, He is an unlimited Being who possess every perfection and is free from all imperfections.

We therefore discover two things from the study of the signs of God:

1. The existence of the Creator of the universe, in which all things are His signs.
2. That because His signs are without limit and are not specific to one time or place, He is a Being, unlimited and possessing every perfection, although we cannot perceive His Reality.

Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah Khorasani, the servant of the eighth Imam (A.S.) said: A group of men were sitting with Imam Rida (A.S.) when one of those who deny God came in. The Imam (A.S.) said to him: ‘If, as you say, there is no God, no Messenger, no Reckoning and no Book (which there surely is), will our prayer, fasting, zakah and faith be to our detriment?’

The man did not reply (i.e. his reply was no).

The Imam continued: ‘But if, as we maintain, God exists, religion exists, the Resurrection and the Day of Retribution exist (and they surely do), are you destined to misfortune and ruin?’ (It is clear that, by the dictates of reason, everyone, even on the basis of a mere possibility that beyond this world another world exists, should act according to the commandments of religion so that misfortune and ruin do not overtake him.)

The man asked: ‘The God in whom you believe, what is He like and where is He?’

The Imam said: ‘Your question is mistaken. God is not such as to be in a place; He created space. He is not such as to have quality

He created qualities. So he cannot be known in this way. God is not perceptible to any one of the senses, and it is not possible to compare Him.'

The man said: 'If he is not perceptible to any one of the senses, then He is nothing!'

The Imam replied: 'Woe is you! (How small is your capacity for thinking) that since your senses are not able to perceive Him, you deny His Lordship. But we, for the very same reason that we cannot perceive Him, are certain that only He is our Lord and no-one else.'

The man said: 'Tell me, when has God existed?'

The Imam said: 'You tell me when God has not been, so that I can tell you when He has been.' (i.e. God existed before time, and He created time.)

He said: 'What is the evidence for the proof of God?'

Imam Rida replied: 'When I reflect upon my body, I realise that I cannot add anything to its length or width, nor subtract from it. Similarly, I cannot choose to be happy or unhappy (perhaps, for example, I may try very hard to get better from an illness, but I do not succeed). From this evidence and also from noticing the regulation of the sun and the stars, the heaven and the earth and the orderliness of the whole universe, I understand that my body and this world of creatures has a Creator and a Lord (Who is Knowing and Able).'²

2: **Usul-i Kafi*. Part I page 78 (abridged).

3. Design in the Universe

In this universe, from the smallest atom to the largest celestial body, in everything we see, we are reminded of its perfect orderliness and exact regulation, so much so that the great scientists have been provoked to amazement.

Cecil Boyce Hamann, Professor of Biology at Asbury College, says that whenever he puts a drop of water under a microscope or observes the farthest star through a telescope, he is filled with great wonder.

There is so much orderliness in nature that it is possible to explain by means of immutable laws the course any phenomenon will take before it occurs.

For this reason (i.e. that the patterns and laws which govern nature are immutable and fixed), scientists endeavour to discover these laws. For if they did not hold would not every kind of effort in this field be fruitless?¹

1: * *The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe*. ed. J.C. Monsma. New York. 1958

The earth in which we live, with respect to its size, its distance from the sun, the speed of its orbital movement, etc., is so arranged that it is able to act as the support for life. Because, if in the conditions of its existence the smallest change were to take place, losses of unacceptable dimensions would occur.

The atmosphere, most of whose constituent elements are life-giving gases, is sufficiently viscous that it can, like a shield or armour, protect the earth from the deadly attack of 200 million meteors every day, which approach the earth with a speed of 50 kms. per second.

The responsibility for regulating the temperature of the earth's surface within limits which maintain life also belongs to the atmosphere, and if it did not exist, inhabited land would, like the dry deserts, become incapable of supporting life.

But why are we taking the long way round in explaining these things?

Nearer than anything is ourselves. The mysteries of man's existence are without number, so much so that the world's scientists, after years of research and study, have not yet been able to fathom all the wonders of it.

After many years of study, Dr. Alexis Carrel wrote a book called "*L'homme, cet inconnue*" (*Man, the Unknown*). He wrote confessing that biology and other sciences were still unable to discover the facts about the working of the human body, and that many problems remained to be unravelled.

Now let us examine some of the marvels of our own existence.

The Cells of the Body:

The body of man is like a building. It is composed of small building blocks called cells, each of which is itself a living entity.

Each cell, therefore, is alive, and its nourishment, digestion, absorption, elimination and reproduction, for example, are as in other organisms, and are perfectly carried out.

In the structure of the cells most metals, such as iron, copper, calcium, as also other elements such as oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen and sulphur are used.

The number of these cells in the body of man is about 10¹⁶ which is equivalent to ten thousand, million, million.

Each one of these living cells works in perfect cooperation with the next, and all of them follow the same aim. They are very quick to suffer, having little toleration, and nourishment must be correctly supplied for their needs.

The blood, with the help of the heart, performs this duty very well. The structure of the heart is of well-designed and perfect dimensions, so that it can supply blood to the whole body through the agency of the blood vessels and the capillaries.

The blood, after it has delivered nourishment to the cells, absorbs poisonous substances which have accumulated there and returns to the heart with a dull colour. The heart delivers this to the lungs, a filtering apparatus for the blood, whereupon it is re-supplied to the whole body with a bright colour and greater freshness.

While passing through the kidneys, another part of these poisonous matters are removed, so that no kind of disturbance arises in the general working of the body.

Do we not see in the precise combination and quantity of the metals and elements from which the cell is formed, and also the amazing structure of the heart and its way of working which is claiming the attention of the thinkers of today, a plan of perfect and superior design?

And if we see in the human body a mysterious whole and at the same time a design, are we exaggerating?

Without doubt, no.

And in this same way we must confess that the world of existence is firm on the foundation of perfect orderliness, and undoubtedly every orderliness and design is the creation and

accomplishment of a wise and powerful maker.

This subject will be investigated completely in further chapters.

LESSON FOUR

4. The Designer of the Universe

The Computer:

Today, most people manage to do their most difficult work easily with the help of machines. One of the most amazing of these machines is the computer, about whose various capabilities most people have heard. For example, one variety of computer can, in a few minutes, accurately supply a doctor with medical records which have been stored in it, and is capable of diagnosing illnesses. It investigates details of every condition reported in the past year or even ten years ago, and makes recommendations for the cure and therapy of disease. This computer can, when necessary, recommend a suitable medicine to the hospital pharmacy, and inform the nurse, so that she can give the medicine to the patient. Some important factories also use computers for the control and adjustment of their machines.

Is it possible that an accident or chance brought the computer into existence, or is its astounding design rather a proof of the intelligence and genius of its maker?

Undoubtedly anyone faced with such a machine would agree that he is aware of the greatness of the intelligence and thinking of its maker.

The Automatic Kitchen:

“Orbis” is the name of an apparatus which can prepare excellent food for more than one thousand people in one hour.

In many present-day countries transport cafes and roadside restaurants make use of this apparatus; it is capable of doing the work of twenty trained cooks.

When you park your car in front of the restaurant, you press the button on a loudspeaker beside you, and immediately a voice asks you what you want. You give an order for various kinds of food, and exactly eight minutes later your food is brought by a special waiter.

How the Automatic Kitchen Works:

When the customer presses the button, a light switches on inside “Orbis”, and as the customer gives his order for food (e.g. a sandwich), someone sitting in front of the apparatus depresses special switches. The machine starts to work. In this way, first bread is cut by means of an automatic knife, and at the same moment a piece of meat is sent to the cooker which grills it in exactly four minutes. Then it is transferred onto the bread and the other parts of the sandwich are also placed on the bread. At this point the warm sandwich is put into a plastic bag and is ready.

Is the automatic and well-designed “Orbis” without a maker or a designer, and did it come into existence as the result of an accident or chance? Or is it not rather the product of the ideas of a scientist who invented it using precise calculations?

Undoubtedly, this design and order which you notice in the above examples, is the result of the thinking of its designer and

inventor. That is to say that if there had been no inventor, and if they had not been constructed on the basis of very exact calculations and measurements, these machines would never have come into existence.

The same argument demonstrates a general proof and its undoubted truth, that design and orderliness must take their origin in a source of knowledge and power, and that chance cannot be the origin of marvels having design and orderliness, because, as to everything belongs a particular effect (e.g. cold water is an unlikely cause for being scalded), it is incorrect to suppose that design and reckoning should come from chance or mere accident.

It therefore follows that the wonderful design and orderliness which is observed in the brain, the nerves, the digestive system, the heart, the eyes, the ears and thousands of other examples constitutes complete evidence and a living proof that the world of creation has a wise and powerful designer and creator, and that whatever attracts our attention among the secrets of the way creation is arranged, permits us to become more aware of the greatness of its creator. Can we say that the human brain and the wonders of the body are less significant than the computer?

Of course, you will acknowledge that all these things are a proof of the greatness and magnitude of the knowledge and powerful Creator of the world - its designer. In addition to this, the understanding and intelligence which is seen in man is clear evidence of the manifestation of something knowledgeable and intelligent which produced him, because it is not possible for someone who has no understanding and intelligence to give to his constructions and creations such understanding and intelligence.

The Holy Qur’an points to this undoubted truth and shining reality in many verses, such as the following:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا، ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَخَّرَ

الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى يُدِيرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ.

*God is He Who raised up the heavens without pillars
you can see,*

*He subjected the sun and the moon each one running
to a term stated ; He directs the affair; He distinguishes
the signs; haply you will have faith in the encounter
with your Lord. (XII:2)*

LESSON FIVE

5. Unveiling the Secrets of Nature

The amazing progress of man's knowledge is progressively uncovering the unknown and destroying misconceptions in physiology and the experimental sciences.

For example, it was once thought that some of the organs of the body were of no use, but modern science, after much analysis and research, has demonstrated specific uses for each of them, and, in the future, when research tools have been further developed, more important functions will surely be discovered. We shall mention some examples to show what we mean.

1 - *The thymus* is a small gland located in the mediastinum, in front of the wind-pipe and behind the ribs. The specific function of the thymus had been unclear, and previous scientists had thought it to be a superfluous organ. But today it is known that the thymus plays an important role in resistance

and defence against foreign substances which attack the body*.

Some scientists believe that this gland has an important influence on sexual function and the growth of the body after puberty. Its removal results in atrophy of the sexual organs and delayed puberty.

2 - *The pineal gland*, or *epiphysis* is more complex than the thymus, and it is situated in the brain. In the past some physiologists had attributed no use to it, but nowadays it is believed that this gland is operative in controlling sexual activity and in preventing premature puberty. It also has other functions which, if stopped, cause death**.

3 - Previously, physicians had thought that *the tonsils* were without function, and in the event of swelling of the tonsils would advise their extraction, and would excise them. However, today, specialists understand their importance, and do not recommend their removal except in exceptional circumstances.

The tonsils produce white blood-cells whose function is to defend the body against microbes. They perform the same function for the body as does quarantine for diseases coming

The thymus gland produces lymphocytes, and its fundamental use is in the making of antibodies which defend and protect the body against viruses and foreign protein.

** The pineal gland acts by secreting a hormone called Glomerulotrophin which circulates in the blood and causes another hormone called aldosterone to be secreted from the surface of the adrenal gland. This latter controls the concentration of sodium and potassium in the blood, which is of importance because an imbalance in these concentrations and the stopping of the secretion of aldosterone results in death in less than one week.

into a country. They act as a strong barrier at the entrance to the respiratory passages, cleaning the inspired air against infection and destroying microbes. When the air is more polluted, or when microbes are more active, the tonsils work harder, and as a result they swell up. Removal of the tonsils is inadvisable, because:

- it results in an increased activity of microbes in the throat and lets them enter the glottis, the windpipe and the lungs, and causes illnesses such as bronchitis.
- the skin lining the nose and the glottis becomes thinner than normal and causes dryness in the nose and throat (atrophy of the mucous membranes). What is more, at the time of various throat infections, the tonsils swell up and, like warning lamps, inform doctors of these illnesses. So, if they are not there, the disease will not be diagnosed, and this may result in further complications such as angina.

4 - After much research, a group of scientists came to the conclusion that *the appendix* has an important role to play in the fight against cancer, and its removal, when unnecessary, can be a cause of this fatal illness. It has been explained in the Journal of the American Medical Association that removal of the appendix in those who are in danger of getting cancer has an important effect, and may itself cause cancer.

The study of the examples mentioned above, together with hundreds of others, shows that when we do not find any use or advantage for something, we should not come to the conclusion that it really has no use or advantage. Rather, we should wait until its secrets and functions are revealed in the light of science. For, although man has made much progress, he is still at the first stages, and has not yet read even one line from the great Book of Nature.

Einstein said in his book *The Philosophy of Relativity* that

what we have read from the Book of Nature has taught us many things, but we know that we are far from finding the complete solution and understanding of her secrets.

Williams James also remarked that the difference between our knowledge and our ignorance is like the difference between a drop and the ocean.

Therefore do not those materialists who, because of incomplete knowledge of the secrets and properties of a thing, think to be without use or function make a serious mistake? Whereas if they were to be more careful, they would realise that there is a world of difference between not knowing a thing and its non-existence, and that it is not correct to assume that because a man does not find a thing therefore it does not exist.

It is obvious that man's not knowing the details of one or two things from the infinity of existents should not be an obstacle to him on comprehending the Wise Creator of the universe through the secrets of the world of creation and its wonderful harmony.

There is no doubt that the study of even one of the parts of creation, or even just a fragment of that part, is sufficient to lead man to the Knowing Designer and Builder of the universe. If one picks up a book which is written in a fully rational and logical manner, but one does not understand some things because of one's lack of knowledge, what should be one's judgement on the book? Should one ignore all the useful matters therein which are derived from the writer's creative thinking and broad vision? Surely not!

In the words of the poet: The world is as eye, cheek, mole and brow, For everything in its place is good. (*Gulshan-i Raz*, Shabistari)

6. Lavoiser's Law and Creation

We have all seen flames of fire, and we recognise what they are, but when we see these flames soaring up do we ever stop to ask what in fact they are. Today we know that flames are composed of gases combined with oxygen from the air, but, previously some chemists had thought that there was some invisible substance in charcoal and oil which, when there is ignition, is released in the form of flames, and to this substance they gave such names as "sulphur". This idea gathered many supporters, and many scientists subscribed to it, calling this invisible substance "phlogiston".

Georg Ernst Stahl* said that phlogiston was a substance which escaped and which was the basis and essence of fire; that it was hidden inside inflammable materials; and that at the time of burning it was released in the form of flames. He said that the reason that wood, charcoal and oil burn readily is that there is

* German scientist, chemist and biologist, who, in 1694, became professor at Hall University. (b. 1660, d. 1734)

more phlogiston in them, but that in metals there is less of it.

He and other followers of this idea believed that in the combustion of iron, phlogiston was released and what remained took the form of rust. They also said that when sulphur was burnt, phlogiston was released, and a colourless gas remained which was sulphur without phlogiston.

Rouelle**, a great chemist and the tutor of Lavoisier, also accepted this theory, and tried very hard to prove it.

Lavoisier, the French scientist, one of the founders of modern chemistry, researched into what his teacher, Rouelle, and other scientists had said, spending much time thinking about their theory, until he realised that the belief in phlogiston was groundless.

In 1772, he effected the combustion of a piece of lead by focusing the rays of the sun on to it by means of magnifying lenses. He observed that its weight increased. He deduced that some part of the air had become combined with the metal and had added to its weight; if phlogiston had been there, the weight of the lead would have decreased. Thus, he claimed, the phlogiston theory should be abandoned.

In support of his view he asserted that if the 'burnt' lead were heated it would return that part of the air which it had taken, and would again become lead.

In 1776 he performed another experiment in which he put a crucible of mercury over a heater and left it for 12 days. It was not long before a light red film was observed on the surface of the mercury. He found that the air in contact with the mercury could not support life. He deduced that a part of the air inside the crucible had reacted with the mercury, forming a light red film. In order to confirm this, he separated the light red film and heated it. He observed that a gas was released from it, and that

** French scientist. (b. 1703, d. 1770)

this gas supported life. he came to the conclusion that there is nothing which is given off from mercury when it is heated, but rather that there is a gas in the air which combines with the mercury to form mercurous oxide (HgO).

Lavoisier then asserted that there was no evidence for the existence of phlogiston, and that in chemical reactions the total weight of all substances entering into the reaction equals the total weight of all the substances resulting from that reaction. In other words, 'Rien ne se pera, et rien ne se crea.' (Nothing perishes, and nothing is created).

In this way the theory of phlogiston lost its supporters. We know today that when something catches fire it is because it enters into combination with oxygen, and not because an invisible substance comes out of the combustion in the form of flames. Anyhow, the history of phlogiston and the theory of Lavoisier shows us clearly that when Lavoisier said 'Nothing perishes and nothing is created' he meant that in a chemical reaction nothing disappears and nothing is added, and he was not referring to the origin of the creation of the world, which is a philosophical problem.

Unfortunately, some people, imagining that Lavoisier had wanted to answer a philosophical question, asserted that the event of creation was not compatible with Lavoisier's theory, because he has said that nothing is created and nothing is lost. How, they asked, could something be created from nothing? However, by referring to the history of the two theories, it becomes clear that Lavoisier was referring only to chemical reactions which take place in the present world, and he meant that this world is such that within its bounds nothing extra can be added and nothing can disappear. And the problem of whether the world was created or whether it is eternal is a philosophical problem about which Lavoisier's theory remains totally silent.

The point is that when we learn about scientific theories and ideas, we must look deeply into what has been said, and be careful to examine them with specialists in each matter so that the truth may become clear, because it is possible that inattention to these matters may result in a weakening of our beliefs.

Moreover, we must not submit to a theory without careful examination of it, so that we imagine it to be an indubitably ascertained fact. There have been many theories which have been supported through the ages by various scholars, but which were refuted later and all traces effaced. An example of this is the theory of phlogiston, whose history we have just related. Even the theory of Lavoisier has lost its original form (the principle of the conservation of matter), and has become the principle of the conservation of matter and energy. For example, if 8 grammes of oxygen are made to react with 1 gramme of hydrogen, Lavoisier's theory would predict that 9 grammes of water would be formed, but we now understand, through more exact calculations that a small part of the substance is converted into energy, and that the amount of water formed is a little less than 9 grammes.

7. The Eternal Need for Allah

Examine the following examples, and then you will realise the extent to which the creatures of this world show the presence of a Creator.

- 1- How do those who construct aeroplanes act together to produce a plane? These specialised engineers assemble the metal sections in a specific manner according to exact equations so that the plane may fly, carrying passengers and cargo. Of course, the work of the construction engineers is the assembly with their own hands of the basic materials according to their plans, in such a way that when their work is finished their activity ends. As for the metal sections, the engines, the lights, the seats, etc., which are made by the engineers, these do not depend upon them once their work is finished.
- 2- If we want to build a house and we are in possession of all the raw materials, is that sufficient? Surely, we need a **builder**

and his workmen, not in order to produce the raw materials, but so as to put them together according to their craft. It is clear that we do not need the workmen for producing the materials used in the building, but that we need them only in so far as the use of these materials is concerned. In this way a house can be built from these materials.

- 3 - A person who has never seen the Eiffel Tower can nevertheless construct it in his imagination in no time at all, merely from having heard about it. He can even construct it higher than it is, and imagine people climbing it.

The existence of the Tower in the imagination is, as suggests the previous two examples, the work of the one who has imagined it. The basic materials of the plan and the house were not produced by their constructors, but all the materials for the imagined Tower were made by the one who imagined it, not obtained from some place or another. That is why their size is not dependent on the quantity of raw material available, and it can be made larger according to the wish of the one who imagines it. We can see that imaginary forms derive their existence from ourselves. They remain in our minds as long as we want them to, and when we forget about them they become nothing again, and have no further existence in our imagination.

From this last example we can conclude that anything whose existence depends on the existence of something else can not be independent, and at every moment has need of the other.

Now we can understand the condition of the created things of this world which have come into existence from nothing and are the creation of God. Are these, at every moment, in need of their creator? Some people may think that the created things of this world, after their creation, do not stand in need of their creator for their continued existence. However, this is a com-

pletely erroneous concept, because the things in the world are the effects and creations of God and are identical with the imagined forms which we ourselves can construct in our imaginations, in that at every moment they need the One who created them in order to continue existing:

The better to understand this, imagine in your mind a human figure, speaking, walking and working according to his will. Does this figure have any independence? Clearly his existence is due to you, for if you cease to want him to exist, he will be annihilated and returned to nothingness.

This is the condition of the entire universe of creation which is completely from God, created by Him, and in no way independent. It is always in need of God. Also, if God ceased to will its existence, it would return to nothingness.

Allah has said in the Holy Qur'an:

سورة فاطر آية ١٥ - ١٦

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ

أَنْتُمْ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ.

إِنْ يَشَاءُ يُدْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ.

O men, you are the ones that have need of Allah; He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable. If He will, He can put you away and bring a new creation (35:15-16)

This is a subject to which Islam directs the attention of its followers. For example, it is instructed that in prayer (salat) when one rises one should say *bi hawli'l-lahi wa quwwatihi aqumu wa aq'ud* - "With the power of Allah do I stand up and sit down."

In truth, if we realise that we have no independence from God, and that it is only He Who has created us thinking and willing creatures to strive in the way of happiness, and that it is only He Whose all-embracing Love encompasses us. Therefore we prostrate before Him and say *subhana rabbi al-'la wa bi hamdah* - "Glory be to my Supreme Lord and Praise be to Him."

LESSON EIGHT

8. Allah - the Self-Sufficient

A Testable and Irrefutable Law:

The world we see with our eyes is a material world composed of atoms. Every object has a special place and special properties, which vary from situation to situation and according to their orientation. Distance plays a role in the action of these properties and the nearer the cause is to the effect the stronger the effect is; the further away it is, the weaker the effect, until a distance is reached where the cause has no action at all. To elucidate this point we shall give one or two examples.

- 1 - The power of a magnet is not the same at all distances: the nearer the metal is to the magnet, the stronger the power of attraction. If a nail is placed at a distance of two centimetres from a magnet, the attraction will be stronger than if it is placed at a distance of ten centimetres.
- 2 - The heat of the sun on the surface of the planet Venus is not the same as it is on the surface of the Earth. Since Venus is

nearer to the sun, it receives more heat and is therefore hotter than the Earth.

- 3 - The light of a lamp may reach a hundred metres, but within this distance the intensity is not uniform. The nearer to the lamp we are, the greater the intensity of its light.
- 4 - The voice of a public speaker may reach fifty metres, but, like the light, it is not uniform within this distance. The nearer to him we are, the louder his voice. The further away we are, the more difficult it is to hear.
- 5 - If a leader wishes to exert his influence without using agents or modern methods of communication, he cannot succeed, because his own efforts have an effect in a certain place and cannot influence those who are far from him. On the other hand, by using modern methods he can exert his influence on all people. Of course, this depends not only on his own activity, but also on the power of his supporters, and, in the same way, his power varies in relation to the distance he is from his supporters.

These examples show that all things which are situated in a certain place do not have an equal effect at all distances, the nearer we are to the centre of something, the greater its effect will be, and vice versa.

Does God Have a Centre?

Some people may possibly think that like the sun and other material things, God has a place, and that He has a seat from which He exerts His influence over His Creation. However, this is not the case, because His influence on Creation, which is His work, is the same in every place, from the depths of the oceans to the furthest parts of the universe. There is no place to which His influence does not reach in sufficiency. This influence is not such as has a centre, such that the further we go from it the weaker it

becomes, until we reach a point where there is no trace of his influence and chaos reigns. For if God had a place like other material things, His influence would vary throughout the universe. Therefore we can deduce from this that the Creator of this world has no location and no centre. Indeed, God is the Creator of "place" and it is impossible that the Creator should be dependent on what He has created.

God cannot be compared with an inventor, because, as we explained previously, an inventor is not a creator. His only genius is that he understands the properties of things and is successful in bringing together certain elements to make something which, in some cases, he is himself in need of. But God, Who is the Creator of all Creation, is not in need of what He has created.

Is God visible?

Now, since we have seen that God has no place, it is clear that he has no body either, because a body needs a place, and there can be no body which has no place. Since God has no body, he cannot be seen, because our eyes can see only bodies.

God is in need of nothing

Since God is the Creator of nourishment and other necessities of life and all existents, we must agree that he has no need of any of these things.

God, therefore, is the entire Truth Who is in need of nothing. Unlike human beings, He does not need shelter, nourishment, and the other necessities of life, rather all people and things are in need of Him. Maybe you will now ask: "If God has no body, occupies no space and cannot be seen, then what is He and how can we say that He exists?"

To understand this, take the following example. We can say that electricity is neither solid, nor liquid, nor gas. These negations

do not deny the existence of electricity, and it could never be true to say that because electricity is none of these things, therefore it does not exist. We have to admit that electricity is a fact which is not describeable by any of the afore-mentioned conditions.

Now, when we say that God, the Self-Sufficient, has neither body, nor place, nor can He be seen, nor is He in need of anything, we mean that none of these imperfections can be found in the perfect, unlimited Being of God, Who is the source of all existence. Here there can only be Perfection and Self-Sufficiency.

These properties distinguish His Being from other beings, and this is the God in Whom we must believe. Intelligence and human nature can accept such a God. No wise and honest person can deny His Existence. If we compare this with the belief that God is on a level with man, having a body, children and other such attributes and appendages, then we can see the supremacy and glory of Islam.

In fact, we might say that many materialists reject God because the true God (i.e. Allah as He is understood through Islam) has not been made known to them, and what they have considered is not the real God.

LESSON NINE

9. Allah's Omniscience

More knowledge - more benefit?

Mighty and powerful bulldozers which are used in building, and which have various important uses, bear witness to the knowledge of their designer and maker. We must agree that the inventor was very well acquainted with the laws of mechanics, the various alloys of metals and the formulae of physics. All that is made by man reflects the intelligence and knowledge of its maker. The better and more efficient the product, the wider and more complete the knowledge of its maker.

Something beyond compare:

The grandeur and mystery of Creation cannot be compared to a bulldozer or other man-made artifacts. The infinite details seen in the beings and objects of the universe indicate the unlimited knowledge of God. Let us examine the following:

1- Newton said that a study of the components of the ear and

the eye would lead us to understand that the maker of the ear was thoroughly acquainted with the laws of acoustics, and that the maker of the eye was thoroughly acquainted with the laws of light and vision; a study of the heavenly bodies, he said, would lead us to understand the Truth which governs the universe.

- 2 - The physiology of the bat is full of amazing things. In order to be able to find its way in the dark without flying into obstacles, the animal sends out ultrasonic waves in front of itself rather like radar. If there is an obstacle in the way, the sound waves reach it and are reflected back, and thus the bat can steer clear of the obstacle.
- 3 - Although insects are very small, they are very delicate and wonderful in their structure. For example, some of them, instead of eyes with one lens, have compound eyes made up of individual visual units called ommatids, every one of which has three parts: a cornea, a lens and a retina.

The number of ommatids varies between insects. Glow-worms have about 2,500, but in others there can be between 10,000 and 28,000. Because insects cannot rotate their heads, they can be permitted, by these compound eyes, to see things which happen beside them or behind them.

The above examples show that the Creator of the world undertook His Creation in His Perfect Wisdom and Infinite Knowledge.

Now we must ask if God knows all the things after He has created them. And the answer is, yes, of course He does. God knows about things, whatever their place and whenever they happen. He is aware of the shining of the furthest star in the highest heaven, of the tempestuousness of the foaming blue waves breaking on the furthest shores of the ocean, of the most mysterious hollows of the most remote valleys in the folds of the mountains, of the rustling of even one leaf in the gentle breeze, of the doleful

coo of the owl in the deepest silence of the forest, of the flicker of the glow-worm among the leaves, of the innumerable fish with their infinite colours and variety in all the waters of the world, of the birth of the fawn of the honey-coloured gazelle in the depths of the forest, of the falling of the clear, pearly dew-drop from the petal of the half-opened rosebud in the recess of the rocks. He knows the height of the mountains, the covering of the sky, the expanse of the lands and the seas and the treasures of the mines, the hidden depths of the caves and of all and everything.

How beautiful is the word of God!

سورة انعام آية ٥٩

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَازِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ، وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظِلْمَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ.

He knows what is in the land and sea; not a leaf falls, but He knows it. Not a grain in the earth's shadows, not a thing, fresh or withered, but it is in a Book Manifest.

(6:59)

The reason for God's knowledge

He who creates and gives existence is aware of His Creation and always attends to it, in the same way as we are not unaware of the forms we create in our own imaginations. As long as we wish them to exist, they remain in our minds, but when we turn our attention away from them, they cease to exist. If you imagine a person, you are necessarily aware of all his movements and his resting, and his actions are never hidden from your mind, because this imaginary person is your creation, that is, he did not exist before you thought of him, and you brought him into existence by your imagination.

God, Who created the world and all of Creation, whose existence comes from Him, oversees it all and is never unmindful of it. Of course the difference between us, who imagine various forms in our minds, and God, Who created the universe, is that we

ourselves depend on God for our existence, and our existence comes from Him. However, God is independent of all things and has given existence to all things. It is for this reason that we call only Him the real Creator.

The difference between creator and maker

The maker of the computer is not the creator and did not give it its existence; his only skill was that he gave a new form to what was already in existence. He was not aware of the computations and the information that will be stored in it in the future. Similarly, other inventors, discoverers and artisans are not informed of all the minutiae of the movements and restings of what they have made, because they have not given existence to them, they have not brought them from non-existence into existence. The raw materials were already in existence in the world. Only, by analysing and constructing, they have changed their form. Take the case of the aeroplane, which is made from raw materials in mines which were extracted, smelted and forged and made into the finished product.

Clearly, then, the makers did not create what they made; they only changed the form of the materials. For this reason they are not permanently aware of their artifacts, and one cannot, therefore, properly call them creators. If, in some cases they have to be called creators, they have only been called so figuratively, not literally.

But God, Who has given existence to all things, is always aware and knowledgeable of their actions, because He is the real and true Creator. The Holy Qur'an says: *Shall He not know who created?* (67:14)

Now we have understood that we ourselves and all the creatures of this world are not separated from the glorified presence of God. Wherever we are, and to whatever land we travel, in the depths of the oceans, in the outer reaches of space, in the narrow

places of the valleys, we are not hidden from Him. He sees the smallest of our good or bad deeds, and rewards and punishes accordingly.

Can someone who has such a God and believes in Him ever fall prey to sin?

10. The Unique in Power and Strength

The wide and mysterious universe

A little reflection on the creation of each of the objects of existence will reveal to our minds the unique power of the Creator. As examples, consider the following:

- 1 - The defence system of the body has for a long time attracted the attention of physiologists. The body's defence system is a complicated one consisting of the lymph glands, the thymus, the spleen, the liver and the bone marrow. The cells of these parts of the body, despite the difference in their structure, follow a common aim, viz. defending the body against foreign elements such as microbes and poisons. In this task, the white blood-cells, found in their greatest concentration in the lymph glands, play a vital role. When a foreign body enters the organism, the white blood-cells, which are about 7 to 30 microns in diameter, rush immediately to the site of the invasion, and, in various ways, prevent an increase in the danger.

To help these cells the body follows different ways in the fight against foreign elements, and to combat each foreign substance it manufactures antibodies. The antibodies made in the body are of different sorts. Some of them are for the destroying of microbes and their elimination, some of them neutralise animal, insect and chemical poisons. Some stop the activity of microbes, and others separate out the poisonous substances in microbes and other noxious bodies. Yet another kind comes into action when blood from an incompatible blood-group enters the body.

The point is that the body can manufacture suitable antibodies against all kinds of foreign substances, even those which are as yet unknown to modern science.

- 2 - The Director of the Leon Observatory on Mount Palomar in Arizona has said:

"As long as the telescope of this observatory had not been invented, the range of the visible universe was not more than five hundred light years, but this telescope has extended this range to one thousand million light years. As a result, millions of new galaxies have been found, and some of these are a thousand million light years from us. But beyond this distance there is a great, dark, fearful expanse in which nothing can be seen. That is to say that no light comes from it which leaves its traces on the photographic plates of the telescope. But, without doubt, there are hundreds of millions of galaxies, by the force of whose gravity the universe is held together.

"The whole of this immense visible universe which contains a hundred thousand million galaxies is nothing but a small and insignificant speck in a still more immense universe, and I am not sure that we shall not find beyond that yet another universe."

Ali ibn Abu Talib, the first Imam, said: "We are not able to fathom the depths of Your Greatness, only we know that You are Living and Everlasting, that neither slumber nor sleep take hold of You.

"No sight can reach You, and no eye can see You, but You see the eyes, and reckon the timespan of everything. The heads and feet of man are in Your hold.

"What is it that we see of Your Creation? What is the Power that causes us to wonder? What can we describe of Your Ruling? Those parts which are hidden from us, which our eyes cannot reach, which our minds cannot comprehend, which are covered by curtains of concealment, are more magnificent."

Indeed, the unique Power of Allah has brought everything into existence, and nothing falls outside the area of His Command. The world exists by the Will of Allah, and it will continue to exist as long as He desires. The stars, the moon, the sun and the other heavenly bodies move round by His Power, and the amazing order of the universe is entirely in His hands. He is able to change it to a new order whenever He wishes. It is not the case that He created the world and then abandoned it, the rotation, growth, pulsation, existence and sustenance of everything is from His Will. Nothing can happen without His Willing, neither can anything remain. So, the One Who brings things into existence, Who sustains them and governs them, is Allah.

An order superior to the natural one

It is true that Allah has laid down a natural order for this universe, according to which it is possible to anticipate the future. But in certain circumstances, Allah manifests His wide-ranging Power, and by His Will creates a superior order which can dominate the existing order. Instances of this superior order can be seen from history and in everyday life.

In these cases we see how the hand of Allah is at work in the

universe; at times He raises those who have fallen, and at other times He causes those who are elevated to be cast down.

It is for this reason that those who have a strong faith in a powerful God do not become disappointed in life. In whatever situation they find themselves, in the darkness of despair, the flame of hope is alight, and they are confident that they will find deliverance through the help of God.

We have all read or heard the story of Moses and Pharaoh. Pharaoh was unequalled in cruelty. He killed the sons of Israel so that the promised one of the children of Israel who, he had heard, would come to destroy his throne and crown would not come to life. He thought that by these contrivances, by persistence and through the natural order he could counteract the Power of God. But his efforts were in vain. At last the promised one was born.

The mother of the child was inspired to put him in a box and to cast him onto the waters of the Nile. The river carried him down to the palace of Pharaoh, and the eye's of Pharaoh's wife caught sight of the box, and she took it out of the water. When she saw the infant in it, she asked Pharaoh to take the child as their own son, and Pharaoh agreed. The powerful hand of God kept the child of whom Pharaoh was so afraid in his very lap, till he grew up, became strong and brought down the crown of Pharaoh.

Similarly, the Power of God caused the vain efforts and devices of the brothers of Yusuf to come to nothing. Yusuf fell down into the well, but he was raised to a high position in the land of Egypt.

The unbelievers of Mecca joined hands to do away with the Prophet of Islam. They began to make trouble for the Muslims, and even applied economic sanctions against the Prophet and his followers for several years in the valley of the mountains of Abu Talib. Eventually they decided to murder the Prophet, thinking

that by such subterfuges they could achieve something. But the Will and Power of God preserved the Prophet, and He caused Islam to prosper day by day, and brought down the Quraish and the disbelievers.

These and other examples lead us to the truth that the order of this world is in the hands of God, and that when it is according to His Wish, He can cause a new order to rule over the normally existing order.

Therefore our minds and our consciences demand that we humble ourselves before this Great and Beneficent Power, act in all obedience and avoid opposing our Creator. The powerful hand of God has moved us through various stages and has brought us to our present stage of intelligence and ability. Is it right that we should forget Him?

One who knows God, acknowledging that he has such a Wise and Powerful helper, will not fear any difficulty. The most complex and difficult problems can be solved by him, and consequently he will try to reach his aim with unflinching determinism arising from his faith in God, He will not be afraid of any obstacles, for he sees himself in the shade of a great Power which will enable him to overcome all difficulties.

Belief in God and His Unique Power enabled the Prophet to fight large groups single-handed, to stand firm against difficult circumstances, so that he could build the structure of tawhid and a programme for life. In this way he was able to establish humanity and virtue.

A man whose heart is overflowing with faith in the Creator of the world, and is filled with love for the Truth will never feel alone, disappointed or without hope, and the light of God will always illuminate the corners of his heart. Obviously, such a man will make himself ready for a better and more virtuous life with unbounded enthusiasm.

11. Allah the Unique

From the first day that man set foot on this earth, he has always wanted to know the cause and the source of Creation, and this springs from his pure nature which seeks the original cause and source so as to worship it.

When someone who lives far from the rush of society and the habits of his cultural environment looks about himself for the first time, he notices the earth and the sky, day and night, the sun and the moon, their rising and setting, the wind and the rain, the succession of the seasons, the bearing forth of fruit from plants and trees, the various species of animals, their movement, growth, feeding, reproduction, and their being equipped for what they require in life.

He turns to himself, and sees his hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, teeth and the other parts of his body, each of which has its own task. All of them pursue the one aim, namely to live.

He then goes on to think about the relationship between each

of these things, and he realises that there is a kind of connection and harmony between all of them, in such a way that all of them make one harmonious unit over which one order rules. In this unique harmonious order, the following particularities are to be remarked:

- 1 - It must have a founder and a creator, because this order and harmony cannot be the result of an aimless accident.
- 2 - There is an aim in the whole of creation and every part of it, and in the midst of it in man, and it is not created for amusement.
- 3 - The Creator of this universe is powerful and great, worthy of adoration, and so He must be given complete respect and be worshipped.
- 4 - This Great Creator is aware and comprehends the whole of the universe and what happens in it, and within it the actions of man.

Thus man is not in need of an intermediary to worship Him; it must be a direct activity between man and God; and to worship such things as angels, stars, idols, saints and holy men as intermediaries is not good or lawful.

Why man leaves the worship of One God

What was mentioned above concerned the propensity of the nature of a right-minded person whose thinking is not tainted with the false habits of his environment and from copying bad family influences; this is what we meant when we said that man's propensity was towards the worship of One God. There are different causes for an unaware person to leave his own nature and to wander in the way of unbelief, some of which shall be mentioned here.

- 1 - Some idol worshippers have said that because God is beyond our understanding and comprehension and does not exist in

any particular place that we can turn towards and worship in that direction, we worship persons who have been respected and honoured by Him, so that they may be pleased with us become intermediaries between us and Him and bring us nearer to Him.

They have ignored the fact that although God has no direction, He encompasses everything and is Omni-present. Therefore, wherever we turn, there is God, and we can speak with Him without the need for any intermediary.

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيُّمَا تُلُوْا فَنَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ.

"Wherever you turn, there is the face of Allah." (2;15)

- 2 - Again, sometimes after the death of one of the elders of a tribe who had been respected and honoured by the members of that tribe, they made him into a statue as a memorial, and honoured this, turning towards it at the time of worshipping God. However, soon they stopped remembering God, and their honouring of the statue turned into worship of it, and then the making and worshipping of statues became widespread. Thus we read in history that the descendants of Cain made a statue in memory of their great father figure called Wadd, but gradually, in paying respect to the statue, they prostrated themselves in front of it and worshipped it.
- 3 - Man sometimes respected other being for the benefit they had for him, and he counted them among the manifestations of God. This respect gradually turned into worship. Worship of fire among the ancient Persians and of the sun among the Aryans of ancient India was in this category. This was the origin of the appearance of the belief in many gods and of idol-worshipping, and because the generations who came afterwards did not think carefully about the ideas and beliefs of their ancestors, they fell into polytheism and were lost.

The confrontation between true religion and polytheism

True religion has always strived to turn people away from the misleading ways of polytheism towards the path of *tawhid*, the belief in One God. The Qur'an mentions and praises the endless fight of the great messengers to eradicate polytheism and to guide people to One God.

For example, about Ibrahim it says that he said to the people of his land:

"What are these statues that you worship?"

"We follow the same way as our forefathers did," they replied.

"You and your forefathers," he said, "have clearly gone wrong." And Ibrahim decided to make these ignorant people aware through word and example.

One day he entered the house of the idols and struck them down with an axe. When people understood that he had done this, they became very angry, and demanded:

"Was it you who did this to our gods?"

Ibrahim gave them an answer through which they might understand the vanity of their beliefs and thinking, and told them to ask their idols themselves.

The people thought much about this, and after considering his answer they answered shamefully:

"You know idols do not speak."

"Why then," said Ibrahim, "do you worship these weak beings who have not the strength to defend themselves. Why is your thinking so distorted?"*

These great guides, the Messengers, always reminded men that they could establish a relationship between themselves and God at any time and in any place without the need of an intermediary, and they reminded men that in worshipping God they must not

* See CXXI, v, 51-70; SXXXXVII, v. 82-98.

look towards anything or anybody, for any reason, and that their worship must be only for God. If in their worship there is the least attention to anything other than God, then that worship would be for the two - God and the other - and this is unacceptable to God.

The consequences of tawhid

One who knows that God is One and believes that He is Aware of everything and has Power to do everything, and believes that all creatures are formed and made by Him, will, because of this, never give allegiance to other things. The greatest power, the most abundant wealth, will never enslave him and make him bow down for anything. Such a person will submit only to God and will prostrate only in front of His Glory.

The ancient Iranians believed that their autocratic and arrogant kings were manifestations of God, and they submitted to their monarchs without asking for any reason. They had no social or individual freedom. When the emissary of the Arabs met the Iranian general at the time of the war between the Muslim Arabs and the Iranians (16 A.H.), he sat on the ground without ceremony and ignored the luxurious surroundings of Iranian life. When the general inquired after the intentions of the Muslims, the emissary replied:

"Allah has raised us up to lead people away from the worship of the servants of Allah towards the worship of Allah Himself, and to invite them from the narrow confines of the world towards the expanses of freedom, from the tyranny of other religions to the justice of Islam."*

In the shadow of *tawhid* there is no alternative for the servants of God but to follow the Divine Law which is founded on Wisdom and Justice. It is clear that following the Divine Law will

* Tabari in his Tarikh, vol. 5, p. 2269-71.

cause real justice to increase, and any kind of tyranny and aggression to come to nothing.

On the other hand, idolators, and those who do not believe in One God can never create real justice among themselves, because every tribe or group has its own god, which is different from the others, and reliance on this god encourages it to be aggressive towards other groups or tribes. In this way real justice is of no avail, and ignorance, disunity and tyranny in word and in deed take its place.

In conclusion, belief in One God - in the true meaning of the phrase - makes man free, pure and unified and gives him peace of mind. He will not be subjected to oppression, tyranny and discord.

Thus we can understand the real sense of the phrase:

"Say, there is no god but Allah, and you will prosper."

12. Dualism and Monotheism

Good and Evil

Dualists were those who believed that creation is divided into two - good and evil. According to this they believed in two sources of creation for the universe and said that the good things were made by Yazdān and the evil things by Ahriman. Their purpose in this belief was to make God free from imperfection, insufficiency and evil. However, they were unaware that in this belief they were guilty of the polytheism mentioned in the previous chapter. Moreover, they were mistaken in dividing creation into two compartments - good and evil - because, if the entire order of things is examined, it becomes clear that there is no evil in the world at all, because everything in its place is goodness. They also believed that the existence of what they called evil was distinct from the existence of what they called good, and thereby they came to the conclusion that the problem could be solved by positing two sources for the existence of the universe - a good

source for the good things and a bad source for the bad things. In fact, if we are more careful, we shall understand that these two aspects cannot be separated from each other. For example, rain is good because it is useful for agriculture, but some people may think that rain is bad because it ruins houses made of mud and straw in which people live in some parts of the world.

Clearly, the dualists' way cannot resolve the difficulty they raised, because the evil of rain is not divorced from its benefit. In fact there are not two existents - one good (from God), and the other bad (from another source). In fact, the solution can be found in the Qur'an and hadith and can be confirmed through the use of our intellect, and this solution comes through considering those things whose goodness cannot be perceived at a glance, such as thirst, hunger, the problems of life, mental difficulties, extreme cold and heat, poisonous animals, etc. Then we will see that in the complete order of things, all is necessary and good.

For further consideration we shall examine the following:

The avoidance of danger:

The human body is composed of flesh and bones, which are subject to attack. Fire alone can reduce the body to ash in a short time, and the same body has no resistance to cuts and beatings - one stroke, if powerful enough, can damage it severely.

So that man might be safe from great dangers, God has designed several agents.

- 1 - Thirst and hunger may, from a short-sighted point of view, appear not to be a very good thing, but, in fact, they play an important role in the economy of the human body. These feelings ensure the life of thousands of millions of cells. If man were bereft of these sensations, the activity of the cells of his body would become depressed in a short time, and he would be in danger of death and, indeed, would eventually die.

- 2 - The sensation of pain and the sensitivity of the nerves is one of the gifts of creation. In fact, the nerves of man form a very complex network of communication. With the least feeling of discomfort, they sound a bell of warning, and excite man so that he will avoid or fight the danger. If it were not for the sensation of pain, sick persons would not go for treatment. If the nerves did not feel discomfort, or ignored it, the skin and the flesh could be destroyed by fire and turned into ashes; or, if there were an encounter with something sharp or hard, the bones could be damaged.

Therefore; if we find hardship in these sensations, we should understand that they serve as a red warning lamp, and it is for this reason that man should give attention to the continuation of his existence and his safety, so that he may seek the path of health and continue his life.

Difficulties and experience.

Scientists say that the world of nature is the world of growth and perfection, and that these phenomena are connected with discomforts and difficulties, because hardship and difficulties give experience to the spirit and strengthen the substance of man. It is these discomforts that educate the spirit of man, for it is in the fire of difficulties that man is tried and strengthened and his soul matured. Man's perfection must be achieved through the breaking of his complacency, so that he may find a way through from his inner experience to the outside world.

Great men are those who have met with many ups and downs in their lives and experienced many trials and tribulations. As long as sandal-wood is not burnt it cannot release its fragrance.

Napoleon said that hardships and privations awaken and lend experience to man's intelligence. Difficulties and the bitterness of life are factors that awaken man's dormant potential. Through them man can increase his achievements in the material, spiritual and intellectual domains.

The reason that most great men are seen to come from poor circumstances is that the poor have to fight against the difficulties of life and this causes them to strengthen their intelligence.

The history of science and civilisation shows that progress in these fields is accompanied by difficulties and hardships. Such discomforts lead us to search for a solution, and then move us to find a more favourable situation. Therefore, those who are ignorant of the true reason why we experience hardships and discomforts and thereby consider them to be evil are mistaken.

Criteria for good and evil

The error of the ancient Iranians who considered extremes of heat and cold and poisonous animals to be evil lay in their taking their own physical environment as the criterion of good and bad for all the things of this world. The fact remains that benefit and harm cannot be the criterion for the good and the evil in things; rather, we must see what role everything plays in the total system of creation.

This same heat and cold, which, according to their shortsightedness and their erroneous assumptions, are bad, are, on the contrary, in the view of the scholar of natural sciences who looks at the world as a unit really a benefit, and their existence is a necessity for the growth of plants, animals and men.

Those who use their own benefit and disadvantage as the criteria for good and evil in the world can be compared with the ant who might consider that man is of no use except to squash ants under his foot, or that aeroplanes and cars, having no use for him, were therefore totally useless and harmful.

If ants think this about man and his inventions, are they correct? Where does their error lie? Is it not because they have considered only their own situation and what is connected with themselves as the measure of good and evil?

Again, we may make a comparison with those who are new to tropical coasts and consider the excessive humidity which causes them to sweat and suffer the resultant discomforts to be only a negative phenomenon preventing people from continuing their normal lives. Is this judgement correct?

We know, in fact, that water-vapour rises up with a wind that comes from the sea-coast and brings water to dry and hot areas remote from the sea, thus bringing new life to thirsty trees and moderating the intense heat, so as to enable millions of people to live in those areas.

The mistake in this way of thinking is that those who were on the coast considered only their own situation and ignored the arrangement of existence as a whole. Regarding what we have said, we reach the conclusion that one must not assume from a cursory glance that things are useless, but that one must try to understand the effects of creation as a part of one complete system, not only in the present but also connected with the past and the future. Only then can one be in a position to judge.

13. The Just God

From previous lessons we have read and learned that:

- 1) Creation and its marvellous harmony is a veritable witness to the existence of an Omnipotent and Omniscient God.
- 2) We cannot encompass with out finite minds and wisdom the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God, because what we understand from the unique power and knowledge of God in the world of creation is only a small part of the great and magnificent totality of His creations, each one of which is evidence for His unlimited Power and infinite Wisdom.
- 3) Unlike the continual need of all creation, God is the Absolutely Needless, and He stands in need of nothing.
- 4) Because God has boundless love, He is continually bestowing His favours on his servants.

سورة غافر آية ٦٤

اللَّهُ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ

صُورَتَكُمْ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ.

Allah is He Who made the earth a resting-place for you and the heaven a canopy, and He formed you, then made goodly your forms, and He provided you with goodly things; that is Allah, your Lord; blessed then is Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. (S.40, v.64)

Now we may ask if it is possible for God, Who bestows all these favours on his servants, to be unjust? We know that injustice stems from ignorance, weakness, arrogance or similar causes, none of which can exist in His Pure Existence. If we seek to find the cause for injustice, we may find the following reasons.

- 1 - Fear of failure. When the director of a factory sees that his profits are threatened by the establishment of another factory, and he fears possible bankruptcy, he will do anything against his rival, unless he is a man of active conscience and strong faith.
- 2 - Privation of rights. Sometimes, when after much struggling someone cannot get what are his rights from an unjust person, he is led to extremes, and begins to act with all kinds of injurious acts to bring down that person. The reaction to being deprived of ones rights becomes a pretext for violence and crime in some people. When they find themselves powerful after their position of subjugation, they do what they want, and derive pleasure from killing and burning weak and helpless people. The groans of these people are like music to their ears, but a cause of sadness for us.
- 3 - Ignorance. Laws which are drawn up by human minds sometimes cause much oppression and injustice, because man's

knowledge is finite and limited and mixed with ignorance and misconceptions. Some of the great injustice against black people can be attributed to this cause. Some people, convinced of their own superiority, and thinking that virtue and greatness depend on the colour of one's skin, ignored the rights of the black people. However, we know that the criterion for superiority and virtuousness is knowledge and humanitarianism, and in this matter black and white are the same.

These and similar results of weakness and ignorance are impossible for God, because He has unlimited knowledge and Power and is in need of nothing whose loss could cause Him to be afraid. So He is incapable of any injustice.

This is a very clear and obvious matter. Those who doubt this have not considered what we have explained, or else they do not understand what justice is.

WHAT IS JUSTICE

Justice is that everybody's rights should be respected that no distinction should be made between people for no reason. For example, in a school examination, all those who have a certain mark can move up to the next grade. Thus, the headmaster cannot make any distinction among the students and allow some of them to proceed to the next class while depriving others of this right while their marks are the same, because creating such a distinction among students who have the same right of entry into the higher class constitutes an injustice.

But in a situation where the question of rights does not arise, and only for the goodness of the act is something given to someone, discrimination between individuals cannot be counted as injustice. For instance, if someone wishes to invite some deprived persons to a meal, and chooses only some of these unfortunates, or makes a distinction between them in inviting them, his action

does not constitute injustice, because here there are no rights which are being violated. What is given to them is only given in order to help them and out of a sense of doing good.

The observance of equality and justice is necessary when all have the same right, but where no rights exist, there can be no discussion of equality and justice, and discrimination between two individuals cannot be called injustice.

Thus, those who find difficulty in understanding the creation of things, and ask why God has not created all people equal and without distinction, and why He does not behave towards everyone with equal measure, and imagine that God's Justice has been proved to non-existent and completely imaginary have not understood the real meaning of Justice. For the beings of the world have no right to claim of God that His distinguishing constitutes injustice. If God does not create anyone at all, or if He distinguishes between beings, nobody's rights have been violated so that we can say that there is injustice.

However, since God is Knowing and Wise, and does nothing without a good purpose, we can ask what the reason for these distinctions among created things is. Are they unnecessary in the order of things? These questions will be answered in the following lessons.

14. The Vicissitudes in the Life of Man

The Reason for Variation in the World of Creation.

Certainly you will have heard of the space-craft "Apollo", a perfect example of the marvellous progress man has made in science and technology. It took man above the clouds, beyond the atmosphere, and allowed him to set his feet on the surface of the moon, thus opening the door to a world hitherto unknown to him.

Looking at the design of this space-craft, we see a huge mass of nuts and bolts, large and small, and various delicate and complex instruments; the command module, the main craft, the lunar landing module, landing and take-off equipment, fuel tanks, telecommunication and navigational apparatus, power sources, safety devices and sufficient stores of food, water and other necessities. Each of these parts has its own role. Obviously, if it were not for these various parts, Apollo would never have come into existence, and it would not have been able to overcome

the difficulties facing man on his way to the moon.

This example shows us that in a whole whose parts are connected with each other and in harmony, variety cannot be avoided.

Now let us look at the world of existence, to discover that diversity here is neither pointless nor without reason. Without doubt, the beauty and complexity of this world is due to the variety of its parts, and we cannot call this diversity meaningless or unjust.

In the last lesson we showed that injustice exists where all have the same right to use something equally, but distinction is made between some and others. However, the parts of the world had no existence before they were created, and so they had no pre-existent rights which would enable us to say that the existence of distinctions between them constitutes an injustice. In fact, the world of creation owes its existence to variety, and if there had not been any variety there would not have been any universe, there would have been just one big uniformity. It was this variety that brought into existence atoms, solar systems, galaxies, trees, plants and animals.

Turning now towards variety in human life, we see that diversity in man is not an exception to this general principle of variety. If we look at diversity in human ability, intelligence and memory and ask why they are not the same in all humans, we must ask before this why plants and minerals do not have these superior faculties. Then we can see that neither of these questions can be properly discussed, because such questions can only arise when rights are being trampled on. In this case, neither of these two conditions existed prior to creation that a distinction between them should be seen as an injustice.

Another point to notice is that God demands from everyone according to his ability and responsibility, and no-one is asked to

do more than his bodily and mental powers enable him. This is justice itself.

For example, if a headmaster gives the examination of the most advanced class to one of the lower classes this is an injustice. However, if he gives the easy questions to the lower class and the difficult questions to the advanced class, then no-one can complain that there had been an injustice. Instead, he would be regarded as just by any meaning of the word.

Therefore, if all existent things are regarded from the same point of view, and their responsibilities were all the same, to make a distinction as regards their creation would be an injustice. But we know that responsibilities are proportional to the individual's capabilities, and thus there is no injustice. For example, if a small screw in a machine has to do the same work as the largest cog, there would be injustice; but if each part must work according to its design and possibilities, then there is no injustice.

Moreover, we believe that God is Wise and that He does nothing for no reason or for no good purpose, and we believe that the world has a special design so that no speck can come into existence without reckoning or design, as we explained in detail previously when we showed how nothing is without its place and its use. If, in some cases, something appears useless or without a function, it is in fact because of the limited nature of our minds. Not knowing something does not mean it does not exist.

We can conclude from this that all the variations in things have some good purpose, and that they are all perfectly useful and necessary in the system of the universe, although we may not be able to understand this by our restricted thinking.

It may be objected that all individuals may have the same characteristics, talents and abilities, but that because of the needs of society they are forced to divide their labour among themselves. The answer to this is that if this were the case, those who seek an easy life would choose the easier occupations, and the difficult

and laborious occupations and menial tasks would be left with no-one to do them; for no-one would be ready to do them, since they all think the same way.

The spirit of man must pass through various states in order to obtain moral perfection. Gradually, calmly and without haste, through facing difficulties and comforts, tasting the bitter and the sweet, his spirit becomes more perfect.

It is these ups and downs that teaches man to acquire patience; sometimes he is the king of the castle, and sometimes he is thrown into the dungeons. Happy is the one who uses whatever situation he finds himself in to perfect his soul. If he is well-off, he can follow the way of perfection by helping the poor and the orphans, thus acquiring a great, humanitarian spirit, although he could be using his riches for easy living and luxury without putting them to any spiritual use.

Similarly, if he is poor, instead of encroaching upon other people's property and rights, he can be contented with his lot, be patient and cultivate self-respect, thus rolling away the stone of life's difficulties with the hand of activity and patience. Thus all the vicissitudes of life are ways to perfection, and we must follow this way, whether the passage is narrow or wide.

Our meaning is not that we should will upon ourselves difficulties and sufferings. It is clear that this would be very difficult, because we would not be using the natural abilities that God had bestowed upon us. What we mean is that, if we try our best, but do not reach our objective, or fall from prosperity to hardship, we should not consider ourselves to be unfortunate. Rather, we should regard the vicissitudes, ease and difficulty, as new fields for the building of our souls and the use of our minds in resistance and struggle against these difficulties. In this way we can derive the greatest benefits for our spiritual strength. One who acts thus does not find in life anything against the principles of justice and purpose, and everywhere he turns he finds victory

and prosperity. In this respect, the Qur'an says:

سورة انعام آية ١٦٥
رَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَبْلُوكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ

He has raised some of you in rank above others, that He may try you in what he has given you. (S.VI, v. 165)

The meaning of 'that he may try you' here is that we should use to our benefit the present moment, and so, whatever situation happens to man, it is for his spiritual development, and this is the Grace and Justice of God.

This is the philosophy of differences and vicissitudes which can never be in contradiction to Justice. If we fail to understand some of the world's events we should not consider them to be unjust and wrong, because the system of creation is built firmly by the Powerful hand of the One with Whom there can be no injustice, and all that He demands from us is through His Love.

This is a fact that we have clearly observed many times in the things which have happened to us and to others. Sometimes we consider something to be bad, but after a while we realise that not only was it without harm, but that it was also positively beneficial. The Qur'an says:

سورة بقره آية ٢١٦
وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ.

Yet it may happen that you will hate a thing which is better for you; and it may happen that you will love a thing which is worse for you; Allah knows, and you know not.

(S.II, v. 216)

LESSON FIFTEEN

15. Prophets and Human Guidance

What is man created for?

Did God create man as part of the chain of reproduction, to be a cog in a machine, and to be counted only as an automaton? Was man created only for his own enjoyment? Was he created only to amass as much wealth as possible through any means, direct or devious, so as to satisfy his material wants? Is there no greater idea behind His creation?

A large number of people regard only man's material aspect and neglect the other side of the coin, because they have not understood the profundity of the nature of man, or because they have not correctly evaluated it. Men of great understanding have ascribed three dimensions to man:

1. Individual material life.
2. Social life.
3. The world of the spirit and insight.

Those who give importance only to the first dimension, and believe in absolute freedom for man, even though it be harmful for him, overlook the profound character of man and they have forgotten the other two important dimensions. Those who land importance to the first and second dimensions, but neglect the third, only succeed in creating an environment which lacks spiritual and moral values.

Arnold Toynbee, the great British historian, in a long interview with the American magazine, 'Life', said that man had submitted himself to materialism, and that from that point of view we do not lack anything. However, he said, we have become bankrupt on the spiritual side of things. However, I think there is still time, he continued, to leave this incorrect view of things and return to religion.

So, a serious investigator goes further than the first two dimensions, and looks at and studies man and the aim of creation from all three dimensions. Because the reality of man is thus, and man cannot be known in himself in any other way than this. Moreover, the third dimension gives man the power to evaluate his entrances and exits on the stage of personal and social life. This is the correct way of living. Man must reach his perfection by making his way through various dimensions, and he must find this way, for he is created for this purpose.

The question now arises of whether one's conscience can lead one through these dimensions. Let us begin to analyse this problem with a view to finding an answer.

Conscience.

Some psychologists deny the existence of conscience. They believe that what is called conscience is really only the result of

early childhood training. On the other hand, many scholars, like Rousseau, believe that there is a power hidden in the depths of man's nature which can distinguish good from bad. Children who are not under the influence of an environment which trains them in a certain way, whose conscience has not been perverted, can understand good and bad, basically and instinctively. (See Rousseau's *Emile*, especially Book IV)

We can agree that a part of good and evil is according to custom: for example, dress, food and such things which may be good at one time and place and bad in others. But the intelligent and reasonable are governed by thinking and cannot accept that all goods and evil are like this, because trust, fulfilment of obligation, help for the poor and the weak, work for humanity, brotherhood, equality and the such like have deep roots in the nature of man. On the other hand deception, injustice, breaking agreements, selfishness and the such like have always and in all places been condemned. One cannot, therefore, say that they came to be regarded as instinctively bad.

One must therefore accept the existence of conscience, but with the following necessary condition: that conscience, by itself, cannot guide man completely - it needs training. It must, like minerals in the grounds, be extracted and refined. Otherwise, it may be perverted under the influence of a corrupt environment, with the result that these psychologists cannot recognise it and therefore deny its existence. This is an indication that man needs infallible prophets.

Human ideologies.

From early times up to now, man has been putting forward many ideas for the improvement of society and the individuals who it comprises. But because man is not completely aware of the secrets of spiritual and material well-being, and his ignorance is

very great, he has never been able to put forward any ideas which have been able to satisfy the full requirements of human nature.

Dr. Burrows said some years ago that at Princeton he heard Einstein say that science tells us what is there, but religion tells us what should be there, and Victor Hugo said that as much as man progresses, his need for religion becomes greater.

Another difficulty with such ideologies is that whatever intelligence tells us, however right it may be, no guarantee can be made that we will follow its ideas. Many people know through their intelligence and knowledge that gambling, alcohol, stealing and crime are not good, but nevertheless they fall victims to such practices.

Today we see that the United Nations, with over 130 members from countries all over the world, is a weak body whose resolutions generally remain merely in their minutes and only on paper. This is because intelligence and knowledge are no guarantee for action.

But the Divine scheme, because it comes from an unlimited source of knowledge, can have no room for error, and because it issues forth from the immaculate hearts of the prophets, it has influence on mankind. Moreover, the reward and punishment for not carrying out His instructions causes man to implement this scheme. Alone, intelligence and thinking is not enough; a confirmation must be found through Divine assistance. These faculties are only fields for training through the Divine discipline of the messengers so that man may reach felicity without being diverted.

Imam Ali (A.S.), in the first sermon in *Nahj al-Balaghah* explains the reason for the sending of messengers thus:

Then Allah sent His messengers and the series of His prophets to them (mankind) to make them fulfil the pledges of His creation, to recall to them His bounties, to exhort them by

preaching, to unveil before them the hidden virtues of wisdom and show them the signs of His Omnipotence.

However, supposing that man has a correct ideology, do the dictators and those who wish to enforce their own ideas allow us to distinguish the true from the false? Don't they rather try to cover the true face of ideologies? In this way people, through ignorance of correct beliefs, do not rise up against oppression and are successfully deceived. However, a law that comes from God However, a law that comes from God can be made known to all through the miracles and signs of truth which God gives to His messengers, and people can understand its truthfulness and believe in it, and will then be unable to find any excuse for disobedience.

The necessity for the sending of messengers.

a) The personal, social and spiritual perfection of man is one of the aims of creation.

b) Conscience alone is not enough for the true perfection of man.

c) Human ideologies cannot completely satisfy all the demands of man's nature, and there is no guarantee for their implementation.

d) Prophets have been sent and their prophethoods proved through miracles so that man distinguish the truth and no-one can excuse his disobedience by saying that he could not find the truth.

Through these four points, we discover that the prophets are necessary for the perfection of man, and that they were sent to inform man of what he requires in the way of perfection, so that they may tread the path of happiness. One cannot imagine that the Wise God could leave man without instructions, laws and obligations, or that He could leave them in the hands of tyrants, so

that they might become the victims of human desires and be prevented from reaching perfection.

Ibn Sina wrote in '*ash-Shifa*':

More necessary for the continued existence of man and his essential perfection than even the growth of eye-lashes and eyebrows and the concavity of the soles of the feet is the sending of prophets by Allah.

Thus, in arriving to the aim of creation and to spiritual and material perfection, God must have sent some people as messengers, as indeed we see that he has, so that they might guide people by the radiant torch of revelation.

A tradition is related by Hisham ibn al-Hakam that:

Imam Ja'far as-Şâdiq, in answering an atheist who had enquired about the need for the sending of prophets, said: "When we have shown that there is a Creator Who fashioned us and Who is above us and all of His creation, and that this Creator is Wise and Elevated in the sense that He did not allow His creatures to see or touch Him, so that He might be together with them, and they might be together with Him, and that He might argue with them and they might argue with Him, then it becomes clear that He has emissaries in His creation so that they can speak from His Presence to His creatures and servants, and they might guide them to their advantage and benefit and to that in which is their continued existence and in the absence of which is their extinction. So it has become evident that there are some who command and prohibit on behalf of the Wise, the Knowing to His creation, and who speak from His Glorified Presence, and these are the prophets, and His chosen from among creation wise and trained through wisdom, and raised in it. They are apart from man in all their conditions - in spite of sharing with him in his form and fashioning - they are sustained in wisdom by the Wise,

the Knowing. Then the above is evident in every epoch and era in which the messengers and prophets brought evidence and proofs so that the earth of Allah might not be deprived of a witness with whom there is a sign which refers to His Truthfulness and Righteousness."

(*Uşûl al-Kāfi*, Kitab al-Hujjah)

Of course, Divine plans are not conceived on only one level. Rather they guide us from all directions. Worship, government, justice, economy, power, individual and social duties, and also the general laws which govern individual problems. All of these are the aims of religions and they enable man to perfect himself in all the three dimensions of his nature.

Again Divine plans do not restrict themselves to one class of society, but encompass all levels of society and uphold the rights of all people, so those who think that religion was invented by the ruling or wealthy class, and that it was invented in feudal and capitalist societies to serve the purposes of these societies are clearly wrong, because these people have not paid proper attention to the foundations of religion.

In addition to this, history bears witness that the upper and wealthy classes did not participate in the movements led by the prophets, and Divine religions always opposed the oppression and transgressions of feudalists and capitalists.

Leaders, scholars, the simple and the poor, and others, all come to religion because only by its clear objectives can they satisfy the demands of their natures and emotions, and they realise that only religion can guide them to real perfection. This is the only reason why man turns to religion.

Fortunately, today, educated people are more aware of the value of religion, and they believe that real peace and perfection can only be had in the shade of religion and belief in God.

The necessity for miracles.

After man has realised that he needs the guidance of prophets in order to reach an all-embracing happiness, and that he can only construct the glorious edifice of perfection through their instructions, he naturally feels affection for those teachers who work for his benefit and sacrifice their sinless souls for his advantage. Thus belief comes to reach such a degree that people do not spare themselves any hardship in order to advance the aims of the prophets, and they prefer the demands of the prophets to the demands of their own souls.

But this deep-rooted and comprehensive influence and importance of the prophets, and the love and belief of people in them cause some ambitious persons to take advantage of them, seeking to become influential and obtain their desires by claiming prophethood.

So, if someone claims prophethood and people gather round him, one cannot believe in him without some investigation. For it is possible that he falsely proclaims prophethood, as many people have done up to the present day and thus collects a following. In order to find out if someone is a genuine prophet, this latter must bring some evidence with him so that people can be sure of him and accept his claim. Thus the real prophets can be distinguished from the false. This evidence that distinguishes the true prophets from the false is known as miracles, and God gave miracles to His prophets and messengers so that people could be saved from mistakes and the dangers of those who seek to deceive them, and so that the face of truth may never be hidden from people. So far we have seen that messengers must bring miracles so that people can know that they bear a message from God, and that what they say is true, and so that they may be completely obedient to them and follow their teachings with faith and conviction.

What are miracles?

Miracles (*mu'jizah*) are what the prophets did according to the Will of God in order to affirm the prophethood they claimed, and which others are unable to copy.

Miracles are only a proof of prophethood.

A group of those who sought excuses for their lack of faith demanded various things as miracles, not through a desire to have the prophethood confirmed, but in order to oppose the prophets. They even asked for things that were logically impossible. However, because the prophets brought enough miracles they did not accede to these demands and told these people that the position of a prophet is to guide, to bring good tidings and to warn. This is why miracles are according to the Will of God and in situations where they are necessary, as is mentioned in the Qur'an with reference to such people:

سورة عنكبوت آية ٥٠

قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ.

The signs are only with Allah, and I am only a plain warner.

(S.XXIX, v. 50)

سورة غافر آية ٧٨

...وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...

It was not for any Messenger to bring a sign, save by Allah's leave.

(S.XL, v. 78)

16. The Purity of the Prophets

Why the prophets must be ma'sūm.

The Merciful and Wise God inspired the prophets, so that through their leadership and guidance human society might recognize the right way as opposed to the precipitous way, and might be able to stride up to the highest peaks of true pride, perfection and laudable virtues, and stay on that way.

With the same intention, the Merciful and Wise God also made His prophets and messengers immune from every kind of sin and error, and, in one word, made "faultless" (*ma'sūm*), so that they might be able to lead mankind towards real development in all directions, and towards obedience and submission to the commands of God without any error or mistake.

It is obvious that the very same reason which prompted the need for prophethood and the sending of prophets also requires that **the prophets** be immaculate and immune from all kinds of sin, **impurity**, error and fault. Since the aim and purpose of send-

ing prophets is to lead society towards guidance and instruction, this aim is to be secured through the faultlessness of the prophets and messengers, for it is clear that to do things which are repulsive or indecent, to sin, and also to be a source of error and fault is a reason for people to be averse to and diverted from these things, and thus the aim, which was the guidance and instruction of society, would be lost.

Of course, we know that no wise person does things against his aim, and that he takes regard for what is effectual in attaining and reaching his aim. For example, someone who wants a number of distinguished individuals to take part in a celebration **in his honour** knows that no-one without an invitation can **honourably attend**. He will never send an invitation to someone who is averse to him, rather he will try to send his invitations in such a way that they will all be accepted, and, if he doesn't do this, his work will not have been prudent and wise, and it will be regarded as having been unseemly and unbecoming.

The Merciful and Wise God also takes account of what **basically** interferes with the guidance and education of society, and does not want people to depend on and follow the will of capricious and impure men, and so to end up far from, and be deprived of their true development. Therefore He has sent immaculate prophets so that the guidance and instruction of society might be in the best possible way.

And now we shall read in more detail why the prophets must be without fault.

1. The Principle of Instruction.

In the previous lessons we have read that the purpose of sending prophets was educate humanity, and we know that **in teaching the teacher's behaviour is a more effective instrument than his speaking and verbal instruction.**

The habits and deeds of the teacher can bring about a radical transformation in man, because, on the basis of the principle of imitation, one of the indisputable principles of the working of the mind, man gradually adopts the manner and conduct of his teacher, and becomes of the same colour, so that it is as if he is the clear, limpid surface of a pool which reflects the image of the sky above him.

Speech alone cannot play the part of instruction, rather it serves instruction, and this is the idea of the prophetic mission, that prophets must possess praiseworthy habits and qualities and be untainted with sin and error so that they can effectively attract the people of this world towards the sacred aim.

It is clear that one who has soiled his hands with sin, even though in secret and without anyone being aware so that he himself remains pure in the eyes of his fellow men, will never have that unwavering strength of mind to bring about a radical transformation in the area of the human spirit.

One who taints his lips with wine can never dissuade others from drinking it, and raise the voice of truth and mobilise his iron will in combatting this act.

The intense discomfort and disquietude of the prophets, and especially the noble prophet of Islam, about the sins and indecencies of people is itself the best witness to the fact that they were disgusted with every evil and were never soiled by it.

The great secret of the progress of the prophets was their coordination of word and deed, and it is this coordination which enabled them to transform the fundamentals of human thought and lead societies toward perfection.

2. Confidence and Acceptance.

The greater the degree of faith and confidence that people have in a speaker, the more their agreement with him increases,

and vice versa.

For this reason, the prophets, who divulged the Divine commands and restrained people from sin and immorality, must, according to this assertion, be endowed with the greatest, most admirable qualities, and be free from every kind of sin and indecency, even error and mistake, so that people's confidence and faith in them may be greater and they may accept their guidance and what they say, and so that people may strive more assiduously in carrying out the plans and putting into practice the reformative instructions of the prophets, and understand from the depths of their hearts their leadership. Thus the aim of the prophetic mission, that is to say the leading of the human race to development on all sides, will be accomplished; the aim of the prophetic mission will not be obtained under any other circumstances, and that would be very far from the wisdom of God.

This purity and worthiness of the prophets was so extraordinary that people became devoted to them to such a degree that their followers felt great love towards them and gave up their lives in following and obeying them, without heed for the consequences.

However, the question as to how one man can be completely free from sin and error is a matter to which we shall now turn our attention.

How can a man be ma'sūm?

1. Real Love of God.

The holy prophets were deeply devoted to the Merciful Lord and God, and why should they not have been? They, who with their seeing and hearing and profound insight knew God better than anyone, who understood His Greatness and Splendour and Majesty to be above all things, who deem Him alone worthy

of love, devotion and obedience, who had nothing except His Pleasure in view, who gave their hearts to none but Him, who did everything with devotion to Him, and who knew Who they were worshipping.

It was for this very reason that the prophets welcomed difficulties and formidable situations, and also paid attention to God with smiling, open faces even when they were in the most critical circumstances. And so, when, in their beloved, true way, they met with difficulties, they became overflowing with joy.

History has recorded the endeavours of these heavenly, torch-bearing men of guidance, as also the condemnable behaviour of people towards them. Could steadfastness in these difficulties have had another motivation apart from love of God and the performance of His command? Surely not.

How can it be imagined that those who are completely engrossed in their beloved way, and who utter nothing except according to His wish, and in whose heart, soul, spirit and thoughts not one corner is empty of remembrance of Him, can disobey His commands? Or can give themselves up to sin? Rather, they followed the path of obedience to Him and were devoted to Him.

Someone asked the noble Prophet of Islam (S.A.) why he applied himself to worship to such an extent with suffering and hardship since he was purified and had no sins. His answer was that why should he not be a grateful and thankful slave of God.*

Amir al-mu'minin, 'Ali (A.S.) made reference to the great qualities of the Prophet of Islam when he said that God had so deeply affected Muhammad (S.A.) with the messengership and leadership that he was a witness for creation, the bearer of good news, and a warning, in his childhood he was better than everyone, in his maturity more preferred, and his nature was, of all the

* Nur ath-Thaqalayn, vol. 3, p. 367.

pure ones, the purest. His bounty and his generosity were more freely showed down than that of any other benefactor.**

"He is the leader of the pious, and the eyes of those who are led".***

Thus we see that the perfect knowledge of the prophets and the deep and true love which they had for God resulted in faultlessness and absolute purity, so that, in addition to precluding sin from their will and thinking, they withheld themselves from sin.

2. The Deep and Perfect Insight of the Prophets.

Perceptiveness is not the same in everyone. Someone who is ignorant and illiterate will never think like a doctor does about microbes and the contamination of vessels by them. A doctor who has spent years investigating microbes, has watched their multiplication under a microscope, and has witnessed the fate of those who were infected by them can never neglect microbes and their dangers.

Thus we see that the ignorant person proceeds to drink water contaminated with microbes and has no worry, whereas the doctor would never be prepared to drink such water and would never even entertain the idea.

The only motive for refraining from drinking is the knowledge and information which this doctor has concerning the bad effects of microbes. So, for example, the illiterate, ignorant person would also keep himself from eating something filthy, for, in this case, he is aware of the impurity and harmful effects of it. But a one-year-old child into whose reach that filthy thing fell would probably put it into his mouth.

Another point is that there are some people who attach little importance to incremental harm, although they fear sudden, unexpected dangers and avoid them. For example, someone may

** Tarikh Tabari, vol. 5, p. 2269-71.

*** Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 115.

be rather lazy about extracting a decayed tooth and may procrastinate about resorting to a dentist, till such time as his other teeth become affected, and a great deal more discomfort comes his way. The toll for this is that he may be affected by very serious ailments. However, the very same person, as soon as the pain of appendicitis appears and there is a possibility of real danger, will entrust himself to the hands of a surgeon with all haste.

If a knowledgeable doctor becomes addicted to alcohol, it can only be because he is not fully informed of the damage of alcohol to the spirit and the soul, and because its accumulative harm becomes obscured through his appetite and his desire to gratify himself.

Ordinary people take a superficial view of evil, and do not take sufficient note of its physical and spiritual, bodily and psychic effects.

However, the prophets, who, with the help of a higher power, have supremacy in their vision and knowledge over the rest of mankind, who have a profound and perfect insight into all the effects of evil, and who, by a secret witnessing, see even those effects of evil which will materialise in the next world, will never come under the influence of their own bodily desires and soil their hands with the contamination of sin; even the thought of it will never enter their hearts.

The prophets saw the effects of sin in the intermediary and next worlds, and gave an account of them to people, and many traditions have been recorded from the great Prophet of Islam on this subject, and we shall give a sample of them now.

“Amīr al-mu’minīn, ‘Alī (A.S.) said: ‘I and Fāṭimah (A.S.) went to the Prophet; we saw that he was weeping excessively. I said ‘For the sake of my father and mother, why are you weeping?’ He said ‘The night they took me on *mi’rāj*, I saw a group of women from my people in severe torment. One woman I saw

hung up by her hair, and the brain in her head was boiling from the intensity of the heat. Another was strung up by her tongue, and they were pouring caustic water into her throat....Another was eating the flesh of her body and fire was burning under her feet. Another one had her hands and feet bound, and the snakes and scorpions of Hell were crawling over her. Another one, the flesh of her body was being cut up with flaming scissors..... Another one had grown the face of a dog and fire was entering her from underneath and coming out of her mouth, and the angels of punishment were striking her with fiery clubs on her head and her body.’ Fāṭimah (A.S.), the daughter of the Prophet (S.A.), said ‘These women, what had they done that Allāh was punishing them in this way?’

“The great Prophet of Islam (S.A.) said ‘The one who was hung up by her hair had not, in this world, concealed her hair from strangers, and the one who was strung up by her tongue had tormented her husband....and the one who was eating flesh of her own body had beautified herself for strangers, and the one whose hands and feet were bound and over whom snakes and scorpions crawled had given no importance to *wuḍū* and the purity of her clothes, nor to *ghuṣl* after sexual impurity and *ghuṣl* after menstruation, and had counted her prayers as nothing.... but the one whose flesh was cut by scissors was a woman who had given herself to the will of unfamiliar and strange men....and the one who had grown the face of a dog and whom fire entered from underneath and came out of her mouth had been a singer.’ Then the great Prophet of Islam said ‘Woe to that woman who made her husband angry and how good it is for the case of that woman whose husband is happy because of her.’”*

* Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar; vol. 18, p. 351.

The noble Prophet of Islam also said: "I came across a group who had been strung up on fiery hooks. I asked Jibra'il who they were and he said 'They are people whom Allah had made unneedful of what is *halal* and *haram*, but they had run after what is *haram*.' And I also came across a group, the flesh of whose bodies was being sown with a thread of fire. I asked who they were, and Jibra'il said 'They are individuals who had had illegal relationships with unmarried girls.'**"

And he also said that someone who profitted through usury, Allāh fills his stomach with the fire of Hell to the extent of the usury by which he profitted.** And similarly for those who drink alcohol and do other sins; and he explained in detail, so that it might prevent people from sin, what had happened to the Prophet and the prophets and how they themselves had seen the effects of sin in the intermediate and next worlds.

In short, remembrance of judgement and the witnessing of the effects of sin in the next world was the best way to keep the prophets from sin and indecency.

Allāh has said in the Qur'an:

سورة ص آية ٤٥ - ٤٧

وَأَذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولَى الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ. إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ. وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُضْطَلَّقِينَ الْأَخْيَارِ.

And commemorate Our servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, possessors of Power and Vision. Verily We chose them for a special (purpose) - proclaiming the message of the hereafter. They were in Our Sight, truly of the company of the Elect and the Good." (S. 8 v. 45-47)

* Ibid, p. 333.

** Thawab al-A'mal wa 'Aqab al-A'mal, p. 336.

LESSON SEVENTEEN

17. Hazrat Musa (ع)

He to whom Allah spoke

At the same time as Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) was born, two large tribes, the Copts and the Israelites, were living in Egypt. The Pharaohs, who were the rulers in Egypt, were Copts, but the Israelites were from the lineage of Ya'qūb (Jacob), and had the name of Bani Isrā'īl. The original birthplace of the Banī Isrā'īl was Canaan, but after Yūsuf (Joseph), from among these people, reached great rank in Egypt, they also came to Egypt and remained there. In the beginning, their number was not very great, but gradually they became more and more numerous until they became a social group in their own right, and they held great esteem. But with the death of Yūsuf, and also because of their inadmissible disobedience, they forfeited their esteem and glory, and it happened that the Copts became their rulers and exploited them, and assigned arduous and difficult work to them, and did not hold themselves back from any kind of oppression and violence.

The monarch of Egypt, who was named 'Pharaoh' and was a Copt, had dipped his fingers in the blood of the Israelites, and

had so much power that fighting with him was out of the question. From an excess of egotism, he called himself 'god', and pulled the people towards worship of him and to polytheism and idolatry.

Pharaoh was heedless of the fact that Allāh was looking after the people with His distant light of guidance, and he did not understand that it was the inveterate practice of Allāh that whenever he set up a prophet, he delivered the people from ignorance, oppression and cruelty.

A soothsayer told Pharaoh that a child from the Banī Isrā'īl would soon come into the world who would be a danger for his sovereignty. Pharaoh flew into a rage and gave an order without delay to cut off the head of every boy in the Banī Isrā'īl, and to see that no children remained to them.

In the middle of all this, Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) was born.

When the fear of danger had gone, his mother, with all the love she had for him, put her dear new-born baby into a box, according to Divine revelation, and committed him to the waves of the river Nile, till the water took the box away with itself.

Pharaoh and his wife, at their residence on the banks of the Nile, were gazing into the river when they caught sight of the box with the infant, who was sleeping peacefully atop the troubled waves. When Pharaoh's wife saw that child's pure face, her heart was uneasy about casting him back into the river. She looked at him and like him; her heart was seized with love for him, and she pleaded with Pharaoh to allow them to look after him in the palace and to consider him as their child. Pharaoh also became glad and hoped that his adopted child would one day be useful for him, and bring him some benefit.

The suckling infant would not accept to be breast-fed from any wet-nurse and this became a problem. In the end the mother of Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.), whose breasts were full of his milk, and who

was looking for Mūsā, came into the court of Pharaoh as a wet-nurse, took Mūsā to her bosom and suckled him.*

How amazing it seems - Pharaoh brought up his incomparable enemy in his own lap! And thus Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) grew up and came to maturity, and God made him acquire his share of knowledge and wisdom. It happened that he saw all the oppression and injustice in Pharaoh's cruel administration; but, not only did he not participate in it, but he suffered from seeing the injustice, and began to look for a remedy.

One day, as he was walking along, he saw one of Pharaoh's men struggling with one of the Banī Isrā'īl and tormenting him. As soon as the Isrā'īli saw Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.), he called him to help him. Mūsā rushed forward and struck the man of Pharaoh hard with his fist, and accidentally, as a result of his blow, the man died.

Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) went far from that place, but the next day he again saw the same person from the previous day fighting with another of Pharaoh's men. Again this man called for Hazrat Mūsā's help, but Mūsā said to him angrily that he was a deluded person, i.e. that he was making a mistake by fighting with one of Pharaoh's men everyday, which was dangerous for everyone. Then he went forward and pushed him aside. The Isrā'īli, thinking that Mūsā wanted to hit him, shouted at him:

“Do you want to kill me, like the man yesterday?”

After these events, Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) was anxiously on his guard, but it became clear to Pharaoh's people that the killer of that man was none other than Mūsā, and therefore Pharaoh gave an order for the death of Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.).

The officials began to hunt for Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.), and he lived in fear and apprehension. A benevolent God-worshipper advised

* Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 13, p. 38-40.

him that the sooner he left the town the better it would be, because the men of Pharaoh were seeking to kill him.

Unhappily, Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) came out of Egypt and went towards Midian, thus saving himself from the oppressors and seeking the friends of Allāh.

سورة قصص آية ٢١

.... رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ.

O Lord, deliver me from the unjust people. (XXVIII; 21)

At long last, Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) entered Midian, and, in order to rest, he stopped beside a well. Around the well he saw many men who were watering their animals. A little further away from the crowd of men, he saw two women who were standing waiting with their sheep. Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) went forward to help them, and enquired the reason for their waiting. They said:

“Our father is an old man of many years, and we have to give water to the sheep ourselves. Now we are waiting till the crowd goes away from around the well and we can quench the thirst of our sheep.”

Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) went forward and watered the sheep, and the women returned home. Mūsā, who was dead tired and hungry and had no provisions with him, sat down in the shade and asked God to take away his hunger:

سورة قصص آية ٢٤

.... رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ.

O my Lord, truly I stand in need of any good which Thou dost send to me. (XXVIII; 24)

It was not long before one of these two girls returned, walking very shyly, and said to Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.):

“My father calls you so that he may give you remuneration for the work you did.”

The father of the girls was Shu'aib (a.s.), the true prophet of Allāh.

Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) got up and went with the girl. On the way he asked to go ahead of her, and told her to direct him from behind, because he was from a family (the family of the prophets) who did not cast their eyes on the body of a woman from behind.

And in this way he came to Hazrat Shu'aib and related his story to him. Shu'aib consoled him and said:

“Do not fear, again you have been saved from the talons of the oppressor.”

The same daughter who had followed Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) said to Hazrat Shu'aib (a.s.): “O Father, engage this man in your service, for he is robust, strong, trustworthy and honest.”

Hazrat Shu'aib (a.s.), who was aware of Hazrat Mūsā's honesty and virtuousness, gave one of his two daughters as a wife to him, and Mūsā made an arrangement with him that he would take sanctuary with Shu'aib for ten years, and that in that time he would carry out Shu'aib's work, especially being a shepherd and tending his flocks.*

At the end of the ten years, Hazrat Mūsā set out with his family towards Egypt. On the way, one cold and dark night, they lost themselves. Everywhere was dark, the road was indistinguishable from the wilderness, and Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) and his family remained wandering about. His eyes caught sight of a fire. Without hesitation, he said to his wife:

“Stay here, and I will go towards that fire, perhaps I will come across someone to guide us, or I can take an ember from the fire and bring it here.”

He hastened towards the fire, and when he reached it, this voice called him from the direction of a tree.

سورة قصص آية ٣٠

... يَا مُوسَى إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ.

O Mūsā! Verily I am Allāh, the Lord of the Worlds! (XXVIII; 30)

* Nur ath-Thaqalayn, vol. 4, p. 117.

وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰ. أَنبَىٰ أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي. إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِيَجْزِيَ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَىٰ

I have chosen you as a prophet, so listen to what is revealed to you. I am the Unique God, and there is no god apart from I. Worship me alone, and establish prayer so that you may remember Me. The resurrection is sure to come...so that every soul may be recompensed as he strives.

(XX;14, 15)

Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) had a staff in his hand which he used as a crook and also to help him shake and pull off leaves from branches for his sheep. In this revelation, he was given the command to cast down his staff on the ground, and his staff immediately turned into a roaring serpent. Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) was afraid and started to run away. Because of his fear he did not even look back. But a call came to return: "Don't be afraid, be calm". His heart quietened and he turned back, and according to God's command he stretched out his hand and took the serpent. Following the will of Allāh, it changed back into a staff. He was then told to put his hand into his breast and then to pull it out again. When he had done this, he saw his hand shining bright, and a white-coloured light radiated from his hand, but in a way that did not hurt the eyes. These were the miracles of Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.); God had equipped him with these signs so that Pharaoh and his people would not doubt his prophethood. These powers were granted to him so that they would not think that he was pretending on his own to the prophethood.

Then Allāh commanded him to declare to Pharaoh that his messengership had commenced.

At first, Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) informed Pharaoh of his prophethood with sweet words, and invited him to the worship of Allāh, and asked him if he wished to have a meritorious and clean spirit, if he wanted Mūsā to guide him towards his God.

Pharaoh asked, "Who is your God?"

Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) replied, "My God is He Who created the heaven and the earth. He it is Who created all things."

Pharaoh became incensed at this, and turned towards Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) and said, "I have no sign from you of another god apart from myself, and as for you, Mūsā, if you do not worship me, there will be a punishment for you!"

Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) replied, "If I bring you signs from God himself for you, what will you say?"

Pharaoh asked, "What are they? Where are the signs? Bring them if you speak the truth!"

Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) threw down his staff, his crook, and it became a serpent. He put his hand into his breast and took it out, and it shone into Pharaoh's eyes with a pure white light. Pharaoh was amazed. On one side was Hazrat Mūsā and the God of Hazrat Mūsā and His signs; on the other side was his sovereignty and kingship, and his monopolistic command over Egypt and the Egyptians. Pharaoh's egotism kept him back from submitting to Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.); but there remained the difficulty of the signs. He said to himself, "How will it be if I call him a magician and a sorcerer?", and it was with this fiction that he spoke to his bewildered votaries:

"Behold! here is a magician who wishes to turn you from your lands and to usurp your place! What do you say?"

They said that he should invite observers and magicians so that they might prevail over him, expose his sorcery and disgrace him.

Pharaoh agreed, and at his command all the old sorcerers

who excelled at that time gathered together. In this huge assembly, Pharaoh promised that if they prevailed over Mūsā, they could have anything they wanted from him.

So with this juvenile idea that they could degrade Hazrat Mūsā and make him seem wretched, and thereby increase their standing with Pharaoh, they cast down their sticks and ropes on the ground. With the magic that they performed, these sticks and ropes became snakes as if they were slithering about in front of people who were witnesses to this day of trial. Their mouths fell open in amazement. But Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) was with God, or rather, better still, God was with Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.), and his turn came. He cast his simple staff down beside the multitude of spells and wizardry of Pharaoh's magicians, and everyone saw that staff turn into a ferocious serpent which circled round and swallowed all the fabrications of the sorcerers, as if you would have said there had never been anything there.

First and foremost, then, were the magicians who came to believe in Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.). All of them, with one heart and one voice, said, "We believe in the Lord of the worlds Who is the God of Hazrat Mūsā and Hārūn."*

They fell down and prostrated themselves, and begged forgiveness for what they had done.

Pharaoh's rage increased. He threatened them. But they, who knew the difference between magic and miracle better than anyone else, thoroughly understood that Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) was not a magician, and that his power was the power of God, and for this reason they were not afraid of Pharaoh's threat. Pharaoh shouted at them, "How dare you believe in the God of Mūsā without my permission! I will tear off your arms and legs; I will

* Harun was the brother of Hazrat Musa (a.s.). With his loud clear voice he was together with Hazrat Musa (a.s.) everywhere, and helped him in his work of delivering the Message.

hang you from the branches of the date-palm!"

The wretched creature imagined that in their own beliefs people were also obliged to get his permission! The magicians replied, "We will not choose you over and above a God Who created us; we will return to our God; we are the first group who believed in Mūsā; we hope for God's forgiveness. Whatever you want to do - do it; for we know perfectly well that this world does not last."

But this heated speech went without effect on the cold hearts of Pharaoh and his followers. They were deceived by their own status and manifestation of power.

They captured Banī Isrā'īl; those women from whom there was no danger were left alive and were put to work. The boys and youths of that people were killed. Many times God demonstrated the weakness of Pharaoh's people, and made them despicable so that they would learn their lesson. Every time a calamity came, they sent a message to Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) that if God would take the calamity away, they would believe in Him; but when the calamity was removed, they forgot their message, and committed another iniquity.

Pharaoh said to his own people, "Don't fear! Let me kill Mūsā. I worry least he take your religion away from you, and I am afraid that he will create a revolution in this country and bring about a disaster."

Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) said, "I seek refuge with God from every rebel who does not believe in the resurrection."

In the middle of all this, a man appeared who, until then, had kept his faith hidden; heedless of the people, he raised his voice and said, "Do you want to kill a man who says God is his Lord? Do you not see the signs of God which he has brought with him?"

Pharaoh announced, "It is as I have spoken!"

Again this solitary believer warned people, saying that he was frightened that their fate would be the same as the fate of the people of Nūh, or 'Ād and Thamūd, that he was afraid they would end up in Hell and the Fire, and that no-one would be able to save them from the punishment of their God.

Paying no attention to this man's warning, Pharaoh thought about his own plans and said in mockery to Hāmān, who was his minister, "Build a large tower for me so that I may get to know the ways of heaven from the top of it. Maybe there I will capture the God of Mūsā!"

But the man who had a strong faith in God went on repeating his same warnings. He said, "Follow me! I will lead you to the right path, O my people! The life of this world is ephemeral, do not be proud of it. The next world is eternal, the next world is everlasting. All the deeds of man will be investigated. The bad deeds will be punished, and the good deeds will receive a reward. The reward for good is eternal Paradise. O people! I call you to salvation, why do you invite me to the Fire?"

"You want me to become an incomparable unbeliever in God, and further to ascribe partners to him, but I call you towards God, Who in truth is bountiful and the master of power. It is God Who will return all of us towards Himself.

"All of those who see the truth and understand it but do not obey it will be in the Fire. There will be no tardiness: what I say will be seen!"

Pharaoh and his worshippers did not turn back from their way after this speech. God took the fearless believer under his own protection and increased the difficulties for Pharaoh's own men.

In the end it happened that God gave the command to Mūsā to take the oppressed masses out of Egypt by night. Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) led Banī Isrā'īl out in the darkness. They set off in the

direction of the Red Sea. In their hearts they feared least Pharaoh should pursue them with his might, and in fact that is what happened. Pharaoh set out in pursuit of Hazrat Mūsā with his army. Banī Isrā'īl saw that mighty force and became very uneasy. No solution could be found. On the one side was the sea, coast to coast there was water; on the other side was Pharaoh with his immense army. Mūsā sought refuge with God and he revealed to him that he should strike his staff on the water and take it off. This staff became the manifestation of the power of Allāh. Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) struck his stick on the water. In an instant, a dry, smooth way was opened up. Banī Isrā'īl followed Mūsā on this way. The water on the two sides of the way was piled up like two walls, mound upon mound, and did not spill over. Banī Isrā'īl came out of the water, and Pharaoh came up to it with his forces. He was wondering what he should do: should he turn back or entrust his soul to the sea. In front of him he saw Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) and his people; how had they set foot in the water and passed through it in safety? But he did not have faith in the manifest sign of Allāh. He commanded his forces to pass through the water in the same way as had Mūsā's people. All of them obeyed him and entered the sea. They rushed in so that they might capture Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) - peace be upon him - and his people. They were drunk with the wine of pride. All at once the walls closed in on them. The way became a well, water enveloped them on all sides. Pharaoh, seeing himself without hope, became a believer, but it was too late. All were drowned in the sea, all were annihilated, and their memory obliterated. The Qur'an relates the situation of the last moments of Pharaoh's life with exactitude. It says:

سورة يونس آية ٩٠ - ٩٢

...حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَذْرَكَهُ الْعَرَقُ قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنْتُ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ وَ أَنَا مِنَ

المُسْلِمِينَ. الْآنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ. فَأَلَيْتُمْ تُسَخِّبِك بِدِينِكَ لِتَكُونَ لِمَنْ خَلَقَكَ آيَةً وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ النَّاسِ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا لَغَافِلُونَ

At length, when he (Pharaoh) was overwhelmed with the flood, he said: 'I believe that there is no god except Him Whom Banī Isrā'īl believe in. I am of those who submit.' (It was said to him) 'Ah now! - But a little while before wast thou in rebellion! and thou didst mischief! This day shall We save thee in thy body, that thou mayest be a sign to those who come after thee! But verily, many among mankind are heedless of Our signs!' (X:90-92)*

Thus was Banī Isrā'īl saved from the sea.

If Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) had become free from the spectre of Pharaoh and his oppression, there was now a grave concern for him, and that was the ignorance and propensity for dispute among the Banī Isrā'īl itself. On the other side of the sea they reached a people who worshipped idols, and Banī Isrā'īl begged Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) to build an idol for them so that they might not be in any way, even in idol-worship, inferior to them. Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) was very grieved by this and said, "How ignorant and unknowing you are! Do you expect me to look for another god apart from He who delivered you from the grip of Pharaoh?"

God summoned Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) to spend thirty nights far from people in prayer. Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) appointed Hazrat Hārūn (a.s.), his own brother, in his place for Banī Isrā'īl, and recommended him to the people. After thirty nights, following

*Pharaoh was the general name for the rulers of ancient Egypt. The Pharaoh contemporary with Musa was called 'Ramases II' and his body was mummified. It was discovered in 1881 (A.D.) and is now in Cairo Museum.

the command of Allāh, he added to them another ten nights. After the completion of these forty nights, the Torah was revealed to him, that it could be a guide at that time for the Jewish people.

However, as for Banī Isrā'īl, after they had been a few days without Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.), the excuse of the idol seized them again. An impostor called Sāmīrī took their gold and jewellery from them and built a golden calf, in such a way that in special conditions, by its own contrivance, it emitted the sound of the calf. Then he said to the people, whose wisdom was only in their eyes, "This calf is the son of the God of Mūsā, it is your god, you must worship it."

The people had forgotten that God could not be in the form of a body, could not be in space and time, had forgotten that God must be their guide. Contrary to the teachings of Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.), they accepted as god the golden calf which had been built at the hands of Sāmīrī, and which had no benefit or loss for anyone. They did not pay attention to the fact that it was an idol built by Sāmīrī for them which merely made a cow-like lowing, and did not realise that if it were possible that God should manifest himself among them, he would proceed to guide them and lead them, and it is clear that there is an enormous difference between guidance and leading and the braying of a calf.

Thus the Jews went astray and heeded not the advice of Hazrat Hārūn (a.s.).

When Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) came back and saw their great aberration; he became completely dejected and rebuked the ignorant people.

He told Sāmīrī, "Now, you idol-builder who was built by God, what shall I do with you? That idol, I shall have it burnt and its ashes flung into the sea, and your True God is the only God, Who sees and knows everything that is, and there is no god apart from him."

And with these words he broke the idol into pieces and no trace of it remained.

The Divine words of Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.) had failed to have their effect; the people still looked for excuses, and renegaded or their pledges. After Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.), they became less obedient to the Truth and to the words of God's prophets and His chosen ones. They remained heedless. They oppressed some people, and they killed the prophets of a group of them. They even got to work on their own Divine Book, and altered it, and thus they created the Torah in its present form, whose imperfections are so great that one cannot call it a Divine Book.

LESSON EIGHTEEN

18. Hazrat 'Isa (ء)

The Messiah, The Messenger, and Slave of Allāh

Maryam, the mother of 'Isā

The wife of 'Imrān was a barren and sterile woman, but she heard from her husband that God had promised him a boy who would be able to bring people to life and to cure the sick as well through the power and command of God.*

She believed that Almighty God could do this, and prayed to Him that it would be to her that he gave the child.

God granted her prayer and she became pregnant. As a sign of thankfulness for this great blessing and gift, she vowed that she would give her child to the service of the House of God (in Jerusalem) (see III;34)

The child which was born was a girl, and when her mother saw her she said, "This is a girl, but anyway I will be faithful to my vow; I will call her Maryam. She and her children, I commend to Your protection from the mischief of Satan." (see III;34,35)

* Majma al-Bayan, vol. 2, p. 435.

The wife of 'Imrān took Maryam to the House of God and entrusted her to the custodians of that place. Since the infant was the daughter of their leader, 'Imrān, everyone wanted to pay for her upbringing and guardianship so that the honour of having looked after the daughter of 'Imrān would fall on him. In the end a dispute arose between them, and to resolve their differences they drew lots. Among the custodians of the House of God the draw came out in favour of Hazrat Zakariyya. So Maryam came under the tutelage and supervision of Hazrat Zakariyya, and she gradually grew up engaged in nothing but worship and serving the House of God.**

Her purity and devotion reached such a stage that whenever Hazrat Zakariyya (a.s.) went into Maryam's sanctuary, he found food - heavenly food - beside her. He would ask in surprise, "Where does this food come from?"

Maryam would reply, "From Allāh; truly Allāh gives to everyone who He wants without reckoning." (III:37)

Zakariyya and Yahyā

The wife of Zakariyya (a.s.) was also, like the mother of Maryam, barren, and for this reason Zakariyya had been without children till his old age. At that time, when Zakariyya (a.s.) was looking after the spiritual advancement of Maryam in her sanctuary and saw the infinite mercy of God towards her, he was taken with the desire to have a pious child like Maryam, so he raised his hands in supplication towards God and said, "O God! I wish you to grant me a pure and pious child, a child who will be a source of satisfaction to me, the inheritor of me and the House of Ya'qūb." (see III:39 & XIX:1-6)

Hazrat Zakariyya (a.s.) was engaged in prayer in the sanctuary when angels said to him, "God gives you glad tidings of a child called Yahyā who is of the righteous and devout prophets."

** Ibid, p. 436.

Hazrat Zakariyya (a.s.) who was himself old and weary and saw the barrenness and sterility of his wife (and to become pregnant in such conditions was a gift which could not be expected) said with delight and surprise, "O God, in the state I and my wife are in, how can you grant me the favour of a child?"

In answer to this it was said, "This work is easy for God. Did God, the Almighty, not bring you forth from non-existence into being?"

Thus Hazrat Zakariyya (a.s.) became one of the Divine prophets, and throughout the whole of his life he called people to faith and salvation. In the end he was martyred by one of the kings of Banī Isrā'īl who wanted to marry the daughter of his own brother against the law of God, and to whom Hazrat Yahyā had forbidden this.*

'Isā, the Messiah

One day, Maryam, the girl who had grown up from infancy in the House of God and whose upbringing a prophet of the stature of Zakariyya had undertaken, was engaged in worship when an angel appeared to her in the form of a man.

Maryam thought that he was a man, and in fear sought protection from God, but the angel gave her glad tidings: "I have come from your God to give you a pure and perfect son."

Maryam said, "How? Since no man has had contact with me, and I am not a fornicator."

"Your God," said the angel, "says that this work is easy for Him; that it may be appointed as a sign and an indication of His Mercy."

So Maryam became pregnant, and, since she had no husband, some gossipers began to make obscene comments about her, and she became grieved. So as to be free from these afflictions, she

* 'Allamah at-Tabataba'i Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. 14, p. 26-27.

took herself far from people, and had to go to a remote place. There she counted the days until the birth of her child.

At last, when the time of delivery arrived, she took refuge from her pain under a dry date-palm in the desert, and in that very place she delivered her baby into the world without any mid-wife or nurse..

Loneliness, fear of disgrace and the thought of how she would prove her chastity to people filled Maryam with so much anxiety that she said to herself, "Would that I had died before this and had been lost from people's memories!"

Then she heard a voice which consoled her, "Do not grieve, your God has set under your feet a stream, refreshing to the soul. And shake the trunk of the withered date-palm, that fresh dates may tumble down for you. Eat, drink and calm your mind, and if you see any man point and say, "I have vowed a silent fast, and today I will not speak to any man."

Miracles and unseen help, one after the other made Maryam courageous. So, because of this tranquility, she took her child back with her to the place where she had been living. When the people saw Maryam with the child clutched to her bosom, they began to chide her, and said, "Your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother unchaste."

Without speaking, Maryam pointed to her child. That meant: ask from him what has happened, and you will get your answer. "How shall we speak to a child of that age!" they said in derision.

But Maryam's child spoke through the power of God, and in clear, distinct speech said, "I am God's servant. He has given me the Book and has appointed me to be a prophet, and wherever I may be He has put me as the bearer of good news and with His blessing; and He has commanded me that as long as I live I should pray and give zakât, and he has made me loving towards my mother." (Surah Maryam;16-32)

The clear mind of this child dumbfounded them and this great sign dispelled their incrimination of and suspicion towards Hazrat Maryam (a.s.), and they knew that this infant was brought into existence by the Will of God without a father, and that in the future he would have great rank and responsibility.

Description of the condition of people before the Message of Hazrat 'Isâ (a.s.)

Before the birth of the Messiah, Palestine was in the hands of the Romans. But the people of Palestine, although they had no support to help them to eventual emancipation, were engaged in a struggle with the alien Romans. This continuous fight worsened the condition of Palestine and its people.

The economy was in a shambles and heavy oppressive taxes added to the evil. Free people were either anxious and in chains, or were engaged in a life-long struggle. Prosperous places came to a stand-still, and everything fell into ruin and became weakened, even the faith of the Jews themselves, so that they no longer obeyed by the commands of their religion. Perhaps this weakness of faith was a present for Roman colonisation from the people.

Colonialism always has and always will use this gift, because in this kind of struggle the enemy has no need of arms. People who neglect and give up their faith, without their knowing, will be gradually annihilated.

Anyhow, under these circumstances, in that time full of disturbance and agitation, the need was thoroughly felt for a Divine leader to come and save the deviated people from their misfortunes and aberrations.

And thus it was that, with the expediency of the love and mercy of Allâh, the Compassionate, Hazrat 'Isâ (a.s.) came into this world. The birth of this beloved one was accompanied by

wonders, all of which witnessed to his exalted and magnificent rank. These were Divine signs that he was God's leader and that the strong hand of God had brought him into existence to establish the great revolution.

The Message of the Messiah (a.s.)

The *Injil* descended to the person of Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.) to be a plan for the liberation of those who were lost.*

Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.) announced his prophetic message and started his activities on a large scale. He took great pains and sacrificed himself to save the Jews and to exterminate the roots of their deviations.

But the leaders of the Jews, who clung to their position and rank, and who thought that these would be destroyed by the coming of Hazrat 'Isā and feared his prophetic mission, plotted together to find ways to create a disturbance to check his progress.

Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.) was aware of their designs, but he was as steady as a rock, and thus dispensed his guidance and leadership, and informed the people of the superstitions and distortions that had crept into the religion of Hazrat Mūsā (a.s.).

Sometimes, while he was doing this he would cure a sick person by the leave of God, or, similarly by His leave, bring to life a dead person, so that they would understand that he had come from God and had been sent by the Unique and Incomparable God.

* The revealed Injil (gospel) has disappeared and the 'Gospels' which are now in the possession of the Christians are not revealed books.

The End of the Mission of the Messiah (a.s.)

Day by day, Hazrat 'Isā's friends and followers increased, and the more they increased, the more the opposition of the leaders of the Jews increased, to such an extent that they decided to do away with him.

But God concealed him from their eyes, and they crucified another by mistake who resembled Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.), and thus they believed in their error that they had crucified Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.). This fact has been explicitly stated in the Holy Qur'an:

سورة نساء آية ١٥٧ - ١٥٨

وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شَجِجَهُ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اِخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَبِئْسَ شَكٌّ مِنْهُ
مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا. بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا

حَكِيمًا.

But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them; and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no certain knowledge but only conjecture to follow. For a surety they killed him not. Nay, Allāh raised him up unto Himself; and Allāh is Exalted in Power and Wise.

(IV;157/8)

Therefore, the matter of the cross and the illogical embellishments which were added to this matter are all without any foundation, as, for example, when the Christians today say that every man is, in his essence, a sinner, although he may not have committed any sin during the whole of his life, and that Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.) was crucified in the place of these men so that they might be spared the torment of Hell and its Fire. That is why the Marcionites and the Gnostics did not believe in the killing or crucification of the Messiah.

Hazrat 'Isā, the Messiah, or the Slave of God

What is clear from the Holy Qur'an, and even from some of the New Testament which is at present in the possession of the Christians* is that the Messiah always considered himself as God's slave, worshipped God, and called people to the worship of the One.

Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.) said:

آل عمران آية ٥١

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ، هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ.

"It is Allāh, Who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a way that is straight." (III; 51)

Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.) never claimed to be a god, and if Christians know him and consider him as God, then it is their own imagining.

Nehru, in his book *Glimpses of World History*, wrote that the Messiah was never a claimant to divinity or to being a god, but that people like to turn their heroes into a kind of god.

Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.) was, like other prophets, a man to whom revelation came from God and who was moved to lead and guide society. If he had a miracle, other prophets also had a God. If he was born without a father, Hazrat Ādam (a.s.) was also created without a father or a mother, but no Christian thinks that he was the 'Son of God'.

The Qur'an says:

سورة مائدة آية ٧٥

مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ كَانَا

يَا كِلَانِ، الْقَعَمَامُ....

The Messiah, son of Maryam, was no more than a messenger.

* The Gospel according to St. Mark, ch. 12, v. 29.

ger; many were the messengers who passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their daily food. (V;78)

i.e., like all other human beings, they were in need of the necessities of life.

This truth, which has come in the clear word of Allāh - the Qur'an - agrees with both wisdom and the intellect, because a man, who, like other individuals, has no power from himself, and thus like other men and prophets is in need of the necessities of life like food and sleep. By the judgement of wisdom, he does not deserve to be worshipped.

So, according to the intellect, and with the confirmation of the Holy Qur'an, according to the existing New Testament (Gospel of St. Mark), and on the evidence of great historians: Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.) was the slave and messenger of God, and never laid claim to divinity.

But after Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.), his pure religion lost its genuineness and polytheism and idolatry found its way into it, so that Will Durant in his *History of Civilisation* has written that Christianity did not eradicate polytheism, but has rather adopted it.

Everyone who has studied Christian dogma will confirm that the historian has proved a historical fact. For even now such beliefs as the following are found among the followers of the Messiah.

- 1) 'Isā became separated from the essence of God and he is therefore not created, but is called the Son of God;
- 2) The Messiah was a man, but a man in whom God was incarnate;
- 3) The Messiah is himself God who showed himself in the form of man.

But we all know that God is not material as a result of which he could exist in space, or separate from himself parts and call himself the Son of God. And we also understand with our wisdom that God has no dimensions as a result of which he could be contained in something or incarnate himself or come forth in the likeness of man.

Moreover, how can it be possible that a God without any need should become in need of food and clothing?

Therefore, if the Christians ponder carefully, they will confess that the Messiah, like all other prophets, is the slave of Allāh and has absolutely no claim to divinity.

The Qur'ān says:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا
 إِنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ الْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ وَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ
 السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.
 سورة مائدة آية ١٨

They are unbelievers who say, 'Allāh is the Messiah, Maryam's son.' Say: 'Who then shall overrule Allāh in any way is He desires to destroy the Messiah, Maryam's son, and his mother, and all those who are on the earth?' For to Allāh belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, creating what He will. Allāh is Powerful over every thing. (V:18)

Sayings of the Messiah

The Prophet of Islam, the great Messenger (s.a.) said: The disciples asked Hazrat 'Īsā (a.s.), "With whom should we asso-

ciate?" He replied, "With those whose countenance recalls Allāh, and whose speech adds to your knowledge, and whose actions make your eagerness for the concerns of the next world greater." *Usūl al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p.39

The Prophet (s.a.) also said: The disciples asked Hazrat 'Īsā (a.s.) for guidance for them and he replied: "Mūsā, Kalīm Allāh, said to you, 'Do not swear in the name of Allāh what is a lie.', but I say, 'Do not swear in the name of Allāh, even what is true.' The disciples asked for greater guidance, and he said, 'The prophet of Allāh, Mūsā, said to you, 'Do not commit adultery.', but I say to you, 'Do not even think of it, because everyone into whose head the thought of adultery enters is like the person who kindles a fire in a painted room, which even if it doesn't burn the room, at least blackens the paint.'" *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 14, p. 331.

Amīr al-mu'minīn (a.s.), Hazrat 'Alī, said: "The Messiah, the son of Maryam said, 'Fortunate is he whose silence is thought-inspiring and whose look gives advice; whose house gives him rest and comfort. He repents of his improper actions, and people obtain tranquility from his hand and tongue.'" *Bihār al-Anwār*, vo. 14, p. 320.

Imam Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: "Hazrat 'Īsā (a.s.) said to his companions, 'O sons of Ādam! Turn away from this world towards Allāh, and do not enslave your heart to it, for you were not created for this world alone. It has not merit for you. You will not stay in it, and it will not remain for you. What a great many people are deceived and ruined! Whoever is attracted by it, and places his confidence in it will be lost. Whoever likes it and goes after it will perish!'" *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 14, p.289.

He also said: "The Messiah (a.s.) told his followers, 'Refrain from regarding others' wives, for it plants the bitter seed of passion in the heart of man and that is enough for your perdition. Alas for he whose aim is the pleasure of this world, and whose actions are sin! None of you know how tomorrow and at the time of resurrection he will be ashamed before Allāh.'" *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 14, p.323.

LESSON NINETEEN

19. Muhammad (ﷺ)

THE RADIANCE THAT SHONE FORTH IN THE DARKNESS

The World Before Islam.

The chaotic situation of the world prior to Islam is clearly reflected in the accurate mirror of history. The outline of decline, oppression, bloodshed, idol-worship is evident in this mirror.

Before Islam, it was as if mankind were leaning over the edge of the precipice of ruin and destruction, and there was the fear that at any moment it could roll down and be annihilated in it.

The Religions and Beliefs of the Peoples.

a) In the Arabian Peninsula.

The Arabs prior to Islam were committed in their hearts to idols, and what they saw around themselves with their own eyes

they made into idols. Not only did they lower their heads and prostrate before them, but they donated everything they had, even gifts of agricultural produce, to their idols (see VI:137).

They believed that apart from the life of this world there was no other life (see XLV:24). Obviously those who did not see the wretchedness of their idols whom they had chosen as their gods could not grasp the idea and truth of the resurrection.

So it was no wonder that they turned the House which Hazrat Ibrāhīm had built at the command of and in the name of Allāh into brightly-coloured quarters for their idols.

As for the origins of idol-worship in the Hejaz, some believe that the first person to introduce it was 'Amr ibn Luḥayy. Al-Ya'qūbī writes in his history: "He (ibn Luḥayy) journeyed to Syria and saw all of the inhabitants worshipping idols. When he asked about the virtues of the idols, they told him, 'They have befriended us, and they bring down rain for us.' He took a liking to them and asked them to give him an idol. They gave him *Hubal* and he took him to Mecca." Ibn Hishām writes that 'Amir ibn Luḥayy brought this idol from Mu'āb (Iraq). In any case, *Hubal* was the most famous of the gods in the Ka'bah; he was built in the form of man, and holy arrows, which the diviners used for casting auguries, were set in front of him.

The influence of idol-worship grew to the point where idols were built in the form of animals, plants, men, jinn, angels and stars; even stones were the object of worship.

'*Lāt*' was in Ṭā'if in the form of a cubic stone, and had a special field and meadow near Ṭā'if which was a holy place, and cutting trees, hunting and the spilling of blood were not lawful in its vicinity; the people of Mecca and other places made pilgrimage to it.

'*Uzzā*' was a very powerful god equivalent to the planet Venus, and was situated in Nakhlah east of Mecca, and was worshipped there. It was given much more honour than the other idols. The sanctuary of 'Uzzā took the form of three trees and human sacrifices were offered to it.

Manāt was the god of predestination, and its original place of worship was a black stone at Qudayd (on the road between Mecca and Medina). It belonged especially to the tribes of Aws and Khazraj (see lesson 20).

These gods were female and were like angels.

Ba'l was the embodiment of the spirit of wells and underground waters.

Sometimes a well with clean, invigorating water became worshipped in the dry desert.

A cave, when it had connections with the gods and the underground powers, was also sanctified. The temple of Ghabghab in Nakhlah (see above) was in such a place.

Dhāt Anwāt, from which things were hung, was in Nakhlah, and in some years the Meccans made pilgrimage there.

Dhu'sh-sharā was respected in the form of a heap of black shining cubic stones.

The spirit of arable lands was the god of good works and sacrifices had to be made to it. The spirit of barren land was a wicked devil who had to be avoided.

They had idols made of wood or metal or stones with no definite form round which they made several turns whenever they went into their houses, and from which they took permission when they went out on a journey, and then took with themselves.

The town of Ḥarrān, where Ibrāhīm had started his campaign against star-worship, was the centre of the Sabaeans. In this town, stars were the object of veneration. Belief in the stars and in the connection between the movements of the stars and earthly des-

tiny was very strong. Each star was the god of one event. Images of Mars, Jupiter, Venus, etc. were erected in the temples, and they asked for help from them, and sometimes sacrificed to them.

The thoughts of the Sabaeans sometimes turned to angels and jinn. The angels were the daughters of god, and were thought to influence events. They imagined that god had a wife who was one of the jinn.*

b) In Iran.

In Iran also many religions were being practiced, but the one which most people followed was Zoroastrianism, the official religion.

If we accept that Zoroaster was a true prophet who had a religion based on tawhīd, we must also acknowledge that his true teachings had been changed by the passage of time. Gradually, they changed their direction and even their form and identity to the benefit of the ruling classes.

Its very general and pleasant maxims were covered by a veil behind which the foundations and principles were transformed by the Magi and the priests to the advantage of themselves and the ruling classes. Thus it was that tawhīd became polytheism, and the pure sweet and excellent teachings did not stay: the shell remained, but the nut was thrown out, and the empty shells were filled with the ancient gods of the first times of the Aryan tribes.

c) In Europe.

The religious situation in Europe was like it was in Iran. Christianity had given up its original form, and had become stuck

* Taken from "Jihan dar 'Asr Bi'Ehat." by Muhammad Rafsanjani, Tehran, 1335.

in polytheism and the dogma of the Trinity.

In France, Britain and Spain, people did not believe in a Unique God.

d) In India: there were various religions, but idolatry prevailed.

Class and Racial Differences.

In Iran people were divided into classes, and each class had special restrictions and privileges. The class connected with the ruling council had the most privileges. Similarly in Europe and India, society was divided into classes and the right to possess land, to trade, and the exemption from taxes was the prerogative of the nobility.

At that time also, everyone of the people of the world thought themselves superior in terms of race over everyone else.

The Situation of Women in Pre-Islamic Society.

In Arabia, woman was a commodity, counted in the wealth of the father, husband or son; and after death she was inherited like the other possessions and became the property of the descendants.

It was a disgrace to have a daughter, and in some tribes the family buried this shameful thing with their own hands (see XVI: 59). In Iran, also, the form of class society did not bring anything better for women.

In Greece, woman was a creature of perpetual filthiness, a child of Satan, similar to an animal. In India, throughout her life, she was under the control of her father, husband or son, and had to address her husband as god, master and lord, and, like a slave, she had no right to ownership - after the death of her husband she had no right to take another husband. The revolting custom of

Sati, the burning of the widow alive with the funeral pyre of her husband, was also practised at that time.

In Japan, as well, woman was under the control of her father, husband or son for the whole of her life, and the daughter had no share in inheritance.

In China the father was master of the house and had so much power that he could sell his wife and children into bondage and slavery, and sometimes he even had the right to kill them. On top of this, daughters had no esteem and sometimes they were left in the desert to be the prey of the wild pigs.

The Romans also considered women to be the incarnation of evil and as harmful spirits, and kept them like children under their control.

So every human society at that time, wherever it was, was sunk in darkness, decline and oppression. Throughout the whole of the world, no glow or gleam of light met the eye, and although the desire for goodness and virtue still flickered in the depths of the heart of human nature covered by a dark opaqueness, it had been almost extinguished on the one hand in the blackness and gloom of humiliations, passions and oppression, and on the other hand in the prominent features of poverty and wretchedness. It could not illuminate the path for the seekers after light, purity and felicity. A darkness like a thick heavy cloud in the sky had submerged the daily life of all societies of the time in a deep sleep; and a horrible, powerful obscurity reigned which only the rising of a radiant sun could disperse.

This darkness was more overpowering in Arabia than in any other place, as if they had been invaded to the depths of degradation and debasement.

Hear what that best of men 'Ali (a.s.) says about those days: "...You people of Arabia followed the worst religion; you dwelt amongst rough stones and poisonous serpents. You drank putrid water and ate filthy food. You shed the blood

of one another and payed no heed to relationships. Idols are established among you, and sins cling to you." (*Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 26)

The Birth of Muḥammad, the Prophet of Islam (s.a.)

Muḥammad (s.a.) opened his eyes to the world on the 17th of Rabi' al-awwal of the 53rd year before the Hijrah (570 A.D.).

His father, 'Abdullah, was from the family of Hazrat Ismā'il, and had died before he could see his son. His mother was one of the most pious women of that time.

Muḥammad (s.a.) was entrusted to a virtuous woman called Ḥalimah, who suckled him and nursed him.

One day, Muḥammad (s.a.), who had not yet reached the age of four years, asked Ḥalimah if he could go into the desert with the other boys. Ḥalimah said: "I bathed Muḥammad and annointed his hair with oil. I put collyrium on his eyes and hung a Yemenite stone on a string and put it round his neck so that no harm could come to him from the spirits of the desert. But Muḥammad tore the stone from his neck and said, 'Don't worry about me. My God is taking care of me!'

So we see that from childhood he was the object of God's favour and grace, and was always guided by Divine friendship and help in works that were in their right time and place.

Muḥammad's behavior and speech in childhood were such that everyone's attention was attracted. In his youth, also, he was far from that which tainted those people in its environment. He took no part in their riotous poetry gatherings. He drank no wine, was an enemy of the idols; he was perfect in speech and act. Years before he became a prophet, the people called him '*al-Amin*' (the trustworthy one). He had a pure mind and radiant intellect, and a godly and heavenly character. Every year for one month he went to the cave of Hira and was with God in His mysteries and in prayer. At the end of the month, before returning

to his home, he went to the Ka'bah and made seven or more circumambulations.

At the age of forty, while busy in worship in the cave of Hirā, he was elevated to the station of Messengership.

For three years the Prophet of Islam (s.a.) received no command to call people openly to Islam, and during that time only a few people had faith in Muḥammad (s.a.). Among men, the first person who loved and followed him was Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.), and among women, Khadijah*. Then after three years he received the command to invite people openly to Islam, and he called his close family to be his guests; about forty of these people assembled together. The food which the Prophet (s.a.) had prepared was no more than enough to satisfy the appetite of one man, but by the power of God that little food filled everyone, and this was the cause of much amazement. Abū Lahab, without thinking what he was saying, cried out: "Muḥammad is a magician!" That day the relatives dispersed before the Prophet could speak, so he called them again the next day. After they had partaken of the food and hospitality, he spoke: "O Sons of 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib! No youth has brought to his people better than what I bring to you. I have brought you the best of this world and of the world of the resurrection. I have been commanded by Allāh to call you to Him. Which of you will extend his help to me and become my brother and successor?" Apart from 'Alī (a.s.), no-one answered. The Prophet placed his hand on 'Alī's shoulder and said: "This is my brother and my executor among you. Listen what he says and obey him!"***

* *Tarikh at-Tabari*, vol. 3, p. 1159; *Sinah ibn Hisham*, vol. I, p. 240-245.

** *Tarikh at-Tabari*, vol. 3, p.1171-1173.

One day the Prophet (s.a.) went up on to Mount Ṣafā and called the people around him. He said: "If I told you that an enemy, was going to fall on you this morning or this evening, would you trust me?" All together they replied: "Yes!" He said: "I warn you of a severe torment that is soon to fall on you." Out of fear that the speech of Muḥammad (s.a.) would take effect in the hearts of those present, Abū Lahab broke the silence and said to him: "Did we assemble here just to listen to this nonsense?"

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.) started his call with the slogan of tawḥīd and the worship of one God, and established tawḥīd as the basis of all other beliefs. He made known to men Allāh, who is nearer to man than man himself; he abolished all forms of idol-worship, revolutionised the atmosphere of Mecca, and drew people to his religion. Meanwhile, the Quraysh (the most powerful tribe in Mecca, to which Muḥammad (s.a.) belonged) were becoming ill at ease with the progress he was making and tried hard to stop his preaching, even once trying to kill him; but with the help and protection of Allāh and with His care and intercession all their tortures, persecutions and schemes were without effect and came to nothing. Day by day the call to Islam, and also the acceptance by people, spread, even to those who came from outside Mecca. People rose up with their souls in answer to this Divine invitation.

In the eleventh year of the prophethood, some people from Medina belonging to the Khazraj tribe came to Mecca to perform the ceremonies of Ḥajj. The Prophet invited them to Islam and they accepted, with this promise that when they went back to Medina they would call the people to Muḥammad's religion. They went to Medina and spread around the invitation of the Prophet (s.a.). The next year twelve Medinese accepted the faith of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.) at Aqaba and resolved: not to associate any with Allāh, not to steal, not to fornicate, not to

indulge in infanticide, not to bring malicious accusations against anyone, not to disobey the Prophet in any thing which he indicated. Then the Prophet sent a man by the name of Mus'ab along with them to teach the Qur'an, and thus a large group in Medina pledged their faith in the Prophet.

The Prophet's Migration (*Hijrah*.)

Till the thirteenth year of his mission, the Prophet (s.a.) called the people in Mecca to Islam, and stood firm when faced with the persecutions of the Quraysh. Eventually he got to know that the Quraysh had hatched an incredible plot to kill him, so he put Hazrat 'Ali (a.s.) to sleep in his bed in his place and left Mecca at night; he hid in a cave, and then migrated from there to Medina.

The hijrah of the Prophet opened an entirely new chapter in the history of Islam from which a stimulating and surprising leap forward was made. For this very reason, the hijrah of Muhammad (s.a.) became the beginning of the dating system of the Muslims.

With the presence of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.) in Medina, the tribes of Awsh and Khazraj became brothers for life in the shadow of the teachings of Islam, and a blessed sincerity and cordiality was established between them.

The example of Muhammad's behavior, his spiritual and moral superiority, and the naturalness of his pure religion, caused the people to come to Islam by the score, and in the end to accept it.

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.) was from the people and with the people, and did not maintain a distance from them. He shared with them in their gains and losses. He firmly criticised oppression and aggression, and refrained from and prevented them. He set forth all the principles which were, in the light of Islam, effective for the development of the position of women, and put an end to

the tyranny they had been subjected to previous to Islam, but he also vehemently fought against their unchastity and licentiousness, for he wanted them to attain their real development on the basis of the true principles of Islam.

He defended the rights of slaves, and had broad comprehensive programmes for their freedom. The Prophet of Islam created a society where black and white, rich and poor, great and small, were all equal and could enjoy the benefits of being human beings. In such an atmosphere, there could be no question of 'racial discrimination', for there was a much higher basis in virtue, knowledge, piety, human values and ethical greatness.

Let us look at a clear example of the great teachings of the Prophet (s.a.):

Juwayhar was a young man, poor and rather ugly. He came to Medina with a great enthusiasm for Islam, and accepted it. The Prophet gave him a place in the mosque, and later in 'Saqifah', a garden which was under the control of the Prophet, and made him its overseer.

One day the Prophet told him: "It is good for a man to take to himself a woman, and to choose a wife, so that he may keep his chastity and have a home-life."

"May God bless you, but I am poor and ugly; in what woman could there be such a desire that she would take me as her husband? Especially as I am not from a noble family."

"Juwaybar, with the coming of Islam all the nobility of the age of ignorance (before Islam) has been broken down together with all the standards of greatness and have been melted together. Black and white, Arab and non-Arab have all come from Adam, and God made Adam from the earth. For this reason today there is no black and white, nor even any results from imperfection or excess in something.

"The dearest person to God is the virtuous person.

"Now go to the house of Ziyād and ask for his daughter, Dhūlfā' on my behalf."

Juwaybar did what the Prophet had told him, but Ziyād, who was one of the nobles of the Anṣār tribe, did not accept, and said, "We only give our daughters to people like ourselves - and the Prophet himself knows that very well; so go back till I have consulted with him and give him my apologies myself."

He turned to go back, but because of his anger he cried out, "I swear by God, neither the Qur'ān nor the Prophet have said that one must give one's daughter to someone who is of equal status in family and in wealth!"

Dhūlfā' heard the voice of Juwaybar, and sent someone to her father. He came to her and she asked him, "What have you said to that young man that has made him angry?"

"The Prophet sent him to me to take you, my daughter, with my agreement."

"Juwaybar would not tell a lie; send him back and go yourself to the Prophet so that he may clarify the matter for you."

Ziyād did what his daughter had said. He sent Juwaybar back, and himself hurried to the Prophet and said, "Juwaybar brought a message from you. I want to remind you that I am an Anṣār, and that we do not give our daughters in marriage except to men of equal status from the same tribe."

"Juwaybar is a believer and a man of faith, and a man with faith is the equal of a woman with faith. Give him your daughter as a wife."

Ziyād then returned home and told his daughter what the Prophet had commanded. The daughter said, "Father! to disobey the Prophet's command is against the religion. And I am ready of my own accord, so accept Juwaybar as your son-in-law!"

Ziyād brought Juwaybar in front of the people of his tribe and gave him in marriage to his daughter on the basis of the command of Islam. He even gave the dowry to his daughter from his own pocket, and gave them a house with all necessities so that they would live happily.

Truly, this light was dazzling; this source or warmth-giving radiance lit up a flame in every heart that was a guide to all pure hearts on the path. And thus it was that the muddled souls of the people were led forth from the harrassment of the ~~glor~~ and darkness of that time, like moths who wing their way towards the brilliant flame, and turned in their hundreds towards Islam, seeking the protection of the illustrious, illuminating system of the Qur'ān.

20. Muhammad (ﷺ) the Foretold Prophet

Time of Expectation and Hope

The prophets of ancient times - especially Hazrat Mūsā and Hazrat 'Isā (a.s.), had given their followers news of the advent of Islam, even to the extent that indications of the special attributes of the Prophet of Islam appeared in their revealed books. For this reason, the Jews and the Christians and the followers of other religions were watching out for the advent of Islam, like people who see their ship with torn sails and broken anchor in danger of sinking in the sea and therefore direct their gaze at the shore of future safety.*

Some of the Jews had even found, through much searching, a place between the hills 'Ayr and Uḥud which were named in their own books as the 'centre of Islamic rule', and migrated there, waiting for the advent of Islam.**

* see Ibn Hisham's *Life of Muhammad*, translated by A. Guillaume (London, 1955) pp. 90-95.

** *Rawdah Kafi* p. 308.

The Qur'an is a testimony to the truth of these facts, that the Torah and the Injil (see lessons 17 & 18) had given news of the advent of the prophet of Islam:

سورة اعراف آية ١٥٧

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي
التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ
الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ
عَلَيْهِمْ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ
هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ.

Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Injil, bidding them to good and forbidding them evil, making lawful for them the good things and making unlawful for them the corrupt things, and relieving them of their loads and the fetters that were on them. Those who believe in him and succour him and follow the light that has been sent down with him - they are the prosperers.

(VII, 157)

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ
رُكْعًا سُجَّدًا يَتَّبِعُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سَمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أُنْ
السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطَاةً
فَارزَةٌ فَاسْتَعْلَفَ فَاَسْتَوَى عَلَى سَوْفِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزَّرْعَ لِيُعْطِيَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا.

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh, and those who are with him are hard against the unbelievers, merciful one to another. Thou seest them bowing and prostrating, seeking bounty from Allāh and good pleasure. Their mark is on their faces; the trace of prostration. That is their likeness in the Torah and their likeness in the Injil: as a seed that puts forth its shoot, and strengthens it, and it grows stout and rises straight, upon its stem, pleasing the sowers, that through them He may enrage the unbelievers. Allāh has promised those of them who believe and do deeds of righteousness forgiveness and a mighty wage.

(XLVIII:29)

This example indicates that the Prophet and his devoted companions started from nothing, and reached to the summit by self-sacrifice, dedication and faith, so that they surprised the world.

God has promised forgiveness and a great reward to those Jews and Christians who become believers and Muslims and cultivate righteousness.

سورة صف آية ٦

وَأَذَقْنَا لِقَا رَبِّكَ الْآخِرَةَ وَالْأُولَىٰ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُقْبَلَ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّمَنْ يَعْقِلُ ۗ
وَأَذَقْنَا لِقَا رَبِّكَ الْآخِرَةَ وَالْأُولَىٰ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُقْبَلَ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّمَنْ يَعْقِلُ ۗ

And when Isā, son of Maryam said:

'Children of Isrā'īl, I am indeed the Messenger of Allāh to you, confirming the Torah that is before me, and giving good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.' And when he brought them clear signs, they said: 'This is a manifest sorcery.'

(LXI:6)

سورة بقره آية ١٣٦

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ.

Those unto whom We have given the Book, and they recognise it as they recognise their sons, even though there is a party of them who conceal the truth and that wittingly.

(II:146)

سورة انعام آية ٢٠

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ.

Those to whom We have given the Book recognise him (Muhammad) as they recognise their own sons. Those who have lost their own souls, they do not believe.

(VI:20)

It comes out clearly from these ayahs that the previous prophets informed the people of the coming of Muhammad (s.a.) and of his characteristics, and the clear glad tidings exist in their religious books, so that when Muhammad (s.a.) appeared together with Islam, no room remained for any kind of doubt.

Because, if there had been no such news in the Christian and Jewish scriptures at the time of Muhammad (s.s.), it would not have been expected from the radiant thought of someone like Muhammad (s.a.) that he would stand up and say, so as to prove his messengership before all the people of the Book: "My name and my characteristics have appeared in the Torah and the Injil which are in your possession at this very moment." Because the enemies of Muhammad (s.a.) did not give up, and, in order to annihilate his message, they collected together the copies of the Torah and Injil so that they could prove that such characteristics were not in these books.

History is a witness that they tried every way that there was in their opposition to Muḥammad (s.a.), and even rose up to fight him, but they never managed with this facile and simple ruse to prove that these characteristics did not exist. So it is clear that abundant information concerning the Prophet of Islam exists in the sacred books.

Some More Historical Evidence.

Before the rise of Islam, two circles or groups of people had grown up in Medina. The first were Jews who had left their original lands desiring to witness the advent of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.).

The second were the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, who were the descendents of Tubba', the king of Yemen. When Tubba' came to Medina and learnt that that place would be the place of migration of the Prophet and the place where Islamic government would take shape, he said to these two tribes to remain in that place until such time as the Prophet of Islam appeared and then to support him.*

So they stayed there and gradually increased in numbers and became powerful to the point that they seized the houses and property of the unconcerned Jews, and committed aggression; and gradually they forgot the cause of their ancestors' staying in that town and became ignorant of why their ancestors had come there and made their settlement there.

However, the Jews, who were unequal with them in power, continued to tell each other of the advent of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.) and of safety from the aggression. The Qur'an says about the Jews:

سورة بقره آية ٨٩
 ...وَكَسَانُوا مِن قَبْلِ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا
 كَفَرُوا بِهِ...
 * Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 15.

And from before they had been praying for victory over the unbelievers, (but) when there came to them that they recognised, they disbelieved in it. (II:89)

Ibn Hawash (or Ibn'l-Hayyaban), a Jewish scholar, left Syria seeking to meet the Prophet of Islam (s.a.) and came to Medina, but while he was alive, Muḥammad (s.a.) was not yet called to his prophethood. For this reason, when he was dying, Ibn Hawash said to the Jews: "I left my extensive, comfortable life in Syria out of love to see the Prophet Muḥammad (s.a.), came here, and bread and date were enough for me. Alas! I did not achieve my wish. But know that he will rise up in Mecca and will migrate here. In eating he will be content with morsels of bread and dates; he will be so humble that he will ride on unsaddled mount. His rule will spread to an amazing extent, he will be afraid of none, and those who are an obstacle to the way of right and truth will be cast aside..."*

Zayd ibn 'Umar of the Hijaz came in search of the true religion of Ibrāhīm. On his way he had crossed from Mecca to Syria and to Mawṣul, but the more he searched, the less he found. In the end a Christian scholar said to him that there remained no trace of the original religion of Ibrāhīm, but that in those very days a prophet was to blossom forth in his own homeland from whose message and sayings he could obtain that original religion.

Zayd returned towards Mecca, but on the way he was killed. The Prophet instructed to goodness through his example, saying: "Zayd was someone who left this world in seeking the way to Allāh."**

Buhayra, a Christian scholar, saw Muḥammad (s.a.) in the latter's childhood. He recognised him from the signs he had read in the revealed Book. He said to Abū Ṭālib who was accompanying

* See Ibn Hisham (ibid) pp.94-95.

** Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 15, p.204

Muhammad (s.a.): "He will be a prophet. Look after him, and take him to his country quickly."***

Another Christian scholar, Nisūr, also when he saw Muhammad (s.a.) in the latter's youth, gave the news that he would become a prophet in a clear way: "He is the last prophet of time."

On the basis of these predictions of the holy Books, a number of people became Muslims at the very beginning of the rise and appearance of Islam without any coercion.

The Predisposition of the People of Medina towards Islam.

When the Prophet received the order from God to invite people to Islam, and at the time of Hajj, which existed in a form before Islam, he addressed the people and presented Islam to them. During this time he held a meeting with some of the tribe of Khazraj.

"What tribe are you from?" he asked.

"From Khazraj."

"Are you ready to sit together for a few moments and talk?"

"Yes, we are."

"I am calling you to the Unique God."

Then the Prophet read for them some verses from the sweet words of God, and they were so enraptured by the Qur'an, that they said to each other without thinking: "We swear that this is what the Jews were telling us of. Let not the Jews reach it before us." Then they all became Muslims, and when they returned to Medina they commenced the propagation of Islam. The Prophet also sent Muṣ'ab ibn 'Amīr after them to teach them the Qur'an and also to call others to Islam.

Muṣ'ab brought many groups in Medina to Islam; among them the Asīd, the heads of the Aws tribe, became Muslims and said to

*** See Ibn Hisham (ibid) pp. 79-81.

their tribe, "Muhammad (s.a.) is the very one whose coming the Jews were always announcing." And their tribe also became Muslims, and in this way Islam spread in Medina and became strong. Groups of Muslims from Mecca also moved there, and, in the end, the Prophet himself went to Medina and there he set up the Islamic government.

The Attraction of Salman to Islam.

Salman was an Iranian from a peasant family; his mother and father were Zoroastrians, fire-worshippers. Salman, whose name was then Rūzbah, they loved very much. They taught him the beliefs of their religion, and entirely prevented him from mixing with others.

One day, Salman went on his father's orders to inspect their fields. On his way he fell upon a church in which a group of God's slaves were engaged in prayer. Rūzbah started to think deeply, and he stayed with them till dusk approached, meditating. At last he understood that their way was superior to his father's and ancestors' way.

"Where is the centre of this religion?" he asked.

"In Syria," the answered.

His father became anxious because of his late return and sent someone to look for him. When he returned home, his father asked him where he had been. He described what had happened, but his father said, "The religion of your ancestors' is much better."

"With my own thinking," he replied, "I have seen that their way is purer."

His father became even more disturbed and rebuked him. He then locked him up in the house.

Rūzbah secretly sent someone to the Christians and informed them that when merchants came from Syria and had done their work, and when the time came for their return, they should tell

him and he would secretly leave his house and accompany them to Syria.

And thus it was that he went to Syria, and into the presence of one of the great Christian scholars, and begged him to take him as his servant and to instruct him on the acquisition of knowledge and servitude to God. The scholar accepted him.

When the scholar died, Rūzbah went to some of the other great Christians of the day, in accordance with his master's instructions. From the last of these scholars, who lived in the 'Umuriyah district of Damascus, he asked guidance to another, but he replied:

"I have no idea of anyone else, but in the very near future, a prophet will arise in the lands of the Arabs who will migrate from his birthplace to a place covered in date-palms. This land is situated between two lava belts. Some of the signs of his magnanimity and special habits are these. He will accept what is given to him out of respect, but he will not take food and alms given out of compassion and aid. Among the signs is the mark and seal of prophethood on his skin. If you can go there, then you should go!"

After the death of that scholar, Rūzbah asked the caravan leaders who were setting out for business in Arabia to take him with them to that place. They accepted, but on their way they betrayed him and sold him in slavery to a Jew from the Banī Qurayzā, who put him to labour in the vicinity of Medina. It happened that Rūzbah recognized the very place he had reached as one of the signs told him by the old scholar. So he was happy to start work in the date-groves of his master, but he was always looking out for the advent of Muḥammad (s.a.), and searched for him, but, because he was in difficult circumstances, he could not make many enquiries.

At last the day of meeting arrived. The Prophet had gone, together with some of his companions, to a place near Medina and Rūzbah got to hear of this.

He said to himself that this was the best time to look for the signs from this person himself, and to compare them with what he had heard from the Christian scholar. So he took some morsels of food which he had with him and gave them to that honoured person and said: "This food is for the special benefit of the needy, and since your companions are needy, please accept it from me."

The Prophet gave it to his companions. Rūzbah looked carefully, but he saw that the Prophet did not touch the food, and he could not contain himself with joy, for one of the signs had been found true in him.

With excitement he brought another morsel of food which he had with him to the Prophet, presented it to him and said: "This is my present to you, please accept it from me." The Prophet gladly accepted it and ate from it.

Rūzbah was looking at him and was enthralled. He then walked around the Prophet of Islam - the blessings and peace of Allāh be upon him and his family - to see the mark on the Prophet's shoulder. The Prophet understood what he wanted and took off the clothes that were on his back so that he see the mark. Rūzbah saw it and accepted Islam.

He was renamed 'Salman' and the means to free him were collected. He became close to the group of the companions around the Prophet, and with his insight and deep and wide faith he became, in the shortest space of time, the greatest of the Prophet's disciples.*

All seekers after truth, who were suffering from the dryness and burning heat of that time like an unquenchable thirst, were looking for the source of being and the water of life. Since the signs which they had read or heard of in the holy books were present in the Prophet, they gave their hearts to the ocean and washed their souls in that spring of the water of life and wisdom. Group after group gave their hearts to the pure religion of Islam

* Sirah of Ibn Hisham, vol. 1, p. 212-214; Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, vol. 4, p.54.

and became followers of Muḥammad (s.a.). The Qur'ān says:

سورة نصر آية ٢
..... يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا.

People, group after group, turned to Islam.

But together with these seekers after truth, there were groups of Jews and Christians and other enemies who did not embrace Islam, through bigotry or because their businesses or positions were endangered, although they were aware of the truth of that great, divine person.

They knew where the source of salvation was, but through obstinacy they clung to their illusions and did not desist from their stubbornness, but became caught in everlasting perdition and failed to reach contentment.

سورة بقره آية ٨٩
... فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ.

And when there came to them that which they recognized, they disbelieved in it; therefore the curse of Allāh is on the unbelievers. (II:89)

Now two examples.

Safiyah, the daughter of Ḥayy ibn Akḥṭab said:

"When the Prophet (s.a.) migrated to Medina and alighted at Qaba', my father and my uncle, Abū Yāssir, went to call on him in the half-light of dawn. The sunset came and they returned, and I went to them with childish joy. But they were very tired, and, contrary to their custom, they paid no attention to me. My uncle said to my father:

"Is he the one?"

"By God, I swear he is!"

"Did you recognise him?"

"Yes."

"Now what do you think of him?"

"By God, I swear that as long as I live I will be his enemy!"**

We will finish this lesson with another example of this black-heartedness.

One day the Prophet said to Ka'b ibn Assad:

"Do you not remember the example of Ibn Hāwash (the Jewish scholar who went from Syria to Medina - see above)? Has it had not effect on you?"

"Yes I do," replied Ka'b, "and if the censure of the Jews did not torment me when they say 'Ka'b is frightened to be killed', I would believe in you. But now I am in the faith of the Jews and I am safe from their censure, and I shall stay in that religion till I die!"**

The Qur'ān tells of the injury caused by this black-heartedness which is the origin of the destruction of life and contentment, and speaks of these people thus:

سورة بقره آية ٩٠
بَيَّسَّمَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بَغْيًا أَنْ يَنْزِلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ فَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ.

Vile is the thing they have sold themselves for, disbelieving in that which Allāh sent down, grudging that Allāh should send down of His bounty on whomsoever He will of His servants, and they were laden with anger upon anger, and for unbelievers awaits a humbling chastisement. (II:90)

* Sirah Ibn Hisham, vol.2, p. 518.

** Ithbat al-Hudat, vol. 1, p.350.

21. al-Quran THE MIRACLE OF ISLAM

Prophets and Miracles.

Divine Prophets have always been sent with clear signs, so that men might be convinced that they had come from God.

For this reason those who have souls like polished mirrors and like clear transparent springs, glistening and pure so that they can recognise these signs commit themselves and have faith; like the magicians of Pharaoh's time who, when they saw the amazing miracles of Mūsā (a.s.), how the staff became a poisonous serpent, understood that this was beyond the power of a human being, believed in him and ignored Pharaoh's intimidation.

The disciples of 'Īsā (a.s.) also saw with their own eyes the effects of his breath when he breathed into the bodies of the dead, and, by the will of God, raised the dead and gave them life. They were attracted to him, and the souls and spirits of the dead were given everlasting life through faith in 'Īsā (a.s.).

The Prophet of Islam, who was the last prophet and the best and greatest of them, and who brought an everlasting religion, the perfection of all Divine religions, which will last till the Resurrection, came at the time of his mission, with clear signs from God, so that he could be clearly a proof of the legitimacy of His true and perfect religion.

The Qur'ān, the everlasting miracle.

Thus it was that the Qur'ān, the everlasting document of Islam, appeared on the horizon of human thoughts and ideas. The torch which will always shine at the apex of the great religion of Muḥammad (s.a.) at the highest peak of human intellects, as long as the sun rises in the East. It is a brilliant divine sign whose lights, like the rays of the sun, are essential in every era and century and for always, for the continuance of life and the safeguarding of the happiness of all races and classes of humanity.

Within this framework and on this foundation, all that is necessary for man's guidance has come.

It elucidates the foundations of belief and also the relation of man and God and the ways of strengthening that relation in words with the softness of the clear waters of murmuring brooks, and the firmness of the standing mountains, attractive, eloquent and strong. It describes the social responsibilities of man; it teaches the ways and the rules of social behaviour.

It puts an end to class differences and unequal divisions.

It wishes the highest in man and his brotherhood and equality and his elevation.

Unequaled Eloquence.

Being conversant with vocabulary and having a good know-

ledge of words at one's fingertips is not such a great difficulty, but their combination and arrangement and harmonisation in a style which has regard for eloquence and fluency, and the construction of phrases with a variety of expression yet in the same way in which they arise in the mind, is the most important skill, and it is something which is not practicable without observing the narrow rules of literary exactness, and using craftsmanship and eloquence.

In the art of eloquence, it is said that for eloquence in any speaking or writing it is necessary to observe three principles:

- 1) Proficiency in words and their meanings.
- 2) Power of thought and subtlety of eloquence.
- 3) Power of expression, or skill with the pen.

But it must always be kept in mind that although all the rules and requirements of eloquence may be heeded, no-one can claim that his speech or writing is always the best, and that no-one can parallel him.

However, Allāh the Exalted, Whose range of power and knowledge is without limit, has so variously decorated His words in the Qur'ān with arrangements and harmonisations of words that no-one, be he the most eloquent man on earth, can bring its like. And this is the secret of the eternity of the Qur'ān, the everlasting prophetic document of Hazrat Muḥammad (s.a.).

The Qur'ān, according to the testament of history, shone at that time when the Arabs were at the zenith of their literary development. The famous poets and great orators, Imra'ul-Qais, Labid, etc., who are still counted as outstanding geniuses in the field of literature, wrote poems and gave orisons which sometimes reached the limits of greatness and which were written on curtains and golden plaques and attached to the wall of the Ka'abah.

But, with the rising of the brilliant sun of the Qur'ān, all of these lost their light and were eclipsed like the stars. The eloquent

Arabs were left bewildered by the eloquence of the Qur'ān, which was such that the enemies who were full of hate for Islam and Muḥammad (s.a.), who even took to the sword to wipe him and his religion out, were unable, with all their efforts, to find even one short mistake in the language and expression of the Qur'ān.

The Enemies' Judgement.

It was the time of Ḥajj. People were coming to Mecca from everywhere, and the Quraysh were uncomfortable from fear that the news of Muḥammad's prophethood might have an effect on the new arrivals. So a group of the Quraysh, with Walid at their head, gathered round them and related what unjust things they could about the Prophet and thus dissuaded the new arrivals from meeting him. Then when they were gathered, one of them said, "Let us say this man is soothsayer."

"They will not believe us," said Walid, "for his speech is not like the sayings of soothsayers."

"Let us say he is mad," someone else volunteered.

"No one will accept that," Walid replied, "because his speech and behaviour are not like a lunatic's."

"We shall say he is a poet," they said.

"This also will not work, because Arabs know all kinds of poetry, and his words are not like a poem."

"We shall say he is a sorcerer."

"Sorcerers have special methods, like tying knots and blowing on them, and Muḥammad does nothing like this."

Then Walid himself declared, "I swear by God, the speech of that man has a special sweetness and pleasantness. His speech is like a tree, luxuriant, with steady deep roots and branches which bend down laden with fruit. Thus we can say to people that his speech is bewitched, because it causes separation between father and child, wife and sister and brother."*

* This saying of Walid refers to the fact that every new Muslim, by his accep->

To discover the Qur'ān's eloquence, and also to find out that it is at the summit of eloquence, non-Arab speakers can turn back to the sayings of those Arabs who were experts in the language of those days and which are recorded in history, and also to present day authors who write on this subject, and to the acknowledgements of those specialists in this branch.

Fortunately, from the time of the Prophet (s.a.) till now, all specialists in the art of Arabic eloquence have confessed to the unparalleled eloquence of the Qur'ān, and have been overwhelmed in the face of it. For example, the famous contemporary Arab writer Abdulfataḥ Ṭabarī writes: "Arab history tells us of many famous men, knowledgeable in the best poetry and prose, like Ibn-el-Muqaffa', Jaḥīz, ibn 'Amīd, Farazdaq, Bashshār, Abu Nuwās, Abu Tammām and so forth, but all of them have shown humility when faced with the Qur'ān, and have of necessity confessed that the great Qur'ān is not of the words of man, but a Divine revelation."**

Dr. Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn, the powerful contemporary Egyptian writer, said: "The Qur'ān transcends the limits of prose and poetry, because it has special qualities which cannot be found in any poem or prose. So the Qur'ān cannot be called poetry or prose, rather it should be said: 'It is the Qur'ān, that is all.'**

Harmonisation of its Themes.

The speech or writing of a person, however skillful or eloquent he may be, will not be uniform in all conditions and circumstances. In particular, the works which appear in the days of any author's first writings are very different from the works which

emerge in the later stages of Islam, engages in a new direction so that he is sometimes forced to wash his hands of his own people or to oppose their beliefs.

** *Ruh al-Din al-Islami*, Beirut, p.30-32.

* *Ibid.*

come after many years and as the result of much experience and repeated practice; the later works are almost always better.

But the Qur'ān, in that it was sent down in the course of 23 years, and in that it was revealed in various circumstances and like a long flowing river passed over various stoney places, rapids, narrows, valleys and plains; and witnessed many amazing events, it remained forever, like a spring, clear and fresh. The unity and harmony of the themes and the style and expression of the Qur'ān are a source for wonder. We see this wonder reach its apex, and notice in the contents of the Qur'ān that many different subjects are dealt with, but the style and unity of expression remain constant.

It is clear that if someone, when he reached a stage of mastery over a special subject, shows what he can do, he may display brilliance, but if he undertakes something in another branch of which he is not a master, he will not produce any distinctive work. But the Qur'ān shines to an amazing degree in every area.

Scientific Wonders in the Qur'ān

Although the first and basic aim of the Qur'ān, according to what it says itself, is only to guide man to the great road of contentment and prosperity in the life of this world, the world of man, and on the way, in pursuing this aim, it expresses many truths from human knowledge in the natural sciences, in physiology and astronomy. And this is itself another great sign of the wonder of the Qur'ān. For the Prophet, according to the definite testimony of history, had never studied, grew up in an environment completely devoid of human knowledge and science (except literature), and was far from the centres of science of those days - Greece, Rome, Iran.

Now let us see some indications of this wonder.

1. Meteorology is a very new science. The knowledge of former peoples about the phenomena of clouds, wind, rain and snow did

not go beyond conjecture and what they could see, and, generally speaking, it had an air of imaginativeness and chance and was never established on a scientific basis.

Captains and farmers both had their signs and indications for forecasting wind and rain, but they did not really understand these phenomena. Thus things went on for thousands of years, till, in the 17th century A.D., the thermometer, and in the 19th century the telegraph, and, gradually, other things necessary for meteorology were invented and discovered. In their turn, scientists settled down to research, till, in the first half of the 20th century, the Norwegian scientist, Byerkness, succeeded in discovering the general laws of the formation and movements of clouds and the occurrence of storms and rains in all places.

After him, the extent of discoveries in this science, as in other areas, progressed: the rain-bearing properties of clouds, how rain is released from them, the formation and occurrence of hail, matters relating to thunderbolts and thunder and lightening and storms in tropical areas, air currents near the surface of the earth, and other matters, till knowledge reached extensive limits.

But fifteen centuries ago, when the Qur'an told about the winds and the rain and other phenomena, it was right when it told us about the latest, newest discoveries of meteorology. For example, it has now been proved that it is possible for a cloud to reach saturation point but to yield no rain, and for it to be just microscopic particles tiny enough to hang suspended in the air and not to fall and cause rain; however, by means of invisible particles of salt which are blown by the wind from the surface of the sea it will rain.

Or, something more important; the humidity in the air gathers round the crystallised snow flakes which lie at high altitudes and which are scattered by the wind. Eventually small drops and the first rain unite together, and, as a result of mixing and colliding together in the wind, they gradually become bigger and bigger,

and because of their own relatively heavy weight fall from the massed clouds.*

This is what the Qur'an made clear 15 centuries ago:

سورة حجر آية ٢٢
وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيحَ لَوَاحِجٍ فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَسْقَيْنَا كُفُوهُ...
...

And We send winds for making fruitful, and then we send down water from the sky, thus We give it unto you to drink of it.
(XV;22)

2. Until the invention of the aircraft and the possibility of high-altitude flying, man's knowledge and experience did not encompass needles of ice beyond the clouds. Till then no-one knew that mountains of ice-needles existed in the sky above man's heads.** But the Qur'an is very clear when it says:

سورة نور آية ٤٣
... وَيَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ جِبَالٍ فِيهَا مِنْ بَرَدٍ...
...

He sendeth down from the sky, from mountains therein, hail.
(XXIV;43)

3. Living things in other worlds.

Man, with the help of his knowledge of space, has set foot on the moon, but the matter of the existence of living things on other worlds has not proceeded beyond theory, and we can say that, from many signs, only is it possible that there are living things such as animals or man on some other planets and stars. But the Qur'an declares unambiguously:

سورة شوری آية ٢٩
وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَهُوَ عَلَى جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ.
...

* Mehdi Barzagan, Bad wa Baran dar Qur'an, p. 19-25, 59-60.

** Ibid, p. 140-143.

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and of what He hath spread out in both of them of animate beings and for their gathering together when He willeth; He is All-Powerful. (XLII;29)

4. In Surah 36 (Yā-Sīn), verse 36, we have:

سوره يس آية ٣٦

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ وَمِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

Glory be to He Who created all the pairs of what the earth produces, and of themselves, and of what they know not.

And in Surah 20 (Tā-Hā), verse 53, we read:

سورة طه آية ٥٣

وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَآخَرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْ نَبَاتٍ شَتَّى

And sent down water out of the sky, and therewith We have brought forth various pairs of plants.

In times when man's knowledge did not permit the respected interpreters of the Qur'an to know that plants and growing things came in pairs and couples, they interpreted and observed pairing in classes, species or by form and matter or other philosophical terms which do not exist in the pages of the Qur'an. But today, on the basis of new research, it has been discovered that not only are men and animals created in pairs, but other living things also. One of the most amazing phenomena in the world is the pairing and fertilizations of plants, which is all explained in Natural science books.

The Qur'an Makes a Challenge.

Not only from the point of view of eloquence, but also, as we have seen, in the fields of human ideas and society, and for all

levels of understanding, the Qur'an is a miracle. For rhetoricians it has its eloquence, for philosophers its wisdom, and for scientists its different kinds of knowledge. For all these reasons the Qur'an addresses all people and says: "If you say this book is the word of man, bring its like and its equal."

سورة اسراء آية ٨٨

فَلَنْ تَجْعَلَ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ عَمَلًا أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَآبَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ وَلَوْ كَانُوا بِغُضَبِهِمْ لَيُنْفِضِينَ ظَهْرًا

"Say: 'If man and jinn banded together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they would never produce its like, not though they back one another.' (XVII;88)

سورة هود آية ١٣-١٤

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُورٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَاللَّهِ أَشَدُّ حَقًّا مِمَّنْ شَقَقْتُمْ مِنَ ذَوْنِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ. فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ بِاللَّهِ وَأَنَّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

"Or do they say: 'He has forged it.'? Say: 'Then bring you ten surahs the like of it, forged; and call upon who you are able, apart from Allāh, if you speak truly.' Then if they do not answer you, know that it has been sent down with Allāh's knowledge, and that there is no god but He." (XI;13-14)

سورة بقره آية ٢٣

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ

"And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down on Our servant, then bring a surah like it." (II;23)

But we see from the testimony of history that from then till now no-one has had the courage to do this and produce its like. Of course, during the time of Muḥammad (s.a.) and after his death, some Arabs, like Musailamah, Sajah and Ibn Abī'l-'Awja, planned to challenge it but they were not able, and eventually confessed to their incapacity.

In the time of the Prophet (s.a.), the enemies of Islam, who used the most awful means in their work, torturing the Muslims, laying economic boycotts on them, plotting to kill Muḥammad (s.a.), and so forth, had no-one who could do a simple thing like 'bringing one surah like the Qur'ān'.

In the present day, too, the scholars who spend millions of dollars trying to destroy Islam would certainly attack it in this inexpensive and easy way (bringing a surah like the Qur'ān) if they could. If they had been able to do that up to now, it would have been a victory for them and the end of Islam and the news would have been blown on all the trumpets of the world's news-

In the end it is necessary to remind ourselves that if we get to know the Qur'ān, or get to know it better and put its great, magnificent and precise project into action, greatness will be ours, and more.

The huge edifice of our, the Muslims, greatness collapsed when we stopped putting the commands of this heavenly book into practice. So we fell down, we were satisfied only with the name of Islam.

Our departed greatness will return when we leave this crooked way and, starting again, become new Muslims and put the Qur'ān at the top of the sights of our hearts and our wisdom, and make it an example for life, as the Prophet said:

"When calamities encompass you like the darkness of the night, reach for the Qur'ān." (*Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, p.599)

22. The Message of Islam

THE MESSAGE OF ISLAM.

The spirit of the message of Islam can be summed up and shown in this phrase:

"*Lā ilāha illā 'llāh.*" - There is no good but Allāh.

It means that, apart from the One and Only Allāh, nothing must be worshipped.

This is the great, fruitful, abundant secret of the tree of Islam. For if we compare Islam to a tree, and its ideology to the seed or the root, we must realise that the health and fruitfulness of the tree is connected to the health of the seed or the roots. And then we see how strong, how steadfast and steely the basis of the ideology of Islam is, as revealed in this one phrase.

Contentment and Faith Go Together.

If all man's wishes were rooted in material things alone, and man felt no desire in his soul to transcend the material world, happiness would come from securing material things. But we know and see that man screams out with the voice of his spirit against the depths of technology and materiality. With every increase in material things, the craving of society for the spirit and for spiritual wants increases, and this phenomenon is clearly evident in the recalcitrance and disorder in society. The proof is the complete disruption and crisis which has cast its shadow over civilised societies since the beginnings of the twentieth century, to the point where the spiritual upheaval of society, especially among the young, is out of control.

The Russian psychologist and sociologist, Sorokin, said: "Because, in the culture of a materialist civilisation, man is only an organism with life, and is in no way attributed with the values and absolutes of goodness, beauty and wisdom, no way has been envisaged to reach spiritual perfection and spiritual wants."

Unless the sublime spirit of man which, like the keen-winged falcon, desires the exaltation of flying above the mountain ridges and peaks, soars to places far from human hands, and unless it is refreshed at the source of spiritual virtues, it will not be free of these disruptions and outbursts. All the crimes and desires for gratification are signs of the breaking of natural roaring waves which will not be quiet until they reach the safety of the shore. And the shore of safety is only faith in One Limitless Power, Infinite Knowledge, Pure Perfection and keeping away from imaginary gods. By remembering such a power, and having true faith in it, the heart finds contentment. The Qur'an recites this great truth in the shortest of sentences:

سورة رعد آية ٢٨
أَلَا يَذْكُرُ اللَّهُ تَظْمِينَ الْقُلُوبِ.

In remembrance of Allāh are the hearts at rest. (XIII,28)

Indeed the peace of hearts is only in remembrance of Allāh. Only leaning towards and attention to God can regulate human nature and guide it to happiness.

Islam weighs the value of man by this very standard and criterion and says:

سورة حجرات آية ١٣
إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىكُمْ...

Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allāh is the most godfearing of you. (XLIX;13)

The aim of Islam is to show, to indicate the better and higher horizons, and to save man from the ash-cloth of his material skin and his lusts, so that man may know the real pastures of green and luxuriant pleasures, and desist from journeying in the furnace of material ways and walk in the true way of contentment.

سورة انفال آية ٢٤
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُخَيِّرْكُمْ.

O ye who believe! Respond to Allāh and His messenger when He calls you unto that which will give you life.

By acquiring knowledge of Islam, the dead soul and dormant faculties of man will be made alive, will rise up and grow, and this life will reach the source through the windows of the laws and the perspective of the aims of Islam.

Now let us look at some of these perspectives: Islamic fraternity; watchfulness by the people; the status of knowledge; work and effort; the structure of the family.

1. Islamic Fraternity.

Islamic brotherhood is based on the highest human virtue, for it is far from hollow rootless formalities. It is a reality for the

strengthening of self-sacrifice in the Muslim individual and the keeping alive of the spirit of purity and sincerity and faith. One of its direct practical results is the creation of responsibility and sympathy between individuals in all aspects of life. On the basis of this brotherhood, a Muslim cannot refrain from sharing his brother's difficulties.

The project of initiating Islamic brotherhood in the first days of Islam was so skillfully and interestingly put into action that the poor and the rich were brothers in heart and soul.

Imam Šādiq (a.s.) explained Islamic brotherhood in this easy and expansive way:

"The believers are brothers one to the other, and are in the likeness of one man in that if one part is in pain, the other parts will not be at peace."

He also said - may the peace of Allāh be upon him:

"The spirit of Islamic brotherhood does not allow you to be full and your thirst quenched while your Muslim brother is hungry and thirsty, nor that you should be clothed and your Muslim brother naked. You must wish for him what you wish for yourself. Support him as he supports you. When he is travelling, guard his property and honour. When he returns, hurry to see him, give him respect as if you were his and he were yours. If he is fortunate, give thanks to Allah for his gladness. If he is in difficulty, help him."

2. Watchfulness by the People.

God has created white blood-cells in our bodies to be vigilant like guards against microbes, the enemies of the body's health; to defend against invasion, so that no disorder occurs in the human constitution.

This can be a clear model for Muslims to be awake concerning events in their own society like watchmen and guards, so that whenever spirituality and goodness and rightness fall captive into the clutches of evil and falsity they can root it out, and, if necessary, give their life for this serious thing.

Otherwise, of the society, nothing will be left but a lifeless corpse. For if men remain silent in the face of every injustice and impertinence, and stay quiet like a lagoon, they will create an atmosphere for breeding worms and leeches. Their brightness will soon become filthy, stinking and polluted.

So, like the irregular waves of the roaring seas, society must always be struggling, moving, attacking encroachments and shaking up so that impurities can have no effect on its existence.

To create a living society, Islam has let it be known that the questions of attentiveness and watchfulness by the people is one of the most necessary duties of the Muslims, and always warns them that the duties of society are of equal weight and on an equal footing with individual duty, and that Muslims must also satisfy their religion by this great means.

In this area the Qur'ān gives two commandments as practical advice: bidding to good (*amr bi'l-ma'rūf*), and forbidding evil (*nahy 'ani'l-munkar*).

Imam Baqir (a.s.) said:

"Bidding to good and forbidding evil are great responsibilities on which the other necessary foundations repose."

The day on which Muslim society forgets these two great laws, they will forfeit their greatness.

It must not be forgotten that bidding to good and forbidding evil are a great duty for every individual Muslim, and that by putting these into action they can create a healthy, living society.

3. The Status of Knowledge.

In the remote past, that is, before Islam, education was not public, and all people did not have the permission or the right to acquire knowledge. Education was the monopoly of a special group, i.e. the ruling class, the aristocracy, the nobility and royal families. This situation was more evident in countries whose system of government was based on the class system.

The Arab peoples especially, and the inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula, were further behind other countries as regards civilisation and culture, so that at the time of the advent of Islam, in the Hejaz itself, those who were literate (i.e. those who could merely read and write) could be counted on the fingers.

In such a time, among such a people, Islam raised the position of esteem of education to the level of a religious duty from the very first.

It is the Qur'an which in many places honours the searchers after knowledge with its divine and sweet call and gives them an elevated rank (see LVIII;11).

The Prophet (s.a.) said:

"The acquisition of knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim; Allāh loves the learned."*

Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) said:

"Seeking knowledge is a duty."***

Imam Bāqir (a.s.) said:

"(Just as zakāt on wealth is so that you give a part of it in the way of Allāh)...zakāt on knowledge is also that you instruct others with your knowledge."***

The history of Islam is a sure witness to the fact that Islam cultivates knowledge. This constant recommendation to the acquisition of knowledge by Islam was the reason that Muslims,

* - *** Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 30-41.

especially in the Middle Ages when Europe was in ignorant darkness, were always in advance and were the standard-bearers of knowledge and civilisation.

Of course, it must be remembered that Muslims taught knowledge together with deep faith in God and attention to spiritual values, and did not merely give their attention to profit in this world. Regretfully, in later centuries, when they turned away from the clear and beneficial commands of Islam, knowledge also fell from their sight, and thus they dropped behind in the caravan of the advancement of human knowledge.

4. Work and Effort.

These are two of the inherent principles of nature and creation. God has put within them the secret of progress and movement. The appearance of spring, the season of movement in nature, the flowing of rivers and streams, the bubbling up of springs, nest building and the coming and going of birds, the blowing of the breeze, the caressing of the gentle warmth of the morning, the waves of blessings of the rustling wind, the twists and turns of the branches and flowers, and leaves in the murmuring beckoning of the breeze, the pushing forth and growth of plants, the migration of birds from one climate to another, all these are attractive allegories and enticing allusions from creation for man, to lift him out of dispiritedness and to raise him and make him move, to rejoice, work, strive and endeavour, to grow and flow and to be in movement.

On the basis of this natural law, Islam has called to work and to striving. ^cAlī, the great and beloved leader, said:

"One who has land and water at his disposal, but does not utilise these two great resources and becomes poor - may Allāh curse him."

Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) said:

“Allāh loves no work as he loves agriculture - this usefully productive work.”

and

“Cultivators are the treasurers of the people.”

‘Alī (a.s.) also said:

“Attend to various kinds of trade. Allāh loves a trustworthy and truthful tradesman.”

From Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) again:

“Honour and magnanimity come from effort and work.”

And Imam Kāzim (a.s.) said:

“Allāh is disgusted with the quiet, lazy man.”*

Imam Bāqir, our fifth great, beloved leader - may the peace of Allāh be with him - went once to his field outside the town of Medina when the weather was burning hot, and sweat dripped down his sleeves, so that he could work there. A man who believed that work was a disgrace in the eyes of Islam came up to him and said to him in great surprise: “You, who are one of the Quraysh and of the first rank, why must you give so much esteem to this world and come to this place in this sweaty weather? If you died in this situation, what would you do?”

The Imam replied: “If my death comes, I have died in submission and obedience to Allāh. For I have come here to gain my family’s expenses, so that I do not have to stretch out my hand in need before you or others. Man should fear that time when his death comes and he is occupied in sin and disobedience.”

The man replied: “I wanted to counsel you, but it is I who have been advised!”

* All these six sayings are from *Wasa'il ash-Shi'a*, vol. 12.

It must be kept in mind that although Islam lends importance to trading and agriculture and other work and counts them as worship, it does not on the other hand sanction excess in and overdoing work. Islam says:

“Devote some hours of the night and day to work, and share out other hours for the other material and spiritual aspects of life.” (*Nahj al-Balaghah*, saying no. 390)

Rest, attend to the situation in your family, attend to Islamic duties, pray, read the Qur’ān, and visit your friends.

5. Marriage and Running a Family.

Marriage is another, natural principle. Even plants have a kind of marriage to bear fruits and be fertile. Contrary to the ideas of some, marriage is not entirely an individual and personal matter, for it has an entirely social result.

The strength and stability of descendents, the survival of society and nations, and also the creation of certain ideals are all connected with it, because the following of some of the aims of man and his society will be entrusted to those descendents who come after.

Thus marriage harmonises human instincts and protects from sin, and perhaps it was these necessities that caused God to make the institution of marriage have such a strong physical attractiveness for individuals so that if they did not realise its advantages they would pursue it by the requirements of instinct.

But this instinctive desire must be controlled by the guidance and commands of religion, for if not, like a car with a headstrong driver, the result will be a crash into the depths of the valley of misery and ruin.

For this reason Islam lays much stress on marriage and the ease of satisfying its conditions. The Qur'an says that marriage is a divine gift and necessary for peace and comfort (see XXX:21). The Prophet said:

"Marriage and having a family are my way and tradition."
He also said - may the peace of Allāh be always with him -

"Whenever someone whose conduct and faith meet with your approval, and he comes to you desirous of marriage, be ready, for if not, disaster and corruption will seize the land." (Wasa'il ash-Shi'a, vol. 14, p. 7 and Kāfi vol. 5, p. 347)

Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) said:

"The Prophet fixed the dowry for his daughters and women-folk at no more than five hundred dirhams." (Kāfi, vol. 5, p. 376).

Although it was a very small sum in the eyes of the notable families of those days. And this is itself a sign that Islam suggests the project of marriage for the control of natural instincts, and makes it very easy.

Moreover, Islam in this area has severely fought against gilded illusion in marriage and class differences, and has said that inappropriate and mistaken formalities are futile. Miqdād was a Muslim man with a head full of fervour and a heart overflowing with faith, but he was poor and without a tribe. Dabā'ah was the granddaughter of ʿAbdul-Muṭalib, daughter of an uncle of the Prophet of Islam and from the Quraysh. The Prophet, with their desire and delight and with discretion, married these two, and this well-known girl lit up the poor cottage of Miqdād with the warmth of her love for the rest of her life.

Imam Ṣādiq - may Allāh bless him - explained the philosophy of this marriage:

"The Prophet did this to bring marriage out of the framework of class formalities, and so that others should follow the Prophet, and know that the most honoured individuals before Allāh are the most chaste." (Kāfi, vol. 5, p. 344)

We can see another example in the life of the fourth Imam (a.s.). ʿAbdul-Malik Marwān learnt that the Imam had set his female slave free and had married her. In his view it was not fitting for someone of the position of the Imam to marry a freed slave girl, so he sent a letter containing an admonition to this great man. The Imam wrote in his answer:

"Your letter has arrived... You suppose that marrying a girl of the Quraysh would be a reason for an increase in my prestige. This is a mistake, because there is no better than the Prophet of Islam from whose family I am. I married my girl slave because she is chaste in the eyes of the religion, and that is no small thing. Allāh, by the blessing of Islam, has cleared away imaginary prejudices and privileges; the standard of worth is faith and piety. This admonition which you have written to me would have been appropriate in the time of ignorance and it is connected to the time before Islam. *Wa's-salām.*" (Kāfi, vol. 5, p.344).

23. The Last Message, the Last Prophet

From the first, Islam has said that it is the last message, and Muslims have accepted this fact with wisdom and with love, and have realised that Islam is the last manifestation of revelation, prophethood and the culmination of the former pure religions. Also, all Muslims, on the basis of ayahs in the Qur'an and hadith, believe that the Prophet of Islam (s.a.) is the last Messenger of Allāh who was the recipient of human leadership.

The great Qur'an has explained the universality of the pure religion of Islam in many ayahs and has shown that Muḥammad (s.a.) is the last emissary sent by God:

سورة احزاب آية ٤٠
مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ ابًا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا.

"Muhammad is not the father of any of one of your men, but the Messenger of Allāh and the Seal of the Prophets; Allāh has knowledge of everything." (XXXIII;40)

It has been said in a hadith from the Prophet to ʿAlī:

"In all respects your relation to me is like that of Hārūn to Mūsā (i.e. if Hārū was Mūsā's brother, I also take you as a brother according to the rules of brotherhood; if he was Mūsā's successor, you also will be my successor). Except that Mūsā was not the last prophet, and I am the last."*

He also said - may Allāh praise him -

"I am the last brick in the building of prophethood. With my coming the prophets have come to an end."

Imam ʿAlī (a.s.) said in *Nahj al-Balaghah*, the great book of learning and knowledge:

"With the Prophet of Islam, Muḥammad (s.a.), revelation came to an end." (Sermon 133)

The eighth leader, the true Imam, Hazrat Ridā - may the peace of Allāh be always with him, said:

"The pure religion of Muḥammad (s.a.) will not be abrogated till the Day of Resurrection, and also no prophet will follow him." (Bihār al-Anwār, vol. II, p. 34)

What we have just recounted is only a sample of tens of hadiths which clearly and succinctly explain the conclusive status of the Prophet (s.a.) and the perpetuity of his pure religion; they leave no room for doubt.

* It is an authentic hadith accepted by both the Shi'a and the Sunnis, see *al-Ghadir*, vol. 3, p. 196-202.

The Universality of Islam.

One of the greatest causes of Islam's ever-lastingness is its 'all-inclusiveness'.

Islam is a comprehensive project based on the human disposition, and it embraces all aspects of life: individual, social, material, spiritual, doctrinal, emotional, economic, legal and so forth, and it explains the basis of each in the most acceptable way, most realistically, for all peoples and all levels of people, in every time and place.

Thus European Islamicists, each with his deep view and research, have all acknowledged the omni-sidedness of Islamic laws and its universality.

Now let us investigate some aspects of this universality.

The God of Islam and the Qur'an.

The God of Islam is the Preserver of all worldly things. He is not the god of a tribe, for some special group only. At prayer we say: 'al-hamdu li'llāhi rabbi'l-ālmīn - 'Praise be to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds.' (I;2)

Every moment, in every place, whenever He wants, He brings into existence; there is no limitation on His Essence. He has authority over all existent things.

سورة ملك آية ١

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.

"Blessed be He in Whose hand is the Kingdom - He is powerful over everything." (LXVII;1)

He is aware of the manifest and the concealed, the past and the future, and everything, even what is in our hearts.

سورة تغابن آية ٤ و ١١

يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ. وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ.

"He knoweth whatever is in the heavens and the earth, and He knoweth whatever you conceal and whatever you declare, and Allāh knoweth whatever is in the breasts."

(LXIV;4)

Being with Him is possible in every place; there is no need to travel or to pass by a doorman. He is nearer to us than anything.

سورة ق آية ١٦

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ.

"We are nearer to him (man) than his jugular vein" (L;16)

He is a reality without parallel, beyond all human attributes and likenesses; He is not like the gods of other altered religions who have become man-like or like something created. Therefore He has no place, for He created place.

He is not contained in time, for He is the phenomenaliser of time. He is not associated, nor has He any beginning or ending. Therefore, He has no like or similitude.

سورة شوری آية ١١

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ.

"Like him there is naught; He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing." (XLII;11)

His Essence is beyond sleep, tiredness, remorse and so forth.

"Slumber seizes him not, neither sleep." (II;254)

"Say: He is Allāh, One." (CXII;1)

He is One without equal; He has no son or mother or father, neither partner or associate. This is the reality in 'Surah Tawhīd, which Muslims recite many times each day in prayer so as to be far from the possibility of associating something with Him (*shirk*).

The God of Islam is a God with all the attributes assigned to the pure, sweet tongue of the Qur'an, with an understanding wider, more magnificent, greater than can be conceived by created intelligences. Free from want, without partner, prevailing, close, supreme, compassionate, most compassionate, available to all so that anyone at any time may communicate with Him, bring his needs before Him, ask whatever he wishes of Him, that He may make available what is of benefit and what is expedient, as He Himself said:

سورة حديد آية ٩
وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُمْ لَرؤُفٌ رَحِيمٌ.

*"And verily, Allāh is to you All-gentle, All-compassionate."
(LVII,9)*

The Equality of All In Islam.

Superiority of race or segregation is not only eliminated and void in the eyes of Islam, but the equality of man is an absolute reality from the point of view of Islam, and it says that all men are equal, all are from one father and one mother and are members of one family, and from the aspect of nobility, origin and connections they are equal partners. No-one is better than anyone else, except in purity and devoutness.

سورة حجرات آية ١٣
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا، إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ.

*O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allāh is the most godfearing of you; Allāh is All-knowing, All-aware."
(XLIX:13)*

Islam and Freedom of Thought.

Islam is a firm supporter of logic, rational argument and freedom of thought. Imposition of ideas or beliefs, or the stifling of voices does not exist in Islam.

سورة بقره آية ٢٥٦
لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ عَدِيبَتِ الرُّشْدِ مِنَ الْعَمَىٰ...

*No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error.
(II;256)*

In Islam, investigation of the foundations of beliefs is a duty for every individual, and it is an obligation for everyone not to accept anything without proof, and if some commands and precepts are obligatory and must be accepted without why and wherefore, it is because they are from the source of revelation which cannot be in error, and because they have been stated through the Prophet and the pure Imams.

Islam censures those who blindly follow the beliefs of their fathers and ancestors, and commends self-investigation and deep examination. It rejects feeble-mindedness and vain speculation, and urges only to the persual of knowledge and certainty.

*And pursue not that thou hast no knowledge of; the hearing, the sight, the heart - all of these shall be questioned of.
(XVII;36)*

Islam grants its opponents the right to set forth their queries in reasonable discussion and to enumerate their proofs and listen to the answers.

*Say: 'Produce your proof, if you speak truly.'
(II;111)*

This was the reason that many Jews, Christians and those from other groups who took a stand against Islam, came to the Prophet or the pure Imams, and sat down and discussed their religious ideas.

Islam and the Invitation to Thought and Education.

Islam lends great value to thinking. It asks the learned and wise to think and think again about creation, time, night and day, the sky, the earth, animal life, man and the universe and what is in it.

سورة بقره آية ١٦٤
 إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَخْيَاهُ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ حَبْلٍ ذَاتِ عُرَّةٍ وَتَضْرِبُ الرِّيحُ بِالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرَاتِ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ.

Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, and the ship that runs in the sea with profit to men, and the water Allāh sends down from the sky therewith reviving the earth after it is dead, and His scattering abroad in it all manner of crawling thing, and the turning about of the winds and the clouds compelled between heaven and earth - surely there are signs for a people having understanding.

(II:164)

Also it asks them to research into the lives of those who came before, their thoughts and the causes of their decline and fall, so that they may keep far from the precipices of their destruction.

Divers institutions have passed away before you; journey in the land and behold how was the end of those that cried lies. This is an exposition of mankind, and a guidance.

(III:136-7)

In short, Islam desires that man should think deeply and freely and travel across the far horizons of thought and knowledge and take everything that is best for the improvement of his being. For this reason Islam values scientific advances and discoveries

which are for the help of humanity, and this is why scientists and scholars rose up in the centuries following the advent of Islam, to decorate the high road of human civilisation with the jewel of their scientific endeavours, so much so that their great names will shine forever at the summit of scientific history. They include Jābir ibn Hayyān, Rāzī, Ibn Sinā (Avicenna) and Khwājah Naṣīr ad-Dīn Tūsī, who were celebrated in all the sciences of their times: the intellectual sciences, natural science, astronomy, alchemy, etc. The books of Ibn Sinā were even being taught in European universities up to the end of the last century. Jurjī Zaydān, the famous Christian Lebanese writer, says on page 598 of his *History of Islamic Civilisation*: "As soon as Islamic civilisation found its feet, and the new sciences spread among the Muslims, Muslim scholars appeared whose thinking was more important than the founders of some of the branches of the sciences. In fact these sciences took on a fresh colour with the new researches of Islamic scientists, and progresses due to Islamic civilisation."

Islam's Life-Concept.

From the view of Islam, there is no opposition between the material and the spiritual life, the world and religion. Similarly, those who do not work in this world or make no effort are not approved of, although those who do not think of anything apart from individual benefit and consumption and profit are also detested from the point of view of Islam.

Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.), the sixth Imam, said: "He who abandons this world for the next - i.e. he who withdraws from the activities of life in the name of asceticism - and he who gives up the next world for this world, both are not from among us." (Wasā'il ash-Shi'a, vol. 12, p. 49).

So it can be said that in this matter Muslims should adjust their actions with equal movement in this world, advancing with

its happiness, and in the spiritual world. Therefore in Islam there is no monasticism, being a burden on society, social withdrawal, egoism or seclusion. The Prophet (s.a.) said: "There is no monasticism for us; the monasticism for my followers is jīhād in the way of Allāh." (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 70, p.114).

Islamic Commands and the Advance of Time.

The transformation, evolution and development of the means of living and progress in the various elements of civilisation have no kind of incompatibility with the eternity of the commands of Islam, because the incompatibility of a law with this kind of progress is because the law depends on fundamental means and special factors. For example, if one makes a law: Only the hand must be used when writing, only a donkey must be used for travel, etc. This kind of law cannot come into action when science and civilisation advance.

But if it is not in contradiction with fundamental means, and at the time of making the law these were only used as examples, they will not clash with the occurrence of new means and the advance of civilisation.

Islamic laws are of this latter category, that is to say they do not look especially at the means of one period in history. For example, they say: One must be unconquerable with regard to foreign powers so as to defend one's vital and human rights. This law, although it was declared in the time of the sword, never depends on the instruments of that time, i.e. Islam never says: The Islamic jīhād must only be with swords. Thus it is practicable today. Similarly with business transactions, trade, work, etc.

So, however much civilisation and its means and elements expand, it will never leave the domain of inclusion in the laws of Islam, and this is one of the secrets of the eternity of Islam.

Does Islam Dispense with Contemporary Ideologies and Systems of Thought?

There is no doubt that man has progressed far in the way of knowledge, but scientists themselves confess that what they know in the world of creation is not comparable with what they do not know. And basically, since their vision is limited, they cannot find out all the secrets of the world.

Moreover, each leap forward that man makes is not immune from error. Therefore, in the area of human aspirations, not everything that comes forward, in every field, can be one hundred per cent imbued with certainty, because it is possible that environmental factors and other unforeseen things have an effect on man's thinking and outlook and take him far from reality.

But the fundamental project of Islam, since it grows from the root of revelation, has nothing to do with the possibility of mistake, and can give trustworthy guidance at all times.

Of course, with the condition that these pure laws are not inserted within the framework of other deviated systems, whereupon they become completely incapable of deriving advantage.

The Continuation of Divine Assistance.

Some imagine that the meaning of the conclusive nature of the Prophet's mission is that after him connection with the hidden, divine world has been interrupted and stopped. This is not valid because the meaning of its conclusiveness is only that after the Prophet of Islam (s.a.), no other prophet or religion will come, not that in a general way connections with the unseen world are also severed.

For with the understanding of us Shi'a Muslims, whereby we believe in the *Imamate* and *Walāyat* of the twelve pure Imams, this connection is everlasting and is continued by means of these

pure ones. And this is one of the distinctive points of the Shi'a school. Mulla Şadra has written in *Mafātih al-Ghayb* - Keys of the Unseen - : "Revelation, that is to say the descent of the angel to the delegated and prophetic eyes, has been forever cut off, but the door of inspiration and illumination has not and will never be closed, and it is not possible for it to be interrupted."

How can Islam be Practised in the Present Day and Age?

Although corruption in our world is greater today, and although as time rolls on it becomes greater, and in the end more destructive and more annihilating, we must remember that generosity and magnanimity are found within increase in difficulty. So our independence and individuality demand that we struggle with the aberrations of the times.

Basically, control and reform of the environment can be considered as one of the most pressing duties. The prophets have also taught us by their lives the lesson of the struggle against the aberrations of the times. They never followed the perverse desires of the pulsation of their own societies or the various passions of the environment; eventually they made the environment their own environment.

The Prophet of Islam - may the peace of Allāh be always with him - struggled constantly against the aberrant and amoral customs of the ignorance of his time, till he built another society and environment.

Class differences, the inferiority of women, idol-worship, tribal wars, and tens of other kinds of amorality were among the conventions and customs and beliefs of the people of those days, but the courage of the prophet saw that all of them were destroyed.

Some of the chiefs of the Quraysh, from the ^cUtbah group, were very unhappy about the Prophet's method, so they arranged

a meeting and after they conferred together with him to make him deviate from his way by promise and threat, but the Prophet replied to them: "This is what I was delegated to do. I swear by Allāh that even if the sun were put in one of my hands and the moon in the other I would not deviate from my way, nor give up my faith, till victory or death ensue."

So let us follow the way of the iron-willed leader and envoy of Allāh.

24. The Imamat

SUCCESSION TO THE PROPHET

Eventually the inevitable occurred and the spirit of the Prophet (s.a.) flew to its eternal abode. For in the words of the poet Nizāmī, 'he who has not died and will not die is only God.'

It was clear that with the death of this great man a storm would blow up over the peaceful ocean of Islam, and that turbulent waters would be churned up. The ambitious would try to benefit and to get as much as they could from this turbulence and commotion, to fish in these troubled waters. On the other hand, we know that the great mass of people believe anything they see; they have always been thus and have always been fuel for a fire that anyone may care to kindle. They need constant training and continual taking care of, and without an educator they cannot reach their own perfection.

Now we must ask if such a society, in such conditions, needs a leader who can take the reins of command in the place of the Prophet or not, so that the result of all the pains the Messenger

of Allāh took should not be dissipated. Is there not a need for a knowledgeable, political authority who is thoroughly acquainted with the Divine laws and who can guide and lead the people on the right path in the right way?

The Shi'a belief holds that the generous Grace and Love of God and His infinite wisdom demand that after the Prophet the people should not be without a leader. Such a leader must be sinless and wise, so that his correctness of speech and action may be a guarantee and a true sign of a superior man, someone selected by God. He must take the reins of the Muslim community in his hands and lead and guide them with extensive wisdom and foresight, without error, and this he must take from the Prophet of Islam. Because there is no reason for God, Who was considerate of the people in the time of the Prophet to change His judgement and to withdraw His loving concern.

How could it be possible that God, Who by His Grace created thousands of elaborate details for the protection and growth of our bodies, Who caused the eyebrows to grow so that the salty, bitter, tainted sweat of the forehead cannot hurt the eyes, and Who made the eyelashes also so that under their outspread canopy the eyes can be more beautiful and better protected, how can God, Who created these and many more known and unknown things, have neglected to appoint a goodly successor to the Prophet? Does not the bringing into existence of the best of communities, which is the aim of Islam, need the selection of the best of leaders? Is not the appointment of a sinless leader, educator and Imam the basis of the contentment of society? Can Islamic society attain contentment and happiness without divine supervision and leadership?

So if there is a need for the divine, sinless leader, and Islamic society wants a divine educator, how can it be said that this matter has been ignored by Islam and that the people have been left to themselves?

In short, the same philosophy which demands the appointment of the Prophet also precisely demands that God introduce and appoint a successor through the Prophet.

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.) said in the latter part of his life: "O People, I swear before Allāh that I have explained what will make you nearer to heaven (contentment) and what will make you far from the Fire (error)". (Uṣūl Kāfi, vol. 2, p.74)

With this explanation, how can it be said that the Prophet of Islam did not appoint his immediate successor?

Is the Qur'ān Not Sufficient?

The great and mighty Qur'ān is the fundamental basis for every kind of Islamic concept. Like a mighty rock, all the fruitful buildings of Islamic knowledge have been made steady on it. It is the clear spring from which all the streams of insight flow. The credibility and prestige of other religious foundations rest on it.

But, on the basis of the proofs we shall give, one cannot be content with the Qur'ān alone to solve the problems of leadership, the differences which crop up in Islamic society, or the satisfying of the needs of the Muslim people.

1. Firstly because the Qur'ān and its great and abundant contents need commentary and explanation. Since all the verses are not alike in clarity and openness, unacquainted and unknowing readers in the first moments of their journey may become lost and not take the path to their destination.

So the Prophet himself or those appointed by him who have a spiritual link with what is beyond the external world, must be a guide in this valley also, so that they can interpret and explain the ayahs according to Allāh's purpose. For if not, ordinary people will sometimes interpret incorrectly and will

end up far from the truth.*

It is recounted that a thief was brought into the presence of the Abassid Caliph Muḥtaṣim so that he might have the punishment proscribed in the Qur'ān administered to him. The command of the Qur'ān is: "Cut off the hand of a thief." But Muḥtaṣim did not know from where the hand should be cut. He asked his Sunni Culema. One of them said:

"From the wrist."

"From the elbow," another said.

Muḥtaṣim was not satisfied. He was forced to ask Imam Muhammad at-Taḥī (the 9th Imam (a.s.) who was present, and he replied:

"Four fingers must be cut off."

"Why?"

"Since Allāh has decreed in the Qur'ān: '*And that the places of sajdah are for Allāh.*' (LXXII;18), that is the seven places of the body, of which one is the palm, which in sajdah contact the ground belong to Allāh, they should not be cut off."**

All those present accepted and were satisfied with his proof.

This kind of interpretation is in fact interpretation of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān, and is peculiar to the descendents of the prophetic mission, and no-one, to whatever degree he may be a master of interpretation, is able to succeed in perfectly understanding interpretation in this way unless he has taken the habit from the Household of the Prophet and has taken them as his model.

* The great Prophet of Islam (s.a.) said that everyone who interprets the Qur'an according to his own opinions will have the place in which he sits at the Resurrection made the site of the gathering together of fire. (Tafsir as-Safi, vol. I, p. 21)

** Nur ath-Thaqalayn, vol. 5, p. 439.

2. Another proof is that what we have said concerning the need for correct interpretation of the Qur'an concerns only one side of the Qur'an, the exoteric meaning and the commands of the Qur'an. But in the shelter of these exoteric words and meanings, a deeper and wider aim, a spiritual profundity is concealed, especially in the sections on knowledge, beliefs and the virtues.

The respected Prophet (s.a.) said: "The Qur'an has a beautiful outer meaning and a profound inner meaning." (Uṣūl Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 599).

He also said: "The Qur'an has profundity, and the profundity of that is deep too, up to seven inner meanings." (Tafsīr Sāfī, vol 1, p.39)

Truly, all the Qur'an has, according to the words of the great exegetists, a hermeneutics and an inner meaning, and to arrive at them by thought and research alone is not possible. It is not explicable to all through words, for the ability to perceive and practice this is not given to all men. Only those near to God, the pure, those free from corruption, can comprehend this, and use it for the solution of the differences and incidents between men, and learn it, and then, by virtue of the immunity from error and mistake that they have from God, teach it to others.

These ones near to God, the slaves immune from error are the Prophet (s.a.) and the Household of the Prophet (a.s.) about whom the Qur'an said:

سورة احزاب آية ٣٣
 اِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلِ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيراً.

"Household of the Prophet; Allāh desires only to put away from you abomination and to cleanse you." (XXXIII:31)

There is also a hadith that only the Prophet and his Household, who are the original ones to be addressed by the Qur'an, can perceive all the truths of the Book.** That is to say the Prophet who was addressed by Jibra'il and his Household, since they are the family of the Prophet, are more acquainted with the meaning of the Qur'an.

It is because of this connection (the Qur'an and the Household) that the Prophet said to the people in the last days of his life: "I leave two things in your trust, the Book of Allāh and my descendents; if you attach yourselves to these two you will never go astray."*

3. The Qur'an needs a sinless, enforcing guarantor. Since the Qur'an is a fundamental law, a kind of constitution, it needs an enforcing guarantor and a power to implement it. But only he who like the Prophet (s.a.) is free from error and who understands and knows the Qur'an with competence, can be the guarantor of its commands and laws.

These special qualities are to be found in the beings of the Imams (a.s.), and the best witness to this is the few years of the leadership of 'Alī (a.s.), who, despite the difficulties which beset his holding of the rein of government, carried out to the end the great and resplendent laws of Islam each and every one.

As a postscript, the summary and fundamental of this lesson can be found in a discussion which students following the sixth Imam, Ja'far as-Sādiq (a.s.), had with one of the Sunni school in the presence of the Imam.

* Ibn Haubab, Musnad Beirut, vol. 3, p. 17. al-Ghadir, vol. I, p. 55. Ghayat al-Maram, p. 212.

** Tafsir Mirat al-Anwar, p. 16.

A man from Damascus was given a meeting with Imam Šādiq (a.s.) and said that he had come for a discussion with one of his students.

The Imam said, "Introduce him to Hishām." Hishām was the youngest of his students.

"O Boy," said the man from Damascus, "ask me concerning the Imamate of this man (Imam Šādiq (a.s.)."

Hishām was angered by his lack of manners and shuddered. But he concealed his temper and began.

"Is your Creator more kind and loving towards His slaves, or the slaves themselves?"

"The Creator."

"What has the loving Creator done for his slaves?"

"He has appointed a clear guidance and proof, to protect them from differences and disunity, and to establish friendship and unity among them. He has made clear to them their religious duties."

"Who is that guide?"

"The Prophet."

"Who is it after the death of the Prophet?"

"The Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of the Prophet of Allāh."

"Can the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of the Prophet prevent us from differences today?"

"Yes."

"So why do you and I who are both Muslims have a dispute, or in other words, why have you come here from Damascus as a result of this difference?"

The man from Damascus was silent and said no more.

Imam Šādiq (a.s.) said to him: "Why don't you speak up?"

"What shall I say?" he replied. "If I say we have no difference, then I lie. And just as I said the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of the Prophet should take away the difference between us, so this also is untrue, because, in many instances, the Book of Allah and

the Sunnah do not have a clear and obvious meaning that could dispel our differences."

So the man from Damascus said that he wanted to ask the very same question from Hishām. The Imam agreed.

"O Hishām. Who is the more loving towards people? God, or the people themselves?"

"God."

"Did he send them someone to protect the unit of Muslims and to take over their control, to explain to them truth and falsity?"

"Are you talking about the time of the Prophet, or about now?"

"In the time of the Prophet, it was him; no, tell me about now."

"Today it is this man who is seated here and to whom people come from every corner of the land, and who gives us news of the heaven and the earth; and this knowledge was bequeathed to him from his father and so on back to the Prophet."

"How can I verify and accept this statement for myself?"

"Go now and ask him anything you like."

"That's right, there is no other excuse; only I must ask."

Then Imam Šādiq (a.s.) told him about his journey and of the things that happened to him on his way which only the man could know of. When he had explained so that no doubt remained for him, the man declared his belief in the Imam.*

* Usul Kafi, vol. 1, p. 171-173.

25. The Spiritual Guidance of the Imam

The life of the Prophet (s.a.), as well as his deeds, are a sure demonstration of the basic project of Islam. He was both the political leader and the social governor of the Muslims, and the bringer of the revelation, who delivered the commands and laws of Islam from Allāh, employing them in the field of Islamic government. His actions were the manifestation of the law, his behaviour pure virtue, and his instructions the guidance and leadership of a strong and wise man. He was not content merely to counsel and advise, but rather proceeded to establish a model society founded on true justice.

Since Islam also gives mundane sanction to the securing of satisfaction within the society, this does not mean that it refers the punishment of those who damage social happiness with their criminality to another time; for, in this case too, it carries out the prescribed punishment for these people in this world also. So government and leadership together formed the work of this great man.

But, of course, Islam has the distinction over other, worldly systems of government that, together with this side of the coin, it always looks to the being of each individual, and it always recommends the keeping pace of Islamic laws with the pursuit of spiritual and human virtues. This latter it is which today within civilisations is left to oblivion, and gradually the festering and putrifying results of this are seen: the cause of this is the forgetting of humanitarianism, spirituality and the future life.

However, Islam has lent a special emphasis to this important point, and Islamic leadership has always established the basis of its philosophy on the spiritual training of mankind.

The majority of men are unaware of the reality of their own exalted human essence, since it is so subtle and delicate that it is only seen by the clear-sighted. So, in the understanding of the ordinary man, this verdant land of the existence of each human being is situated in an area far from his cogitation and ideation, and he cannot conceive of this land, let alone be a leader towards it.

How can man, who, after the passing of centuries and centuries, has still not come to understand even half of the physical actions and reactions that govern his body, expect to know its metaphysical side? Or give guidance and a way to reach that far objective?

So, without any dispute, the leader to this land must be someone, the essence of whose existence is in union with the metaphysical world, and who is in relation with and knows this terrain from being a traveller in its known and unknown valleys. Till you have not travelled, how can you be a guide?

Now, is it right that we should wash our hands of our spiritual destiny? Should we suppose that we have not noticed the spiritual genius and sublime essence of man? And take him to be the equal of a beast and leave him in the world of appetites and the libido?

No, never! This is not the reality of man's great status.

Man, with his spiritual and celestial needs, and with the special genius which God has placed in his character, is the masterpiece of creation, and the sun of the world of created things. This is why he takes his place like the world-illuminating sun in heights beyond reach, and sheds his warmth and heat on all quarters of the world like the rays of the sun.

Since it has been determined thus, man is no mere wanderer in the order of creation: he is a small speck, but the great Divine Sun shines on him, and God regards him with his special favour out of all creation.

We can see the results of this favour from God to man along the length of human history in His sending of the prophets. God sent the prophets on the basis of this love and favour, so that they might lead men and take their great but turbulent spirit to the shore of that great salvation and eminence.

The great Qur'an refers to this reality in numerous verses, as, for instance, when Ibrāhīm (a.s.) asks God:

سورة بقره آية ١٢٩

رَبَّنَا وَإِنَّا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ.

"And, our Lord, do Thou send among them a Messenger, one of them, who shall recite to them Thy signs, and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them; Thou art the All-mighty, the All-wise." (II;129)

In this verse we clearly see that apart from knowledge and wisdom and guidance, the purification of the soul, which is the same as spiritual training, is counted as one of the essentials of the calling of the prophets.

In the school of the illustrious Prophet, his followers benefit from this special training, and participate in the following of a dazzling and wondrous path of perfection. Salmān Farisī, Abū

Dharr, Miqdād, 'Ammar, Uways al-Qaranī and many others are among this distinguished group.

Their beings were pure and righteous springs; they were purified from all badness; they wished for nothing apart from Allāh, and saw nothing apart from Him. Only Allāh ruled in their beings, throughout their souls, hearts, spirits and bodies.

Similarly, virtue and the refining of the spirit is not a superfluous matter of mere formality, that we should be indifferent to, and set apart from all other matters of life, to be attended to only when we feel like it, or at our leisure. No, virtue is the builder of life and a part of it, even, much more important than it. For, according to the testimony of wisdom and the senses, the great qualities of spiritual virtue and purity are so immense and so fathomless that man can with its protection leave his form and mould and reach to the spiritual life, and realise the high reality of his humanness; till he sees that which is beyond sight.

Indications of Spiritual Life in Islam.

سورة نحل آية ٩٧

مَنْ عَمِلْ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً...

"And whosoever does a righteous deed, be it male or female, a believer, We shall surely give him to live a goodly life." (XVI;97)

"O believers, respond to Allāh and the Messenger when He calls you to that which will give you life." (VIII;24)

It is obvious that the life which is mentioned in the above verses, is not the ordinary life. It is nothing but the spiritual life, virtuous human existence, which can only be obtained from the way of righteous action and refinement of the soul.

How is the Spiritual Life Found?

As with other phenomena, the finding of the spiritual life requires the fulfillment of certain conditions. The spiritual life is the fruit of man's behaviour and deeds; naturally, that behaviour and those deeds which are formed by true and righteous training, which are taught by celestial teachings.

The command and prohibition of God, which we call the shari'ah, stand in exact correspondence with the truths and realities of the world of creation and the realm of existence; that is to say, creation and genesis. Since we are unaware of the truths of the universe, its workings, its ins and outs and its happenings, for our intellects are insufficient, we are ignorant of the behaviour which builds our spiritual lives. But the Imam (a.s.) reveals these high truths and superior workings to man like a wise and loving teacher, with many clear explanations, so that we may become filled with bliss and reach to the spiritual life.

So, the way of Islam (*din*) is the sum total of realities and instructions which are greater than our ordinary understanding and which Allāh has explained by means of the Prophet and his pure, unsullied representatives, so that the spiritual life may take root within us, and assure us of eternal bliss.

Now, if we obey the command, salvation will be ours; if not, it is our loss. Just like a child who is placed under instruction, who hears only command and prohibition from his instructor, and who does what is required of him without asking why. Although he does not understand in the depths of the matter what it means, he will, after the passing of the days of his education, live a life of contentment, because of the virtue and praiseworthy ways of action which were brought into action within him. However, if he revolts against carrying out the orders of his instructors, it will result in inestimable loss to him.

Life Guidance.

Now let us see who is the guarantee for this spiritual life and its perfection, which surely needs a guide?

Will he be found among ordinary men? Or will he be someone who speaks with sureness and dependability, who is in his behaviour free from error, immaculate, and who himself stands on the pinnacle of the spiritual life?

Until God guides someone completely Himself, He does not entrust to him the duty of guiding others.

سورة يوس آية ٣٥
أَفَمَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ أَمْ مَنْ لَا يَهْدِي إِلَّا أَنْ يُهْدَىٰ فَمَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ.

"Allāh - He guides to the truth; and which is worthier to be followed - He who guides to the truth, or he who guides not unless he is guided? What the ails you, how you act?" (X:35)

More particularly, the Imamate is not leadership in the ordinary sense, for this is the duty of every Muslim, and not confined to the Imam: The meaning of guidance here is esoteric guidance; and those who have not found the spiritual life, to whom the realities of the universe have not been revealed, cannot take on this kind of leadership.

By looking into the ayahs of the Qur'an which speak of Imamate and guidance, we can see that everywhere that Imamate is mentioned, the subject of guidance is also mentioned in commentary and explanation.

What is Spiritual Guidance?

The Imam, besides being an educator in the commands of Islam, the exoteric side, is also the leader in the esoteric of Islam; he is the walī. That is to say, he takes man through the inner way, the man who has the predisposition and the worthiness, and leads him towards perfection.

This guidance, because it is carried out on the basis of spiritual blessing and inner stations, is called esoteric guidance.

Esoteric guidance is a superior station which the great prophets reached after the station of prophethood. Thus, Ibrāhīm (a.s.), after he had been made a prophet, was raised by God to the station of esoteric guidance.

سورة بقره آية ١٢٤
إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا...

"Verily, I make you an Imam for mankind." (II:124)

When he had reached the station of walāyat and esoteric guidance, the Imam (a.s.) can apply himself to great works which seem miraculous or impossible from the point of view of ordinary people. The Qur'ān tells how Āṣif ibn Barkhyā, one of the counselors of Sulaymān (a.s.) could cause the throne of the Queen of Sabā to come before Sulaymān (a.s.) ahead of her own arrival, in a time shorter than the blinking of an eye, since he had a certain cominance over the supernatural world and could take away the shutters covering the facts and realities of this world.

Our sinless leaders and Imams - may peace be upon them - are situated on a level greater and higher than Āṣif. The proof of this is the authoritative and documented histories of the narrators, where we find many stories of the spiritual guidance and inner walāyat of our Imams.

Therefore, the Imam, since he is in the highest stage of spiritual life, has a kind of spiritual guidance and charisma, which can have an effect on the hearts of worthy people and cause a transformation in them, attracting them towards perfection. We can read in histories about the states and conditions of groups of followers of the Imams, and how they illuminated their times with their brilliance.

The Man from Damascus.

'Alī ibn Khālid was a Zaydī, i.e. he did not accept any of the Imams after the fourth Imam, Zayn al-'Ābidīn (a.s.), and he lived in the time of the ninth Imam, Hazrat Muḥammad Taqī - may Allāh praise him.

He related that he had been in Sāmarrā', and he was informed that a man had been brought from Damascus to that place in captivity as a prisoner, who claimed to be a prophet. 'Alī ibn Khālid went to see him, and asked him to relate his story.

"I was busy in worship," he began, "at the place which they say is the resting place of the pure head of the noble martyr Imam Husayn (a.s.). One night, a man suddenly appeared in front of me, and told me to stand up. I stood up despite myself and went a short way with him when I found myself in the mosque at Kūfah! He asked me if I knew the mosque, and I said that I did, it was the mosque of Kūfah. He prayed, and I prayed with him, and then we set out again. We had gone no distance at all when I noticed the mosque of Medina! He asked for blessings on the Prophet of Allāh, and we both prayed there. Then we left and set out once more. Then I noticed we were in Mecca. We circumambulated the Ka'abah, left it, and then arrived at our original place, Damascus, after no time at all. Then that person vanished from my sight. A slight breeze came and brushed my face and went....

"A year after that adventure, I saw the very same man. I became greatly gladdened; he took me on the same journey, and like the first time we visited all those places, fully aware. But when he wanted to leave me, I said to him: 'I beseech you, who have such a great power as I see in you, tell me your name.' He said: 'I am Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Mūsā ibn Ja'far.' He was the ninth Imam.

"Now I proceeded to tell everyone I met of this extraordinary event, till news reached Muḥammad ibn 'Abdi'l-Malik Zayyāt. He ordered that I be arrested and accused of posing as a prophet. And now, as you see, I am in prison."

'Alī ibn Khālid asked him if he wanted him to write to Muḥammad ibn 'Abdi'l-Malik about his case. The man told him to write. So he wrote, but in his answer Ibn 'Abdi'l-Malik wrote:

"Tell him that he can escape from his prison, if he wants, in the same way as he went in the night from Damascus to Kūfah, and from there to Medina and Mecca, and then back again to Damascus."

Ibn Khālid was most depressed by this answer. In the morning, he went to the prison to give the man the answer. But he saw there were many soldiers and a crowd of people coming and going around the prison, so he asked what had happened.

They told him that the prisoner who had claimed to be a prophet had escaped from the prison. No-one knew how he had escaped, by going through the ground or by flying!

'Alī ibn Khālid said: "When I saw this, I left my own Zaydī creed and became a follower of Hazrat Javād (a.s.), the ninth Imam."*

Maytham at-Tamār.

Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.), chief among those who forbear, bought and freed Maytham. He asked him what his name was.

* Shaykh Mufid, *Irshad*; p. 304-5

"Sālim," he replied.

"But I heard from the Prophet that your name, your true name, is Maytham."

"He spoke correctly, and you speak correctly; my name, my true name is Maytham."

"Then stay with the name the Prophet called you by, and leave the other name."

In this way Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.) bought and freed the slave, but he caste the noose of love around his neck so that he remained with him up to the last moment of his life - even death could not break this link.

Maytham was a free man who had amazing ability, and he gradually attained great honour in the school of 'Alī (a.s.), and took his place among the group of the friends of 'Alī.

He became aware of the subtleties and discovered the realities. He had great love for 'Alī (a.s.); like a thirsty plant in the rain, he was inspired by him. For him he grew; he was totally absorbed in him. With him the light of his heart and the rejoicing of his soul increased. He never sold this happiness to the world of affluence.

One day, Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.) said to him: "When I am gone, you will be hanged; they will scar your body with weapons, and on the third day your beard will be stained with the blood of your eyes and mouth. They will hang you beside the house of 'Amr ibn Harīth, together with nine others. The tree they hang you from will be the smallest; come, I will show you the date-palm from whose branch you will be hung."

And then he showed Maytham the tree.

The years passed and Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.) was martyred.

The Umayyids gained power over the people.

Maytham occasionally went out to look at the tree, prayed there, and spoke to it: "O tree! May Allāh bless you! I have been created for you, and you grew for me."

In the year of his martyrdom, Maytham went into the precincts of the Ka'abah and met Umm Salmah.

"I have heard your name from the Prophet," she said, "that he recommended you to 'Alī (a.s.)."

Maytham asked her about Imam Husayn (a.s.), and learnt that he had left the city.

"Convey my salām to him," he said, "and tell him it will not be long before I and he will see each other again in the next world before the Lord."

Umm Salmah ordered that perfume should be brought to scent Maytham's beard, and then said to him: "Soon your beard will be coloured by your blood, in the true way of the Prophet and his family."

Maytham then went to Kūfah, where two of Ibn Ziyād's agents arrested him, and took him before the latter. This exchange took place:

"Where is your God?"

"Lying in wait among the oppressors, and you are one of them."

"What did your master, 'Alī say about you and I?"

"He said you would hang me together with nine other martyrs, and that my gallows would be the shortest."

"I want to go against the word of your lord, and I shall kill you in another way."

"How can you? He learnt from the Prophet, and the Prophet learnt from Allāh. Can you go against Allāh? I also know the place of my martyrdom, and I am the first Muslim in whose mouth they will put a bridle."

'Abdullāh ibn Ziyād, his eyes wide open, gave the order to take him immediately to prison. In that prison Maytham gave Mukhtār Thaqaḥī the good news of his liberty.

"You will kill Ibn Ziyād," he told him, "in revenge for the prince of martyrs, Hazrat Husayn (a.s.)."

And so it was.

Maytham was taken to the place of his sacrifice, to the place of his spiritual departure, the place from which his spirit was to soar to the highest and greatest heights of human spirituality. They hung him beside the house of 'Amr ibn Harīth, from that very tree that he had been shown.

The people gathered round him, and on the gallows he took the opportunity to tell them of the virtues of Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.). He spoke and unlocked the hearts of the people and they understood.

Ibn Ziyād was informed that Maytham had defamed him, so he ordered him to be gagged so that he should be unable to speak. Then they attacked him with weapons as Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.), had foretold.

"Allāho Akbar!" he cried.

At the end of the third day, the blood from his eyes and mouth flowed down and stained his beard - may the peace of Allāh be with him.*

Uways al-Qarnī.

The Prophet said: "The scent of heaven is wafting over from Qarnī. O Uways al-Qarnī, I am eager to see you. Anyone who sees you should give you my salām!"**

When everyone swore allegiance to Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.) at Dhī Qār, he said: "From Kūfah a thousand soldiers, no more no less, will come and swear their allegiance to me."

Then they arrived and Ibn 'Abbas counted them, but found only 999 persons. He was puzzled why there was one person missing.

* Ibid, p. 152-154

** 'Abbas Qummi, *Safīnah al-Bihar*, vol. I, p. 53.

After a moment, a man came near with armour, a sword and a shield, and the other accoutrements of war; he went up to Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.) and said: "I want to swear allegiance to you up to death and self-sacrifice."

"What is your name?" said 'Alī.

"Uways."

"Are you Uways al-Qarnī?"

"Yes."

"Allāhu Akbar! My beloved Prophet, the Prophet of Allāh - may Allāh praise him - told me that I would meet one of his followers called Uways al-Qarnī, who was one of the party of Allāh and His messenger, and who would die a martyr. A numberless group would intercede for him."

Thus it was that he was martyred in the service of Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.).*

Uways is well-known for his spirituality as having a high position. His pleasure was worship, and he had no interest in the things of this world. We can learn from the sayings of Uways the extraordinary nature of the spiritual life of this man.

"I swear by Allāh, the thought of death and the fear and trembling at the last days, leaves no place for happiness in this world for the man of faith."

"When we bid to good and forbid from evil they abuse us, but with all that we stand up for the Truth of Allāh."

Qanbar.

Qanbar also was one of those brave people who reached a high station by the rays of the spiritual power of the Prophet (s.a.) and 'Alī (a.s.).

He did not fear to tell the truth and to seek the way of righteousness. Although in the eyes of the people of this world he

* Usd al-Ghabah, vol. I p. 152.

was no more than a slave, in the path of spiritual stations he was intimate to the secrets of 'Alī (a.s.).

The live, powerful, hard-hitting words with which this iron man replied to Hajjaj ibn Yūsuf, the blood-thirsty executioner who had the cruelty of a murderer and a criminal, have become well-known.

Hajjaj asked him: "What was your work in the service of 'Alī?"

"I made ready his water for wudū."

"When he had finished wudū, what did he used to say?"

"He used to recite this ayah: 'So when they forgot what they were reminded of, We opened unto them the gates of everything until, when they rejoiced in what they were doing, We seized them suddenly, and behold, they were sore confounded. So the last remnant of the people who did evil was cut off. Praise belongs to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds.'"

"I presume that ayah speaks about me?"

"Yes," said Qanbar with perfect heroism.

"If I kill you, what can you do?"

"I shall become a man of bliss, and you a man of wretchedness."

"Confess that you have left 'Alī's service!"

"If I leave his way, will I be guided to a better way?"

Hajjaj could not answer this question, so he said: "I am your killer. Whatever way you wish, let me know, and I shall kill you in this way."

"I leave that to you."

"Why?"

"Because however you kill me, I shall kill you in that way in the next life. 'Alī, my master, told me that I should be beheaded cruelly and unjustly."

So Hajjaj ordered that he be beheaded.*

* Irshad, p. 155.

26; Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (ع)

The Chosen Successor of the Prophet.

The Successor to the Prophet (s.a.)*

The Twelve-Imam Shi'ites believe that after the Prophet of Allāh, the leadership of the world of Islam fell to Amir al-Mu'minin, 'Alī (a.s.), and then to his eleven pure descendents.

* *'al-Ghadir*, and 'Allamah al-Amini.

The encyclopaedic work *'al-Ghadir*, the great enterprise of the late mujahid, 'Allamah Sheikh 'Abdul'l-Husayn al-Amini - may the mercy of Allah rest with him - is written around the hadith of al-Ghadir.

This great book, which is the achievement of a life-time of pure seeking by this scholar, is in many volumes and is in the Arabic language. Till now, 11 volumes have been published.

The exposition of the book was put together in a strong and easy style, and its contents are so well reasoned that according to the acknowledgement of the leaders and scholars of the Sunni school, the question of the legitimacy of the Shi'ites has been revived. It has transformed the attitude of the Sunnis towards the Shi'ites, and has rendered a great service to these two groups. May the author's name be always well-known.

Much use has been made of this great book during the writing of the present lesson.

This idea, this belief, is as clear as the rays of the morning sun, and those who are unprejudiced and impartial will have no cause for doubt in it.

Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh, one of the special companions of the Prophet (s.a.) said: "The day the ayah concerning obedience to Allāh, the Prophet and those vested with authority was revealed (IV;59), I asked the Prophet: 'We know Allāh and the Prophet, but who is the third?' He said: 'They are the Imams, my successors, the first of whom is 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib, then, in order, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī, who was called Bāqir in the Torah, and whom you, Jābir, will meet and to whom you will convey my salām; then, after him, Ja'far ibn Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣādiq, Mūsā ibn Ja'far, 'Alī ibn Mūsā, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī, 'Alī ibn Muḥammad, Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, and in the end the son of Ḥasan ibn 'Alī will come, whose name will be the same as mine (Muḥammad Abū'l-Qāsim).'"**

The First Leader.

No society, at any time or place, can stand free and liberated without a leader. This is always true. Inspired by this reality, we can proceed to say that anyone who is the ruler over a society, if he is dedicated to its strength and happiness, must necessarily strive to protect it and must, to the extent of his power, ability, knowledge and foresight, take into consideration the present, future and even the distant future of that society, and plan and programme so that the destiny of that society may become near to the realm of ideal contentment.

It is because of this necessity that rulers, even during short journeys, appoint a deputy. This is remarked in every case of leadership.

A head of a family, a headmaster, a foreman in a factory, **Safi, Muntakhab al-Athar, p. 101. The writer quotes 50 similar hadith from Sunni and Shi'a sources.

all put a deputy in their place for the absence of a few hours, and they give instructions on the orders of the one they replace in their absence. This matter is so obvious that it needs no proof.

The Devoted and Prudent Prophet.

The great Prophet, who was the leader of world Islamic society, observed this very principle. Wherever the light of Islam shone for the first time, however much or little it shone, he always appointed a worthy administrator for that place to look after its affairs.

For armies which he sent off on *jihād*, he appointed a specific commander of the troops, and he sometimes appointed several persons as assistant leaders to the commander, so that if one was killed, the army would not be without a commander.

Thus we know of persons whom the Prophet appointed as his deputies and representatives whenever he travelled from Medina, so that Medina should not be without a leader in his absence.

The Shi'ites ask how, with this evidence, it is consistent with the wisdom of the Prophet (s.a.) that he should die without appointing a successor. Which of the following possibilities accords with reason:

- Was Islamic society, after the death of the Prophet (s.a.), not in need of a leader again?
- Or did the Prophet (s.a.) attach no importance to the community of Muslims after he had gone?
- Or were concern and prudence something he could do nothing about?
- Or did he not know who was the most worthy successor?

Which of these possibilities accords with reason?

With his all-embracing love, and the signs of leadership and determining of duties which he gave to the Muslims in all the ups and downs of their lives, how could the Prophet of Islam (s.a.) not give an order on this great matter?

In the light of these realities, the followers of the Imams proceeded to investigate the first and original texts and documents of Islam, and in this investigation they came across an enormous quantity of sources which their Islamic wisdom and consciences judged to be the most important, and they arrived at this result: that there are clear, sufficient, exact orders from the Prophet (s.a.) about the detailing of a successor: the ayah of *wilāyat*, the hadīth of Ghadīr, the hadīth of *Safīnah*, the hadīth of *Thaqalayn*, and many more, all of which are tested, explained and examined with great details in these great books. From all these we shall select the hadīth of Ghadīr and we shall seek to judge its value in an unprejudiced manner.

The Historical Hadīth of Ghadīr.

In the tenth year of the hijrah, the Prophet (s.a.) set out for Mecca to perform the rites of Hajj. This Hajj was undertaken in the last years of the dear Prophet's life, and for this reason history has given it the name of the "Farewell Hajj" (*hijjah al-wida*).

Those who accompanied the Prophet, who were pressing forward in their stirrups with eagerness to follow him, to see and learn the true Hajj, numbered about 120,000. Some groups also became attached to him in the town of Meccah.

Then, when returning to Medina after completing the Hajj, on the 18th day of Dhu'l-hijjah, at Ghadīr Khumm, this ayah was revealed:

سورة مائده آية ٦٧
يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ..

*O Messenger, deliver that which has been sent down to thee
- from thy Lord; for if thou dost not, thou wilt not have
delivered His Message. Allāh will protect thee from men."*

(V;67)

Thus a great message reached the Prophet from Allāh. The edges of the caravan were slowly rolling along.

"Allāh has given a command... Let everyone await the command..."

Thereupon, the Prophet (s.a.) gave the order that everyone should stop moving and come to a halt; and they did. Many travellers stood there on the order of the Prophet of Allāh (a.s.) to hear the news. About the desert we have been told, 'Ghadīr Khumm is a plain without water, parched'. It is midday and the heat of the sun was scorching. What is the news for which the Prophet is keeping the people standing in such a place, at such a time?

Now the sound of *adhān* is heard. The Prophet performs the prayer with the people, and then camel saddle-packs are built up to form a raised platform. The Prophet stands on the top of them. People catch their breath, and are as quiet as the sands of the desert. They are waiting for the news.

The Prophet starts. His speech, like the spray of drops that shower from a waterfall, is cool and soothing; it calms the heat, and the people quench their thirst under the sun by listening with their souls. After praising Allāh, the Prophet continues: "I and you, we have shouldered every responsibility. Don't you agree?"

"We are witnesses that you have delivered the message to us, that you made every effort in this direction. May Allāh give you the best reward!"

"Do you witness to the Unity of Allāh, and to the prophethood of his slave, Muḥammad. And to heaven and hell, death and the resurrection, and life after death?"

"We do witness to these."

"May Allāh be our witness!" And then he continued, saying to the people: "O people; I and you, we shall see one another beside *Kawthar*. Be careful after me how you deal with two precious jewels."

"O Prophet, what are these two?"

"The Book of Allāh, and my descendants. Allāh told me that these two are not to be separated from one another till they reach me beside *Kawthar*. Do not go ahead of them, for you will be ruined. Do not fall behind them, for you will also be ruined."

Then he raised the hand of 'Alī, Amīr al-Mu'minīn (a.s.), so that everyone could see him and know him. Then, in the same position, he read the divine *farman* of succession.

"O people. Who is more deserving among the believers to have *wilāyat* and guardianship over them?"

"Allāh and the Prophet know best."

"Allāh gave me *wilāyat*, and I am more worthy than the believers and the followers themselves. Therefore to whosoever I am his (*mawlā*) master and guardian, 'Alī is his guardian and master.* O Allāh, be the friend of his friends, and the enemy of his enemies. Help anyone who helps him, and punish anyone who rebels against him.

"Now everyone who is present must tell those who are absent."

The people had not dispersed when the following ayah was revealed:

سورة مائده آية ٣
... الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ
دِينًا....

"Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed my blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam for your religion."
(V;3)

Then the Prophet cried out: "*Allāhu Akbar!* The religion of Allāh has been perfected, and He is pleased with my prophethood

* According to Ahmad bin Hanbal, the Imam of the Hanbalites, the Prophet repeated this sentence four times.

and the Imamate of 'Alī after me."

After this ceremony, people felicitated Amīr al-Mu'minīn. Among the foremost of the companions who felicitated him were Abū Bakr and 'Umar who said: "How good for you, O 'Alī, to have become the master of me and every believing man and woman."

The Chain of Narration of the Ḥadīth of Ghadīr.

From the point of view of its chain of narration, this ḥadīth is so strong that it is probably unique.

One hundred and ten of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.) who were present at Ghadīr have narrated it from the Prophet (s.a.) without any intermediary, and also eighty four of the followers, those who knew the companions.

Aware and unprejudiced scholars, be they historians or commentators or whatever, from the Sunni school have mentioned the matter of Ghadīr with much documentation in their books. The names of three hundred and fifty such scholars are mentioned in the book '*al-Ghadīr*' (see footnote above).

Many of the great Islamic scholars have independently written books on this subject, and twenty-six such writers have been recorded in '*al-Ghadīr*', together with the particulars of each of their books.

Dictionary compilers have related the story of Ghadīr under the entry of '*Ghadīr*' or '*Mawlā*' (master).

So there is not the smallest doubt, not the least shadow, over the chain of narration of the ḥadīth of Ghadīr. Unless for that handful of people who can stand in the light of the sun and feel its warmth on their skin, but then say that there is no light or warmth.

A Short Investigation into the Meaning of the Ḥadīth of Ghadīr.

The ḥadīth of Ghadīr, with the signs contained within it and without it, is so striking that everybody must in all fairness notice, and then become certain, that Amīr al-Mu'minīn, 'Alī (a.s.), became the first successor to the Prophet (s.a.).

Now let us proceed to an elucidation and an unlocking of some of these signs and testimonies.

1. The word '*mawlā*', which we come across in this ḥadīth, is one of the clearest words which can be used in this area.

Mawlā, in this ḥadīth, means someone who has the stations of *wilāyat* and *Imamate*, and can give his opinion and command on it; what he wants has priority over all other wants. For this reason, before he said "He whose master (*mawlā*) I am", he said "O People, who among the believers is more deserving?"

The meaning of the priority of the Prophet (s.a.) is that his wish comes before the wish of the people, and that whatever he says or does in an authority for the people. People follow him, and in fact he has *wilāyat* and guardianship over them. Now, we can see that just as in the first sentence the priority and *wilāyat* of the Prophet (s.a.) is mentioned, so in the following sentence, his priority and *wilāyat* must be spoken of with the same meaning, so that there can be some connection in meaning between the two sentences.

Therefore the correct and complete meaning which we get from these few sentences is as the Prophet (s.a.) said: "Am I, compared with you, not more deserving?"

"Yes, you!" everyone replied.

"So, this being deserving, this priority and *wilāyat* which I have as regards you, 'Alī also has, and, after me, he will be the *Mawlā* of all Muslims and my successor."

Thus, in this ḥadīth, there is no question of any other meaning

for 'mawlā' apart from priority, wilāyat and Imamate; and any other meaning in its place is entirely irrelevant. We should also note that the Prophet of Islam kept people standing in this great heat. This historical fact makes it clear that the matter has a special importance; for, if not, no reasonable man would suppose that the Prophet would detain people under such conditions when his purpose was only to remind people of a trivial matter, for example, that 'Alī was his friend.

2. A second proof is that after this the Prophet said: "O Allāh, help those who help 'Alī, and keep far from Thy Mercy those who refuse help to 'Alī."

The Prophet (s.a.) knew that after him Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.) would take official command of power and the army, and people would have to help him so that Islam would take root. For Islamic government needs just and obeyed commanders, and it is necessary that all people obey the Prophet's successor. Therefore he prayed for Hazrat 'Alī's helpers and cursed his opponents so that in this way too the people would understand that to oppose Hazrat 'Alī would bring about the anger of Allāh and the curse of the Prophet.

3. In the beginning of his speech, the Prophet said: "Do you witness to the Unity of Allāh and the prophethood of his slave, Muḥammad?"

"We do," they replied.

"Who is your *walī* and *Mawlā*? To whoever I am his *Mawlā*, 'Alī will also be his *Mawlā*."

It is clear that the meaning of the *wilāyat* of Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.), after the witnessing of the Unity of Allāh and the prophethood and (wilāyat of the Prophet, is the Imamate, because, with any other meaning, the connection between the sentences would be broken, and we know that the Prophet (a.s.) was one of the

most eloquent and accurate of speakers.

4. After the meeting was over, the people congratulated Amīr al-Mu'minīn. It is obvious that this felicitation was because they had accepted the truth of Hazrat 'Alī being appointed that day to a high station by Allāh and the Prophet. If there had been another reason, felicitation would have had no place.

5.

"O Messenger, deliver that which has been sent down to thee from thy Lord; for if thou dost not, thou wilt not have delivered his Message. Allāh will protect thee from men."
(V67)

According to scholars of the Sunni school, this ayah was revealed on the day of Ghadir about the matter of the succession of Hazrat 'Alī - may Allāh bless him. As a sample, let us see what the great Sunni commentator and historian, Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr aṭ-Ṭabarī has to say:

"...After this ayah, which was revealed at Ghadir Khumm, the Prophet said: 'Jibra'īl has brought a command from Allāh that we should halt in this place, and to announce to all, black or white, that 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, my brother, my executor (*waṣī*), is my successor and the Imam after me."

6. The splendid, magnificent poems and odes which the poets and writers of the times from those days up to now have composed on the subject of Ghadir and the succession of Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.), are, apart from their literary importance, a strong proof in the matter of our discussion, for they have all acknowledged and commented upon the speech of Ghadir Khumm in connection with *wilāyat* and the *Imamate*.

The poems and the names of the poets have all been recorded,

and those who are acquainted with Arabic literature can consult the book of *al-Ghadir* mentioned previously.

In this great book, the poems and many of the names of the poets who composed poems about Ghadir Khumm from the first century A.H. through the subsequent centuries have been mentioned in order and analysed.

7. Our great Prophet (s.a.) and Imams (a.s.) have ordered that the 18th day of Dhu'l-hijjah be kept as a true Muslim 'id, so that the event of Ghadir might be remembered every year and not fall into oblivion.

Thus Abū Rayhān al-Bīrūnī, the famous fifth-century (A.H.) Iranian scholar, in his book - *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, and also Ibn Talḥah ash-Shāfi'ī in his book, *Maṭālib as-Su'ūl*, name the day of Ghadir as one of the 'ids of Islam.

Abū Maṣū'ir ath-Tha'ālabī, the famous writer and scholar, also wrote in his book *Thimār al-Qulūb* that the eve of Ghadir is one of the greatest nights in Islam.

8. Objections.

Whenever Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.), and the other Imams reasoned about the ḥadīth of Ghadir with objectors and in front of opposers, no-one raised any objection about its significance or about its connection with the Imamate and the succession of Amīr al-Mu'minīn who was not reduced to silence.

One day in Kūfah, Amīr al-Mu'minīn gave a speech during which he said: "Anyone who was present at Ghadir, and heard with his own ear the Prophet appoint me as his successor, stand up. Only those who heard the Prophet with their own ear, not those who heard from others who were there."

A number of people rose up. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the Imam of the **Hanbalī sect**, says that there were thirty people who stood up that day, and testified to having heard the ḥadīth of Ghadir.

It should be remembered that this event took place twenty-five years after Ghadir; that some of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.) were not present on that day in Kūfah, or had died since, and that some also, for various motives, did not testify.

The leader of the free, Hazrat Imam Ḥusayn (a.s.), also asked during a speech he gave to the Islamic community in Mecca, among seven hundred of the pious companions and followers of the Prophet (s.a.).

"Do you know that the Prophet appointed 'Alī to the Khilafate and the Imamate at Ghadir, and ordered those present to tell those who were absent."

"May Allāh be witness that it was so."

We shall end this lesson with a foreword which Shaykh Muḥammad Daḥdūḥ, the Sunni Imam and the spiritual leader of the town of Aleppo, wrote for the book *al-Ghadir*. We have abbreviated it.

"The book *al-Ghadir* confirms the facts, and equally refutes the superstitions. It expounds some things which we were ignorant of, and cancels out sayings which we have kept in our hearts for centuries.

"Indeed, past events had been related in a way which made us say: 'We do not know where these come from, and we do not want to think about their secrets', whereas we should have learnt from these events, and we should have conducted research into historical problems on a higher level.

"As we have seen, before the book *al-Ghadir*, the general knowledge of the Sunnis about the historical reality of Ghadir was only slight, but now and after this, as the parts of *al-Ghadir* are published, they will, on the contrary, see a boiling sea overflowing with impressive arguments, clear proofs and brilliant knowledge. What I see in *al-Ghadir* says with one voice:

"The radiance of the moon cannot be concealed."

27. A Brief History of the Saqifah

Muslims maintain that without any doubt and in all certainty the Prophet of Islam (s.a.) is without sin or error, and that his faultless speech is the same as reality and is the wish of Allāh. If it were otherwise, they say, Allāh could not have commanded unconditional obedience to him. So his command is Allāh's command, and it is an absolute necessity to obey him.

What is more, we can see on the basis of the ayahs quoted below that the Prophet - may Allāh bless and praise him - had the right of jurisdiction over the people, that his order took precedence over everyone else's idea or opinion, and that his commands on social or other matters had to be carried out.

سورة احزاب آية ٦

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ....

"The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than they have themselves."
(XXXIII;6)

سورة احزاب آية ٣٦
وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَىٰ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ
مِنَ أَمْرِهِمْ....

"It is not for any believer, man or woman, when Allāh and His Messenger have decreed a matter, to have a choice in the matter."
(XXXIII;36)

An examination of this ayah and its explanation makes it clear that the decree of the Prophet in every matter, even in personal matters, is binding, since the ayah was revealed concerning an individual matter, viz. the marriage of Zayd and Zaynab. Zaynab was the daughter of the Prophet's uncle, and Zayd was a slave whom the Prophet freed. The Prophet of Islam (s.a.), so as to break the pre-Islamic custom whereby the noble and rich were not prepared to marry outside their own, ordered Zaynab to marry Zayd. The false pride and inappropriate arrogance which had been inherited from pre-Islamic times forbade her to take Zayd as a husband.

But this ayah makes it clear that even in personal matters the Prophet's command was to be obeyed, so Zaynab married him and was content.*

سورة نساء آية ٦٤

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي
أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا.

"But no, by thy Lord! they will not believe till they make thee judge between them, then they shall find in themselves no impediment touching thy verdict, but shall surrender in full submission."
(IV;64)

Is the Prophet Subject to the Opinion of the Majority?

Some Sunnis say that in social matters the opinion of the

majority is over-ruling, to the degree that the Prophet himself must obey.

A deeper look at the ayahs mentioned above would make it clear that this is invalid. Now we shall proceed to an investigation of their evidence and claims and then answer them.

Their evidence is ayah 159 of Surah 'Āl Imrān':

سورة آل عمران آية ١٥٩ :
 فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ
 فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
 يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ.

"It was by some mercy of Allāh that thou wast gentle to them; hadst thou been harsh and hard of heart, they would have scattered from among thee. So pardon them, and pray forgiveness for them, and take counsel with them in the affair; and when thou art resolved put thy trust in Allāh, surely Allāh loves those who put their trust."

The answer to this is that this ayah also gives clear evidence that the Prophet (s.a.) is not subject to the opinion of the majority. In other words, the right of jurisdiction belongs to the Prophet even in social matters, and he has a duty, after consultation, to put his view into practice, not the opinion of others, since it says:

"Take counsel with them in the affair, and when thou art resolved, put they trust in Allah"

If it had been otherwise, and the view of others was to be acted upon, it should have said:

"When the opinion of people has been obtained on a matter, accept it and carry it out."

But we see that the ayah was not revealed in this sense. What is more, there is evidence in history against the view of the Sunnis. For example, in the peace of Hudaibiyyah.

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.) left Medina to visit the Ka'bah. Near Mecca, the representatives of the unbelievers of the Quraysh met with him and said that the Quraysh were not prepared to admit him into Mecca. He replied that he had not come for war, but only to visit the Ka'bah.

After much discussion, the Quraysh were prepared to make a peace treaty, and the Prophet, with some special conditions, agreed, although the Muslims were not happy with the agreement and wanted to enter Mecca that day.* The Prophet then told the Muslims; "I am the slave of Allāh, and His Prophet. I will never turn away from the command of Allāh, nor will He let me go."**

Here, an honest reasonable question would be, what then is the meaning of the Prophet consulting with people at all?

His consultations were part of a policy both of respecting and showing the value of the views of the people, and of using reason and thought in the way of progress of Islam. Also, when faced with some obstructions by some of the tribal leaders, consultations were held with them, because, by the value which they gave to consultation, and by the fact that they saw themselves sharing in the work, they desisted from their destructiveness. However, in this kind of counsel meeting, the Prophet never subjected himself to the majority opinion, and, if he paid attention to the opinion of some person or group, it was, in fact, because that was also his own opinion.

Did Consultation Take Place after the Death of the Prophet?

We have seen and understood that it has been proved that the opinion of the Prophet was above the views of everyone, even the

* Sirah; ibn Hisham, vol. 3, p. 321

**Tarikh of Tabari, vol. 3, p. 1546

view of the majority, and that it was the sure view of the Prophet (s.a.) that he selected Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.) to be his successor on the day of Ghadīr and informed the people of his decision.

So, consultations aimed at appointing a successor after the Prophet (s.a.) are clearly against the wish of Allāh and His Prophet, and are completely useless; however, abandoning this reality, we now want to ask whether after the Prophet (s.a.) consultative meetings were held, and, if so, whether the majority opinion was upheld.

To answer and explain the question, we shall take a look first of all at some history and the circumstances of the Saqīfah of the Banī Sā'adah according to reliable historical documents.

A Brief History of Saqīfah.

When the Prophet (s.a.) closed his loving eyes to the world, the Anṣār, the original Medinese, gathered in a building called the Saqīfah of the Banī Sā'adah, and pronounced that after the Prophet, government and walāyat belonged to Sa'ad ibn 'Ubadah. Sa'ad was ill, but was present in the meeting, and after praising Allāh he said: "O Anṣār! there is no group better than you in Islam. For the Prophet (s.a.) was thirteen years among the Quraysh, and he called them to abandon idols and their worship for the One God; but, apart from a few individuals, they did not believe in him and his ideas and make his religion grow. So Allāh restored you to happiness, put him and his religion in your hands, entrusted support for him and his religion to you. You have always been loyal to this agreement, till He chose to take him away. Now you should make every effort, for it is your special right."

The Anṣār said that he had spoken well, and that he should take the government and succession into his own hands. But some said: "What if the Quraysh want to dispute the matter with us?"

"We shall tell them," said another group, "that they should choose a leader from themselves, and we shall choose a leader from among us."

"This would be the first blow to break Islam," said Sa'ad.

'Umar was informed. He sent for Abū Bakr, who was in the house of the Prophet (s.a.) with 'Alī (a.s.), and who sent word that he was occupied. 'Umar sent another message, in which the news was that his presence was indispensable.

Abū Bakr left the presence of the beautiful body of the Prophet (s.a.) which 'Alī was busy in preparing for the funeral. 'Umar said to him: "Do you not know that the Anṣār are gathered in the Saqīfah to choose Sa'ad for the Khalifate?"

So both of them hurried to the place. On the way they met Abū 'Ubaydah al-Jarrah, whom they took along with them. When they reached the Saqīfah, Abū Bakr rose up to address the crowd.

"Praise be to Allāh, and blessings on his Prophet. Allāh sent the Prophet to man so that they who worshipped many gods might worship the One God, they who suppose that their gods are healers, that they are of benefit to them. And it was difficult for the Arabs to leave the religion of their fathers. Then Allāh showed his preference for the Muhājirīn (those Muslims from Mecca who migrated with the Prophet), and brought them faith in the religion of the Prophet (s.a.). They bore the difficulties with this great man with forbearance, so they are more deserving after him in this matter. You, O Anṣār, say that after you no one is to be more preferred in the religion, so after the Muhājirīn, no one has a higher degree than you. So we are the rulers, and you are the ministers and the counsellors. We will not do anything without consulting you."

Habāb ibn Mundhir stood up and said: "O Anṣār, beware! Take the reins of government in your hands; for the people are under your protection, no one can quarrel with you. Do not fall

out between yourselves, so that what you do is ruined. These people do not accept our authority, so we must have our own ruler, and they theirs."

"That can never be," said 'Umar. "The Arabs would never submit to your rule; they will not yield, for the Prophet was not from you."

Habāb stood up again and said: "O Anṣār! You must decide! Do not listen to this man and his friendliness. He wants to do completely away with your right. If they do not give up, you must throw them out of this town and take things over. I swear by Allāh, you are the more deserving."

"May Allāh kill you!" said 'Umar.

"May He kill you!" said Habāb.

Abū 'Ubaydah stood up to come between them.

"O Anṣār!" he cried, "you were the first group who gave support and believed, so you must not be the first to go astray."

Then Bashīr ibn Sa'ad got up and said, "O Anṣār, I swear by Allāh that if we were the first in the jihād against the polytheists, and had priority in the religion, it was only because we wanted nothing but the will of Allāh."

"Now!" cried Abū Bakr. "Do you wish to swear allegiance to both this 'Umar and this Abū 'Ubaydah al-Jarrāh?"

"No!" they shouted. "We swear by Allāh, that you are the most deserving of the Muhājirīn, and we are not on a par with you; so give your hands that we can swear allegiance to you."

Then, as 'Umar and Abū 'Ubaydah wanted, they swore allegiance to Abū Bakr. Bashīr ibn Sa'ad, from the Anṣār and the tribe of Aws, the great Medina tribe, went before them and swore allegiance.

When the people of the tribe of Aws saw Bashīr open the way and acknowledge the Quraysh to be more deserving than them, and the Khazraj, the other great tribe, wanted Sa'ad ibn 'Ibadah as their leader, they spoke among themselves.

"By Allāh, if the Khazraj take the reins of power in their hands, they will always have preference. Let us rise up and swear allegiance to Abū Bakr."

Then 'Umar seized Sa'ad ibn 'Ubādah by the collar and said to the people: "Kill him!"

And Sa'ad was evermore loyal to Abū Bakr.*

Now You Judge.

With the evidence that we shall present to you now, it will be seen that the story of Saqīfah was not only a consultation among the Muslims, but that it was a plot to usurp the right to the Khalifate of Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.) - may Allāh bless him - and to put someone else in his place.

Firstly, while on his way to Saqīfah, 'Umar sent word only to Abū Bakr, and not to anyone else. And Abū Bakr, who was in the house of the Prophet (s.a.) with the great ones among the companions of the Prophet and with Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.), did not tell anyone, forgot the commotion over the tragedy of the death of the Prophet (s.a.), left the corpse of that great man and hurried to Saqīfah. If, truly, a plan had not been arranged, why did Abū Bakr not tell 'Umar that he had to tell the Banī Hāshim and the helpers of the Prophet, that at that time they should wait until the body of the Prophet was buried, and that afterwards they should proceed all together to the ascertaining of the successor to the Khalifate?

Is consultation - *shūrā* - like this, that three people should come among one of the tribes of the town, and, with the opinion of these people being controlled by one man, by sweet words and threats and other means deceive them and create differences? Of course, there were many who did not swear allegiance to Abu Bakr: the Bani Hashim, 'Abbas and his sons, Habab ibn Mundhir, Salman al-Farisi, Abu Dharr, Miqdad, 'Ammar, Zubayr, etc. (See Fusul al-Muhimmah, vol. 4, p. 1837).

between them, then by compulsion and bad words stop progress to their advantage and not let these people's trusted leader know, and then to kill anyone who is against them and say that he wanted to cause a disturbance among the people against the interests of the world of Islam, and on that pretext call for his execution or banishment?

In consultation over such a great and important matter, should not at least the great companions and the Banī Hāshim in the forefront of whose ranks was Amīr al-Mu'minīn have been called?

Secondly, Saqīfah became like a football ground, involuntarily bringing shouts and cheers from the people.

After sweet words and self-advertisement, Abū Bakr said to the Anṣār: "Swear allegiance to whoever you want - 'Umar or Abū 'Ubādah."

There was no place for questions. One of these two must be Khalifah, they who were following him. The Khalifate became like a ball which they then passed to Abū Bakr and say, as long as you have it, what more do you want?

And the Sunnis call this childish ball-game the meeting and consultation of the people!

Thirdly, 'Umar made clear that no consultation had taken place.

Some years after the proceedings of Saqīfah, 'Umar said, at the time of his own Khalifate: "We have heard that one of you said that if 'Umar dies I shall swear allegiance to so-and-so. Someone said to him that the allegiance to Abū Bakr was without consultation and without reckoning.

"It is true that allegiance to Abū Bakr took place all at once without much thought or reckoning, but Allāh protected us from mischief. However no-one should give you the example of Abū Bakr to follow."*

* Tabari, vol. 4, p. 1820-23.

If there really had been a question of a consultation, and the great ones of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.) could have voted in freedom, allegiance to Abū Bakr would not have been "all at once without much thought or reckoning." It would not in this way have become famous; there would have been no mischief or danger in it.

Fourthly, 'Umar said: "After the Prophet, 'Alī and Zubayr and their companions rose up against us, and assembled in Fāṭimah's house."**

We ask whether this clear opposition can be ignored, especially as it is acknowledged by 'Umar.

Fifthly, if the matter of the khalifate must be resolved on the basis of consultation, the Prophet (s.a.) would certainly before his death have explained, or at least indicated, the way it should be done. By the criterion of reason, would the Prophet explain some very obtruse command, but make no mention of such a great matter as this?

How was 'Alī's Right Usurped?

In all societies there are some people who wish to seize the reins of government by any possible means, and rule over the people.

They continue in their aims until such time as they manage to lay their hands on what they covet, although they disregard the commands of Allāh and the Prophet. Anyone who looks into the history of the Khalifate after the Prophet of Islam (a.s.) will be able to find such people.

Now, those who gathered in Saqīfah and struck a blow against Islam, were from this group. So let us once again look at the reality of what happened during the illness and death of the Prophet.

** Ibid.

1. The Troops of Usāmah

In the last days of his life, on his sick bed, the Prophet (s.a.) gave the command of the army to Usāmah ibn Zayd who was a youth, but celebrated and worthy, to take the army towards Mūtah, at the eastern limits of the Roman Empire of that time.

In his army there were both Muhājirīn and Anṣar, and in particular Abū Bakr, 'Umar, Abū 'Ubaydah al-Jarrāh and others. The Prophet had laid much emphasis on the defense of this front, even though Usāmah asked: "Please allow us to stay till Allāh should favour you with recovery."

"Leave this town," the Prophet commanded, "and move off in the name of Allāh."

"If I leave and dispatch the army, and you are ill like this, I shall be anxious and ill at ease."

"Move off to victory and success."

"I am not happy to tell the expedition about your health."

"What I have commanded, do!" replied the Prophet, and fainted. When he recovered he said: "May Allāh curse those who leave the army of Usāmah and desert from it."*** But, in any case, Abū Bakr and 'Umar deserted from Usāmah's troop, and returned to Medina.

2. The Matter of the Pen and the Inkpot.

In the last days of his life, on his sick bed, the Prophet (s.a.) ordered that paper and ink be brought to him, and he said that he wanted to write something down, so that the *Ummah* should not be lost after his death.

But some of those present said: "He is speaking in delirium."****

*** Ibn Abi'l Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, (in 4 volumes), vol 2, p. 21.

**** Tabari in vol. 4, p. 186. *Sahih of Muslim in Kitab al-Wasiyyah* relates this sentence to 'Umar.

Ibn 'Abbās says that in the first years of 'Umar's Khalifate, he visited him. 'Umar asked: "Does he ('Alī) still regard himself the Khalifate?"

"Yes."

"Is he of the opinion that the Prophet made his Khalifate clear?"

"Yes, and what is more clear is that I asked my father about this matter and he said that 'Alī was right."

"The Prophet wanted to specify his name towards the end of his life when he was ill, but I did not allow him to do so."*

It is clear from this sentence who was the person who, at that moment, had unjustly said that the Prophet was delirious.

Now, can it be said that 'Umar knew better than the Prophet what was to the advantage of the Islamic nation, that he should not allow the Prophet (s.a.) to specify the name of 'Alī (a.s.)?

We can now bring this matter to an end by concluding that those who unjustly relied on plotting and deceit for the position of the Khalifate of the Prophet, were engaged in planning the seizure of the Khalifate from the time of the Prophet's death, if not before, and that it was from power-seeking and status-seeking motives.

This seeking of power motivated them to remove obstacles such as Sa'ad ibn 'Ubadah who was against the Khalifate of Abū Bakr and did not swear allegiance to him, whereupon he was killed. They said the 'Jinn' killed him! Or Mālik ibn Nuwayrah, a man of faith who was such that the Prophet rightly said of him that if anyone wanted to see one of the people of heaven he should look at Mālik's face. Since he had heard from the Prophet (s.a.) that the Khalifate belonged to the Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.), when the Prophet died, and when he came to Medina and saw and heard that the Khalifate had been unjustly usurped, hastened to oppose it.

Ibn Abi'l Hadid, *Op cit.* vol. 2, p. 563.

Khālid ibn Wālid killed him, and violated his honour. No punishment or penalty was meted out to him by the Khalifah.

Another evil work that was done in the way of consolidating this lust for power was the usurpation of Fadak.

Fadak was a district crowded with gardens and orchards and very fruitful. It was in the possession of the only daughter of the Prophet, Hazrat Fāṭimah - may Allāh bless her always.

Abū Bakr seized it, and turned out Hazrat Fāṭimah's labourers out from it. Fāṭimah (a.s.) argued with Abū Bakr and won, and he gave her the deed of ownership to the land. But 'Umar took that title-deed and tore it up without any reprimand from Abū Bakr**, but this is matter to be treated separately, for Abū Bakr never replaced it with another document.

Thus, from what has been said, there can be no doubt that these were men with a lust for power, self-seekers, lovers of the world, who stooped at nothing to achieve their aims.

** Sirah al-Halabiyyah, vol. 3, p.400.

28. The Twelfth Imam

MUHAMMAD al-MAHDI ()

The Imam, the just Guide, Hazrat Mahdi (a.s.) was born half-way through the month of Sha'bān in the year 255 A.H. in the town of Sāmarrā, and in 260 A.H., when his great father died, he reached the exalted position of the Imamate. His name (Muḥammad) and his agnomen (Abū'l-Qāsim) are the same as the Prophet's. His father, the 11th Shi'a Imam, was Hazrat Imam Ḥasan al-'Askarī (a.s.), and his mother, the great lady Nargis - may the peace of Allāh be with her.

For various reasons, the twelfth Imam, from the first day of his life, did not appear publicly, and for about seventy years people were in communication with him through the intermediary of his special representatives, in order of succession: 'Uthman ibn Sa'īd, Muḥammad ibn 'Uthman, Ḥusayn ibn Ruḥ, and 'Alī ibn Muḥammad as-Samarri. This period of seventy years is known as the minor occultation (*al-ghaybat as-sughra*), and at the end of that period the major occultation (*al-ghaybat al-kubra*) began.

During the major occultation till the time of his re-appearance, no-one has been his special representative, and there will be no one in the future, and the people have the duty to refer to the *fugaha*, those excelling in knowledge of the shari'ah, and the narration of hadith who are specialised in the matters of the religion.

Belief in Hazrat Mahdi, and Universal Reform.

The belief in the re-appearance of the expected Mahdi (a.s.) the universal reformer is not confined to the Shi'ite Muslims. Other Islamic groups and even non-Islamic groups like the Jews and the Christians and some of the great world intellectual figures believe in the appearance of a great spiritual reformer. In Psalm 37 is written:

“...Trust in the Lord and do good; so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security.
 ...For the wicked shall be cut off: but those who wait for the Lord shall possess the Land.
 ...But the weak shall possess the land, and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.
 ...The Lord knows the days of the flawless, and their heritage will abide forever.
For those blessed by the Lord, shall possess the land, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off.
 ...The righteous shall possess the land, and dwell upon it for ever...”

The Qur'an and belief in al-Mahdi.

In the Qur'an a time is promised when the worshippers of Truth, the world's people of righteousness, will take over the power and government of the world, and the glorious *din* of Islam will reign all over the earth. Other ayahs have been revealed

which exegetically point to Hazrat Mahdi (a.s.).

سورة انبياء آية ١٠٥
 وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ.

“For We have written in the Psalms, after the Remembrance, ‘The earth shall be the inheritance of My righteous servants.’”
 (XXI;105)

سورة نور آية ٥٥
 وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا....

“Allāh has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make you successors in the land, even as He made those who were before them successors, and that He will surely establish their religion for them, and will give them in exchange, after their fear, security: ‘They shall serve Me, not associating with Me anything.’”
 (XXIV;55)

سورة صف آية ٩
 هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ.

“It is He Who has sent His Messenger with the religion of truth, that he may lift it above every religion, though the unbelievers be averse.”
 (LXI;9)

سورة قصص آية ٥
 وَتُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ.

"Yet We desired to be gracious to those that were abased in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors."
(XXVIII:5)

The above ayahs clearly show that in the end the world will fall to the hands of Allāh's worthy and righteous servants and that they will become the leaders of the people of the world. Then Islam will be victorious over all religions.

Belief in the Mahdī and the Sunni authorities.

In this subject, the scholars in the Sunni school have related many hadiths from the Prophet of Islam, through narrators whom they themselves trust. From among them are such hadiths as tell that the Imams are twelve persons and that they are all from the Quraysh.

Al-Mahdī, the promised one, is from the family of the Prophet and is a descendent of Hazrat 'Alī and Hazrat Fāṭimah Zahrā (a.s.), and in many of these hadiths it is mentioned that he is from the line of Imam Ḥusayn (a.s.). They have mentioned and recorded hundreds of hadiths about the Mahdī in more than seventy books by their own valued and dependable authorities of which we shall mention a few examples.

al-Musnad of Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal (d. 241 A.H.)

Sahīḥ of al-Bukhārī (d. 256 A.H.)

Sahīḥ of al-Muslim ibn Hajjaj Nishapouri (d. 261 A.H.)

Sunan of Abi Dāwid Sajistānī (d. 275 A.H.)

Sahīḥ of Muhammad ibn 'Isā at-Tirmidhī (d. 279 A.H.)

The authors of the above books - each one of them among the most authoritative books of the Sunnis, died either before the birth of the Imam of the Age (255 A.H.) or shortly after his birth.

Let us also mention:-

Musābīḥ as-Sunnah of al-Baghawī (d. 516 A.H.)

Jāmi' al-Uṣūl of ibn Athīr (d. 606 A.H.)

Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah of Muḥyi'd-dīn ibn al-'Arabī (d. 638 A.H.)

Tadhkira al-Khawāṣ of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654 A.H.)

Farā'id as-Simtayn of al-Hamawī (d. 716 A.H.)

as-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah of Ibn Iḥjar al-Haythamī (d. 973 A.H.)

Yanābī' al-Mawaddah of Shaykh Sulaymān al-Qundūzī (d. 1293)

Some of the Sunni scholars have written books especially about the Imam of the Age:-

1. *Al-Bayān fi Akhbār Ṣāhib az-Zamān* of Al-Ganjī ash-Shāfi'ī

2. *'Iqd ad-Durar fi Akhbār al-Imām al-Muntaẓir* of Shaykh Jamālu'd-dīn Yūsuf al-Damishkī

3. *Mahdī Al ar-Rasūl* of 'Alī ibn Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Harawī al-Ḥanafī

4. *Kitāb al-Mahdī* of Abū Dawūd

5. *'Alāmāt al-Mahdī* of Jalālu'd-din as-Suyūṭī

6. *Manāqib al-Mahdī* of Ḥāfiz Abu Nu'aim al-Iṣfahānī

7. *Al-Qawl al-Mukhtaṣar fi 'Alāmāt al-Mahdī al-Muntaẓir* of Ibn Ḥajar

8. *Al-Burhan fi 'Alāmāt al-Mahdī Akhir az-Zamān* of Mullā 'Alī al-Muttaqī

9. *Arba'un Ḥadīth fi al-Mahdī* of Abū'l-'Alā' al-Hamadānī

The Hidden Reformer

We have at hand these three hundred hadiths from the Prophet (s.a.) and from the five Imams about the Imam of the Age. From them it is clear that the Imam of the Age is the ninth son of Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī. His father is Hazrat Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī (a.s.),

his mother Nargis Khātūn. His name is the same as that of the Prophet of the end of time, his first name is al-Mahdī. It was to happen that he would be born during his father's lifetime; in Samarrā, that his father would die when he was young, that he would live even to this day, and as long as God wished it. Then he will re-appear and the world will be filled with justice at a time when there is injustice everywhere and that is why he is now hidden from the sight of men.

And when he comes - may his appearance be honoured - with his back towards the Ka'bah's edifice, he will lean against the wall and cry out and call for his followers, who will number 313 persons. 'Īsā (a.s.) will come from the heaven down to the earth, and will pray in a prayer led by al-Mahdī. The Imam of the Age will cause the commands of Islam to reach all over the world, and the earth will be like heaven.

There are very many hadīths related by the Shi'a and Sunni scholars on many aspects connected with this great Imam, and these are mentioned in books like *Bihār al-Anwār* and *Muntakhab al-Athār*.

First we shall indicate here some of these hadīths which the authors of *Muntakhab al-Athār* wrote down in his book and then we shall give the text of some of them.

Subject	No. of Hadīth
1. A hadīth in which is it related that the Imams are twelve, the first being 'Alī, the last being al-Mahdī (a.s.)	58
2. A hadīth which gives news of the appearance of al-Mahdi.	657
3. A hadīth which identifies him as being of the Prophet (s.a.).	389
4. A hadīth which says that his name and agnomen are the same as the Prophet's.	48
5. A hadīth which says al-Mahdī is a descen-	214

dent of Amīr al-mu'minīn.	
6. A hadīth which says he is a descendent of Hazrat Fāṭimah (a.s.)	196
7. A hadīth which says he is a descendent of Hazrat Husayn (a.s.)	175
8. A hadīth which says he is the ninth descendent of Imam Husayn (a.s.)	148
9. A hadīth which says he is a descendent of Imam Zayn al-'ābidīn (a.s.)	175
10. A hadīth which says he is a descendent of Imam Bāqir (a.s.)	103
11. A hadīth which says he is a descendent of Imam Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.)	103
12. A hadīth which says he is a descendent of Imam Mūsā Kāzīm (a.s.)	101
13. A hadīth which says he is a descendent of Imam Riḍā (a.s.)	95
14. A hadīth which says he is a descendent of Imam Javād (a.s.)	90
15. A hadīth which says he is a descendent of Imam Hādī (a.s.)	90
16. A hadīth which says he is a descendent of Imam Hasan al-'Askarī (a.s.)	146
17. A hadīth which says that the name of his father is Hasan	147
18. A hadīth which says that he will fill the world with justice	123
19. A hadīth which says his occultation will be prolonged	91
20. A hadīth which relates the extent of al-Mahdī's life	318
21. A hadīth which says that Islam will rule over the world through him	47

22. A hadith which says he will be the twelfth and the last Imam.

When looking at the above mentioned and other hadiths, it should be kept in mind that the hadiths mentioning al-Mahdī (a.s.) have been narrated most frequently, and that there are few subjects in Islam which have been mentioned in hadiths so often. Thus, in this light, anyone who believes in Islam and its Prophet (s.a.) must necessarily declare his belief in the existence of the promised Mahdī who is now in occultation.

Now we shall relate some of these hadiths.

1. The author of *Yanābi' al-Muwaddah* relates that the Prophet (s.a.) said: "Al-Mahdī is a descendent of mine. He will be in concealment, and when he manifests himself, the earth will become filled with justice, just as it was previously filled with injustice."
2. In this book it is also related that Salmān al-Farīsī said: "I went to the Prophet, when Husayn ibn 'Alī was sitting in his lap and the Prophet was kissing his eyes and mouth, and he said: 'You are a noble one, the son of a noble one, and the brother of a noble one; you are the Imam, the son of the Imam, and the brother of the Imam. You are the Proof, son of the Proof and the brother of the Proof; you will be the father of nine Proofs of whom the ninth will be the Qā'im.'"
3. Ibn 'Abi Dalaf says: "I heard from Hazrat 'Alī ibn Muḥammad (the 10th Imam) that he said: 'The Imam after me will be Hasan, my son, and after him his descendent the Qā'im, who will fill the earth with justice, when it was previously filled with injustice.'"
4. Hudhayfah said that the Prophet (s.a.) said: "If no more than one day is left of the world, that will make that day so long that a

man, descendent of mine, whose name is my name, will appear." Salman asked: "O Prophet of Allāh, which descendent will he be?" The Prophet put his hand on Husayn and said that it would be one of his descendents.

5. Mas'adah relates from Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) that he said: "The Qā'im will be born of Hasan (the eleventh Imam, Hazrat Imam Ḥasan al-'Askarī), and Ḥasan will be son of 'Alī (the tenth Imam, Hazrat Imam 'Alī al-Naqī), and 'Alī will be son of Muḥammad (the ninth Imam, Hazrat Imam Muḥammad Taqī), and Muḥammad will be born of 'Alī (the eighth Imam, Hazrat 'Alī ibn Thisā ar-Riḍā) and 'Alī will be son of this child (he pointed to Hazrat Mūsā ibn Ja'far, the seventh Imam). We are twelve Imams, all pure and noble birth. I swear by Allāh, if there remains of the world no more than one day, Allāh will make that day so long that the Qā'im of us, the Household of the Prophet (s.a.), will appear."

The Opinion of Sociologists.

The world's foremost intellectuals are of the opinion that the wars, massacres, murders, prostitution, and all the evils of this age which are daily in the increase are because there is no equilibrium between man's material and spiritual requirements.

The man of today has turned his back on moral virtues and spiritual riches, although he has conquered the sea, the desert and space, and has taken himself to the moon.

It is obvious that by relying in force and power he cannot establish order and justice in the world, and that only with technology and the material sciences the happiness of humanity will not be secured. Man has no other resort than to strengthen his social relations on the basis of faith and virtue, and to save himself from the vortex of dangers with the guidance of a great world

reformer, to establish a rule based on justice together with peace, security and sincerity. In this state of affairs, human society is moving quickly towards preparation for the rising up of the Imam of the Age (a.s.)

The Length of al-Mahdi's Life

We believe that the lengthening of a man's life is not an impossibility, because it is explicitly said in the Qur'an that:

سورة عنكبوت آية ١٤

قَلْبَتْ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا.

"We sent Nūh to his people, as he tarried among them a thousand years, all but fifty." (XXIX:14)

What is more, research undertaken in the biological sciences has corroborated the possibility of lengthening the human life-span. Even great scientists are of the opinion that food and drugs may be prepared which can prolong man's life.

The late Ayatullah Ṣadr* in his book "*al-Mahdi*", quoted from a scientific article written in 1959 which stands as a witness to what we have said above. Here we shall give a summary of it.

"Authoritative scientists say that all the basic tissues of the animal body can live forever, and it is possible for man to live for a thousand years, provided that it doesn't happen that the thread of his life is not severed. These scientists do not speak on the basis of guesswork or surmise, for they have arrived at their conclusion through scientific experiment.

"A professor at Johns Hopkins University has said that it has been proved that the basic members of the human body have the potentiality for eternal life. Apparently the first person to carry

* A learned scholar of Qum (1882-1953), father of the well-known Imam Musa Ṣadr of the Lebanon.

out these experiments on parts of an animal's body was Dr. Jack Lubb, and after him Dr. Warren Lewis, who, together with his wife, proved that parts of bird foetuses could be kept alive in buffer solutions. These experiments were systematically continued until Dr. Alexis Karel, as a result of further experimental work, established that parts of animals subjected to experiments did not degenerate, and even that they lived longer than the animal from which they had been taken. In January 1912 he started his experiments and by dint of self-sacrifice and removing the numerous difficulties, he discovered the following facts:-

1. Unless complications such as lack of nutrition or attack by microbes intervened, living cells would continue living forever.
2. These cells which continued to live, also grew and multiplied.
3. The growth and division of these cells could be controlled by the nutrition given to them.
4. The passing of time did not affect them and did not make them age or lose strength. Not even the smallest effect of ageing was seen. Each year they grew and multiplied exactly as in previous years. So why does man die? Why is his span of life rarely more than a hundred years? The part of the human or animal body are numerous and various, and there is also a perfect relationship and unity between them; so that the life of some of them depends on the life of others, and the failure or death of parts of human or animal bodies is the consequence of the death of the other parts. Sudden deaths which are the result of infection are for this reason, and it also provides the reason for the average limit of man's life being around seventy to eighty years. Of course, what experiments have shown is that the cause of death is not the arrival at seventy or eighty years of age, but that the fundamental causes a.e diseases and accidents which may attack one of the **body's** organs and put it out of work; then the death of this part **causes** a break in its relation to other parts and the death of all

the organs ensues.

“Thus if science could eliminate these accidents or obstruct their harmful effects, there would be no impediment to the prolongation of life.”

So if we know that a greatly extended life is not an impossibility, there is no hindrance to prevent God, the All-powerful, from keeping a man safe and sound for thousands of years, because the regulations of a man's life is in the hands of God. He can bring a new harmony into existence which has precedence over the usual order of things, just as He did in the case of all the miracles. The miracles of the prophets, the cooling of the fire for Ibrāhīm al-Khalīl, the turning into a serpent of Hazrat Mūsā's staff, the bringing to life of the dead through Hazrat 'Īsā, and so forth, are all against the usual flow of things, but God brought another order into existence by His own power and a miracle occurred; all Muslims, and Jews and Christians, believe in these miracles.

Similarly for the length of the life of the Imam of the Age - may Allāh bless him - there remains no place for any kind of objection, because if someone says that such a length of life is impossible, his claim cannot be at all accepted after the stipulation of the Qur'ān concerning the length of Hazrat Nūh's life, and also after the latest revelations of biology. If it is said that it is possible, but against the normal natural order of things, it can be retorted that the length of life of the Imam of the Age is against the natural order just as the miracles of the prophets, and is carried out according to the will of God. Someone who believes in the power of God and the occurrence of the miracles of the prophets cannot have the slightest objection to the length of the Imam's life.

The Occultation of the Imam of the Age.

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.) sometimes hinted to people concerning the occultation of the twelfth Imam, and the five Imams

(a.s.) also reminded people of this matter. The news of the occultation of the Imam of the Age was so well known even before his birth, that everyone who believed in the birth of the Imam also believed in his prolonged occultation. Let us look at some of the indications that have come down to us from many hadīths on this subject.

1. The Prophet said: “The Qā'im of my descendents will become hidden, as the result of a covenant between me and him, and then people will say that Allāh has no need of the family of Muḥammad, and some will doubt his birth. So everyone who is aware of his time must act according to his religion, and must not let Shayṭān enter him by faltering lest he be thrown out from my people and my religion.”

2. Amīr al-Mu'minīn said: “Our Qā'im has an occultation which will be of great devotion...Beware! everyone who is firm in his religion, and does not become hard-hearted from the lengthening of the occultation of this man (and turn away from his religion) will find himself in the same mule as me on the Day of Resurrection.”

Then he said: “Our Qā'im, when he rises, has no responsibility for anyone's allegiance to him, and for this reason his birth will be secret and he will be hidden.”

3. Muḥammad ibn Muslim said that he heard from Imam Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) that he said: “If you hear of the occultation of your Imam, do not deny it.”

4. Aṭ-Ṭabarsī wrote: “The hadīths of the occultation were recorded by the Shi'ite narrators in books which were composed in the time of Imam Bāqir and Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.). Of all these reliable

narrators one was Hasan ibn Maḥbūb. About a hundred years before the time of the occultation, he wrote a book called "*al-Mashaykhah*.. and mentioned the hadīths about the occultation in it. The following is one of them.

“Abū Baṣīr said: ‘I said in the presence of Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) that Hazrat Abū Ja‘far had said: ‘The Qā‘im of the family of Muḥammad will have two occultations; one prolonged, one short.’ He said: ‘Yes, O Abū Baṣīr, one of those occultations will be longer than the other.’”

Therefore, the Prophet of Islam (s.a.) and the pure Imams (a.s.) reminded people that the occultation of the Imam of the Age (a.s.) went together with the announcement of the existence of the Prophet himself, and that belief in the Imam’s occultation went together with belief in the Prophet’s existence.

Shaykh Ṣadūq narrated from Al-Sayyid al-Himyari: I had some exaggerated idea about Muḥammad ibn al-Hanafīyyah, and believe that he was hidden, till Allāh enlightened me through Imam Ṣādiq and saved me from the Fire. I was guided to the true way, whereby after the Imamate of Jā‘far ibn Muḥammad had been proved to be me by evidence and demonstration, I said one day to him: ‘O son of the Prophet of Allāh, tell me some hadīths from your forefathers about occultation and the truth of it. If you please, I would that you tell me for whom the occultation is.’ He replied: ‘The occultation will occur for my descendent in the sixth generation, and he will be the twelfth Imam after the Prophet of Allāh, the first one being ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib, and the last the Qā‘im of the Truth, the Continuance of Allāh on earth, and the Lord of the Age...”

Why is the Imam of the Age in Concealment?

In previous lessons we have said that the existence of the Imam (a.s.) and the successor of the Prophet (s.a.) was necessary

for a number of reasons, such as settling differences, explaining the laws of Allāh, and giving spiritual, inward guidance, and that Allāh, the Merciful, appointed Amīr al-mu‘minīn (a.s.) and after him eleven descendents, one after the other, as Imams after the Prophet of Islam.

It is obvious that the duties of the Imam of the Age, in all the aspects of the Imamate, are the same as that of his predecessors. If there were no hindrance, it would be necessary that he be clearly manifested, so that people might prosper from all the benefits of his existence. So why was he hidden from the very first?

Basically, there is no need to look for the philosophy or reasons behind his occultation so as to believe in the rule of Allāh, for there is no obligation on us to know the basic reason for it, just as we remain ignorant of the metaphysics behind many other things. It is sufficient that we know on the basis of the many hadīths and true proofs that God, the All Mighty, sent his own Proof, but that, for various reasons, He kept him hidden behind the curtain of occultation.

It can also be found from some hadīths that the basic and fundamental reason for the occultation will become known after the appearance of al-Mahdī. ‘Abdullāh al-Faḍl al-Hāshimī says: “I heard from Imam Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) that he said: ‘The occultation will be indispensable for the Lord of Power, so that the people of vanity will fall into doubt about him.’ I asked: ‘Why?’ He said: ‘For a reason which I am not at liberty to declare.’ I asked: ‘What will his rule be?’ He replied: ‘The same rule as existed in the occultations of previous proofs. It will not be disclosed until after his appearance, just as the rule of the works of Khidr was not known (meaning the drilling of a hole in the boat, the killing of the youth, the repairing of the wall in the story of Khidr in the Qur‘ān) until Mūsā and Khidr decided to part company. O Faḍl, the subject of the occultation is a command of Allāh and as secret of His secrets, and since we acknowledge Allāh

to be Wise, we must accept that all his acts are done with Knowledge and Wisdom, even if the reason for them is not known to us.”

Of course the benefits of al-Mahdī's occultation can be covered, and these have been indicated in some of the hadīths. For example:-

1. A test for people is one of the benefits of the occultation of the Imam of the Age: on one side, a group without faith, whose inner feelings become evident; on the other side, those in the depths of whose hearts faith have taken root, their hope of deliverance, their patience in adversity, their faith in the unseen becoming more perfect, their worthiness becoming known, and degrees of spiritual reward falling to them.

Mūsā ibn Ja'far (a.s.) said: "When my fifth descendent becomes hidden, persevere in your religion, so that no one may turn you away from it. There will be an occultation for the Lord of that Age, when a group of believers in him will relinquish their belief. This occultation is a test by which Allāh will test his slaves."

2. A Protection for the Imam against being killed: From a study of the leaders of Islam, and their situation vis-a-viz the Umayyid and Abbasid Caliphs, we can clearly see that if the twelfth Imam manifested himself they would surely kill him like his forefathers or poison him. Because when they heard and knew that there would arise from the family of the Prophet, from the descendents of 'Alī and Fāṭimah - may Allāh bless them both - someone who would destroy the government of the oppressors, and that that person would be a child of Hazrat Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.), the Abbasids planned to kill him. But Allāh protected him and his enemies lost hope.

Zurārah relates from Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) that he said: "There

will be an occultation prior to the appearance of the Qā'im." Zurarah asked: "Why?" He said: "So that he may escape being killed, and that occultation will continue till the ground for his appearance and triumph over the rule of the oppressors is ready."

3. The third benefit that can be gleaned from the hadīths is that by this means al-Mahdī will be saved from having allegiance made to him by the oppressors, Caliphs, and usurping rulers. When he appears no one will swear allegiance to him, so that he can freely expose the truth and establish a just and righteous rule.

The Purpose of the Hidden Imam.

We have said above that God appointed the Imam of the Age to be a guide amongst people; however it is the people who are the obstacle to his appearance, and whenever they are ready for a single, divine world rule, formed on true justice observing rights, truths and realities, putting into practice all the laws of Islam without any dissimulation or fear, the Mahdī will openly declare himself. So, with regard to Allāh, the Merciful, there is not the slightest lack of favour or mercy, for the fault lies with the people that the Imam is hidden and the appearance of his rule is delayed. Still, it must be remembered that the benefits of the existence of the Imam are not limited to outward guidance among people, for the pure existence of the Imam has other benefits which are not necessarily evident among people.

The most important benefit of the Imam's existence is that he is the intermediary for Divine Favour. For, on the basis of the evidence scholars have produced and also according to numerous hadīths which speak about the Imamate, if there were no Imam (a.s.), the relation between the world and its Creator would no longer exist, because all of the favours of Allāh come through the Imam to the rest of humanity. In many hadīths it is said very

clearly that the earth will not remain without an Imam.

The Imam is the heart of the world of existence, the leader, the preceptor of mankind, and for this reason his presence or his absence makes no difference. What is more, the spiritual guidance of the Imam towards worthy individuals will always be there, although they may not see him, especially as it is mentioned in hadiths that the Mahdī comes and goes in among the people in the meetings of the believers without anyone understanding. Thus the guarding of Islam and the protection of the worthy is well undertaken by the Imam, even during the time of his occultation. In reality the hidden Imam is like the sun behind a cloud from whose light and heat existent things may profit, although the ignorant and the blind may not see it.

Imam Ṣādiq (a.s.) also said in answer to the question: "How can people benefit from a hidden Imam?":

"Just as they do from the sun when it is behind a cloud."

We would now like you to look at this excerpt from the writings of Henri Corbin, the famous French scholar: "I believe that the Shi'a sect is the only religion which maintains eternally the link of Divine guidance between God and his creation, and continually keeps alive the union of walāyat. The Jewish religion, finished prophethood, which is the relationship between God and the world of man, with Moses, and do not acknowledge the prophethood of Jesus or Muḥammad. Thus they have served this link. The Christians, also, stopped with Jesus, and the Sunni Muslims stood still with Muḥammad. With the seal of prophethood among the latter, they admit of no further link being maintained between the Creator and creation.

"Only the Shi'a faith believes that the prophethood ended with Muḥammad, but that walāyat, which is this link of guidance and progression, continues to live after him and forever.

"Indeed, only among the Shi'a does this reality between the world of man and the Divinity remain forever."

A Necessary Reminder.

Belief in the Imam of the Age means that the link between people and the unseen world is inseparable, and someone who believes this must always remember the Mahdī and await the appearance of this hidden reformer.

Of course, waiting for the Imam of the Age does not mean that all Muslims and Shi'as should fold their arms and take no measures in the way of furthering the aims of Islam, only waiting for him to appear. For as the great Shi'ite scholars have been saying from the earliest times, all Muslims and Shi'as have the duty to make every effort in the path of establishing and strengthening Islamic knowledge and laws in the face of injustice and evil, to struggle against this with all their possibilities; or, in other words, to strive till the preparation for a just rule has been made, till society has been so harmonised that all those with complaints have seen justice; and if there is any oppression or cruelty reigning among people, to protest against it, and continue in this way. Every Muslim has the duty to sacrifice himself in the way of Īmam and Islam, and to always be prepared to welcome the promised Mahdī (a.s.), that is, to so order his life that it may not be a contradiction of the project of the Imam, so that he can take his place in the ranks behind him and fight against his enemies.

29. The Return

“You have been created for eternity;
you are merely being moved from one home to another.”

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.)

All divinely revealed religions have specified that man is not destroyed by death but only goes from this world to another world, and in that world will receive the due reward for his deeds, good or bad.

All divine prophets and their followers have mentioned this point, that the amazing harmony and order of the universe is not in vain, and that after the removal from this world, all the actions that were done here will be investigated, so we should prepare ourselves for such a sure and certain future and always say:

سورة آل عمران آية ١٩١
..... رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ قِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“Our Lord, Thou hast not created this for vanity. Glory be to Thee! Guard us against the chastisement of the Fire.”
(III:191)

Now let us look at some of the clear proofs of the Return.

1. The Wisdom and Justice of Allāh.

The matter of the Return, which all religions specify and about which God’s prophets have warned people with all insistence, is not just something to be accepted blindly, for the intellect acknowledges it to be sure and certain on the basis of the wisdom, justice and mercy of Allāh.

God’s wisdom requires that those who do good should not be left without reward, and that those who do evil should not be left without punishment, and that the oppressed be delivered from their oppression. We can see that this world is not a place of complete reward and punishment, and that man good-doers and evil-doers die before they receive a complete, just reward for the deeds. Evil-doers, with all their crimes and wrongs, benefit from the resources of life, and the oppressed are not delivered from their oppression.

Thus, if the records of these people were to terminate right here, and there is no Return and Resurrection, what would have happened to God’s infinite justice, wisdom and mercy?

How can it be said that the Just, Wise and Merciful Creator brought a world into existence where important people are troubled with oppression and injustice, and after a while become nothing?

We all know that this would be nothing less than injustice. The insignificant justice and wisdom of man, even, is not compatible with such works, so how is it possible that an All-wise God should be like that? How is it possible that a God Who had

no need to create us, and Whose aim in creating us was only to train us and make our existence productive, could be satisfied merely with this present world? How could He cut the root of man's existence before he became aware and reached fruition and annihilate him?

Without doubt, God will give complete reward and punishment for all deeds and behaviour in another world, and will neglect nothing.

سورة جاثية آية ٢٢-٢١

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ نَجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً مَخْبِيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ. وَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَيُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ.

"Or do those who commit evil deeds think that We shall make them as those who believe and do righteous deeds, equal their living and their dying? How ill they judge! Allāh created the heavens and the earth in truth, and that every soul may be recompensed for what it has earned; they shall not be wronged." (XLV:21-22)

Also, in this limited world it is impossible to punish some deeds and woks. For example, someone who drops an atom bomb and blows millions of people into blood and dust. His death, in the face of the death of millions of people, cannot be called punishment, and his complete reward will come in the next world which is an eternal world.

Similarly, the life of this world, mixed with difficulties and discomforts, is too small for God to reward the doers of good there, the people who have devoted themselves throughout their lives to service to God and to good towards other creatures, or who have saved countless numbers of souls from certain death.

Retribution.

We have seen and heard with our own eyes and ears in this world how many people have, for example, dealt unjustly with their mothers and fathers, but have had no triumph in their lives, or who have killed their parents and died themselves young. We have also seen how many people have been kind to the mothers and fathers, and have received their reward in this world and lived successful lives; and again how many people have not observed the rights of orphans, and have seen the ominous fruits of their work in this world.

The Qur'an has threatened people with the consequences of injustice towards orphans and has said:

سورة نساء آية ٩

وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكَوا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعَافًا خَافُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ.

"And let those fear (from hurting orphans) who, if they left behind them weak seed, would be afraid on their account, and let them fear Allāh." (IV;9)

Imam Bāqir (a.s.) said: "Allāh has allotted two punishments for consuming the property of orphans, a torment in this world and a retribution in the next."

Sometimes the afflictions and blights from which a man suffers are the result of bad deeds which originate from him, and truly retribution will come in this world till that person becomes aware of what he is doing and ceases from it. In many ayahs, the Qur'an explains this matter.

سورة شوری آية ٣٠

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِيمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ.

"Whatever affliction visits you is for what your own hands have earned." (XLII;30)

سورة نور آية ٦٣

فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ.

"So let those who go against His command beware, lest a trial befall them, or there befall them a painful chastisement."
(XXIV:63)

سورة رعد آية ١١

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ.

"Allāh changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves."
(XIII:11)

Some tribes and peoples who rebelled against the prophets of God sometimes saw the worldly punishment for their deeds in the world itself. The Qur'an narrates the tortues of the people of Nūh, the people of Hūd, the people of Sāliḥ, the people of Lūṭ and the people of Shu'ayb and others (see Surah Hūd and elsewhere).

These retribution are a living witness to the fact that God, the Just and Merciful is not pleased with evil-doing and oppression and will give complete rewards for all deeds in another world. Generally, the retributions of this world are a sample of the complete retributions for deeds in the other world. And anyone who takes notice of the rewards of this world will soon see that man is not left to himself, and will meet with an exact reckoning in the next world for all his deeds and behaviour.

It must be remembered that it is sometimes necessary for the building and perfecting of righteous individuals that troubles and hardships should occur, and these should in no way be thought of as rewards. Thus, also, some evil-doers may not get the just reward they deserve for their deeds, but this is not a proof that they are subject to a special grace from God, or that they have been overlooked, for their punishment will be meted out to them in the next world.

The Return in Islam

Of all the Divine religions, Islam lays the most emphasis on the Return, to the extent that few subjects in Islam are given the same degree of prominence. More than a thousand ayahs of the Qur'an refer especially to the Return and life after death, whereas the ayahs which refer to individual and social laws and prescriptions in the Qur'an, scarcely reach five hundred. So belief in the Return must be counted as one of the foundations and basis of the pure Islamic religion.

The ayahs revealed in the Qur'an about the Return fall into different categories which we shall now demonstrate with some examples.

About the necessity of the Return it is written:-

سورة قيامه آية ٣٦

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى

"What, does man reckon he shall be left to roam at will (after death)?"
(LXXV:36)

سورة ص آية ٢٧ و ٢٨

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا، ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ. أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ.

"We have not created the heavens and the earth, and what between them is, for vanity; such is the thought of the unbelievers, wherefore woe unto the unbelievers because of the Fire! Or shall We make those who believe and do righteous deeds as the workers of corruption in the earth, or shall We make the god-fearing as the transgressors?"
(XXXVIII:27-28)

سورة ابراهيم آية ٤٢
وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ غَافِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيهِ الْأَبْصَارُ

“Deem not that Allāh is heedless of what the evildoers work; He is only deferring them to a day when eyes shall stare.”
(XIV:42)

Those who ascribed partners to Allāh did not believe in the Resurrection and considered it improbable. One day Abū ibn Khalaf brought some decaying bones before the Prophet (s.a.) and crumbled them in his own hands, saying:

سورة يس آية ٧٨
مَنْ يُخَيِّرِ الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ

“Who shall quicken these bones where they are decayed?”
(XXXVI:78)

In answer, Allāh said that He had forgotten his first coming into existen:

سورة يس آية ٧٩
قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ

“Say ‘He shall quicken them, Who originated them the first-time; He knows all Creation’.”
(XXXVI:79)

He also said:-

سورة يس آية ٨١
أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ بَلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ

“Is not He, Who created the heavens and the earth, able to create the like of them? Yes indeed; He is the All-creator the All-knowing.”
(XXXVI:81)

About people being believers or unbelievers, and in description of what will be given to the unbelievers in hell and the believers in heaven, it says:-

سورة نازعات آية ٣٧
فَأَمَّا مَنْ ظَغَىٰ وَاتَّرَ الْحَيَوةَ الدُّنْيَا فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ

“Then as for him who was insolent and preferred the life of the world, surely Hell shall be the refuge. But as for him who feared the station of his Lord and forbade the soul its caprice, surely the Garden shall be the refuge.”

(LXXIX:37-41)

سورة مؤمن آية ٤٠
مَنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئَةً فَلَا يُجْزَىٰ إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْأُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ يُرْزَقُونَ فِيهَا بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

“Whosoever does an evil deed shall be recompensed only with the like of it, but whosoever does a righteous deed, be they male or female, believing - those shall enter the Garden, therein provided without reckoning.”
XL:40

The Qur’an explicitly states the difficulties of Resurrection and the severity of the punishment so that people should fear Allāh and do good.

سورة حج آية ١-٢
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ. يَوْمَ تَرَوُنَّهَا تُذْهِلُ كُلُّ مَرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَىٰ وَلَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ

“O men, fear your Lord! Surely the earthquake of the Hour is a mighty thing; or that day when you behold it, every suckling woman shall neglect the child she has suckl-

ed, and every pregnant woman shall deposit her burden, and thou shalt see mankind drunk, yet they are not drunk, but Allāh's chastisement is terrible." (XXII;1-2)

سورة عبس آية ٣٣-٣٦
 فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الصَّاحَةُ - يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ. وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَيْنِهِ
 لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ.

"And when the Blast shall sound, upon the day when a man shall flee from his brother, his mother, his father, his consort, his sons, every man that day shall have business to suffice him." (LXXX;33-36)

سورة آل عمران آية ٣٠
 يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَاعَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُخَضَّرًا وَمَاعَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا.....

"The day that every soul shall find what it has done of good brought forward, and what it has done of evil, it shall wish if there were only a far space between it and that day." (III;30)

Hundreds more ayahs expound the subject of the Return and the reckoning of the Day of Resurrection. If these ayahs are considered with care and attention, it will transform man's behaviour in this world to such an extent that he will not undertake a thing more without reckoning it and he will fear Allāh. He will gather together provisions for his eternal life here in this world, which is a kind of farm. Pure-hearted Muslims, out of fear of the next world, will carefully weigh their acts and words and even thoughts, they will keep the nights free of sleep, and devote themselves to worship, to supplicating Allāh. They will not do things dictated by their pleasure, and spend the night and day thinking how to improve themselves and the community.

Sa'sa'ah ibn Sūhān said: "I was present in the mosque at Kūfah for the morning prayer. Hazrat 'Alī, Amīr al-mu'minīn prayed with us, and, after the salām, he sat facing the qibla, engaged himself in remembrance of Allāh (dhikr), not looking at all to the right or to the left of himself, until the sun had risen. Then he turned to us and said: 'In the time of my beloved Prophet of Allāh (s.a.), there were people who were engaged in sajdah and rukū' in this night till the morning, and when it became light they were dishevelled of hair and covered in dust, and their foreheads were marked with the effects of sajdah. When they remembered death, like trees whipped by the wind, they fell into great commotion and wept, soaking their clothes in their tears.' Then Hazrat 'Alī stood up, but he said: 'It would seem that those who have lived in forgetfulness.'"

One day after the Prophet of Islam (s.a.) had prayed the morning prayer in the mosque, he saw a youth named Hāritha who was dozing, he had become pale, emaciated and his eyes were sunken. The Prophet asked him how he felt. He said 'In a state of certainty.' The Prophet was surprised at his answer and said: 'Every certainty has a reality. What is the reality of your certainty?'

He said: 'O Prophet! My certainty has made me depressed, and steal sleep from my eyes, and make me hot with thirst in the middle of the day. I renounce this world and all that is in it. Now it is as if I see the Resurrection taking place and the people coming to be reckoned. I also am among them, and I can see that one group is enjoying the blessings of heaven and are sitting on the heavenly thrones around them and are speaking to each other. And I can see that another group is being punished in the Fire; their cries for help and protection are loud, and it seems that right now the crackling of the flames of the Fire is resounding in my ears.'

The Prophet (s.a.) told his companions: 'He is a slave whose heart Allāh has filled with a brilliant faith.' Then he told the

youth: 'Be watchful that this state does not leave you.' The youth said: 'O Prophet! Pray to Allāh that I may be martyred in your service.' The Prophet prayed for his martyrdom, and it was not long before he attained his glory in one of the wars along with other persons.

LESSON THIRTY

30. After Death

Death

That which does not die and will never die is Allāh. We, slaves, will one day eventually leave this world.

The setting of the sun each day is a poetical metaphor for our passing away. How good it is, if we meet with another day, just like the sun, beaming and bright on the horizon of the Resurrection. This is important for the sunset is inevitable; death is a reality which, like it or not, must happen.

What we must think about is what after death will happen to us? Will we become nothing? Will everyone's life merely "end in death"? Or will we "remain", and if so, what will our "remaining" be like?

Those who do not believe in God consider death to be the becoming nothing of man, and life just limited to one or two days. They say that everyone's turn is short-lived. But those who are based in revelation are completely opposed to this view, and they

say that man is immortal and that death is just a ladder leading to the world of purgatory and Resurrection, which is the everlasting resting place.

Purgatory (Barzakh)

According to clear ayahs of the Qur'an and many hadiths from the leaders of Islam, death is not the becoming nothing of man. The human spirit, after death, remains, and experiences blessings or torment up to the time of the turmoil of Resurrection.

This period from death to Resurrection is called *Barzakh*. The life of *Barzakh* is a real existence, not imaginary or illusory. Allāh says:-

سورة آل عمران آية ١٧٠-١٦٩
وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا، بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ
فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ.....

"Count not those who were slain in the way of Allāh as dead, but rather living with their Lord, being sustained, rejoicing in the bounty which Allāh has given them."
(III;169-170)

It is clear that if the life were not real, the phrase "living with their Lord, being sustained" would be meaningless.

Similarly in the case of the man of Ya-Sin, the believer, who advised his people to follow the Messenger of 'Isā, but they did not and killed him, the Qur'an says:

سورة يس آية ٢٦-٢٧
قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ

"It was said: 'Enter Paradise!' He said: 'Ah, would that my people had knowledge that my Lord has forgiven me, and that he has placed me among the honoured.'" (XXXVI;26-27)

It is evident that the meaning of Paradise in this ayah is the purgatory of *Barzakh* which people of faith benefit from in between death and the Resurrection.

The Qur'an said of the unbelievers and those who, till the moment of death, continue in unacceptable ways:-

"Till, when death comes to one of them, he says, 'My Lord, return me; haply I shall do righteousness in that I forsook'."
(XXIII;99)

But their wish is unfulfilled, and they are told.

سورة مؤمنون آية ١٠٠-٩٩
كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

"Nay, it is but a word he speaks, are there, behind them, is a barrier until the day that they shall be raised up."
(XXIII;100)

Here is a true story about this. The tumult of the battle of Badr had just died down and the enemy run away. The dead remained. Some of the dead who were unbelievers were dumped in a well. The Prophet (s.a.) came to the head of the well and said to the dead: "O ye unbelievers! You were the accomplices of evil. You drove the Prophet of Allāh from his home, and joined together in war against him. Now I have seen the promise of my God fulfilled. Have you also seen the promise of your god proved true?"

On hearing these words, 'Umar said: "O Prophet, how can you speak with these who are no more than bodies without spirits?"

"Enough!" said the Prophet, "I swear by Allāh that you can hear no better than they can. Just as I got up and turned away from them, the angels of torment came to beat them with iron clubs."

Amīr al-mu'minīn 'Alī (a.s.), too, was searching among the dead after the battle of Jamal for the body of Ka'b ibn Surah. Ka'b had been appointed in his life-time to be judge of Baṣrah, and had been judge there till the end of the Caliphate of 'Uthman. In the battle of Jamal he hung a Qur'ān round his neck and together with the family and offspring of the Prophet went to the Imam's battle and was killed. After he had found the body, the Imam (a.s.) gave the command to sit him up, and addressed him: "O Ka'b, I have seen the promise of Allāh fulfilled. Have you, too seen it fulfilled?"

Then he ordered the body to be laid down; then he did the same with the body of Ṭalḥah. So someone asked him: "What is the use of doing that? They cannot hear your words."

"I swear by Allāh," he said, "that they heard both my remarks, just as did the dead at Badr with the Prophet."

Also Ḥabbah al-'Arnī said "I went with Amīr al-mu'minīn, 'Alī (a.s.) to Wadī as-Salām. The latter stood and it seemed that he spoke with some people. I stood too but became tired, so I sat down, but I was still tired. I got up and sat down again. Still I was tired so I stood up to get my cloak and asked 'Alī if he would allow me to put my cloak down so that he could sit down for a while. I told him I was afraid he might be tired from standing too much.

"O Ḥabbah," he said, "this standing up gives no discomfort, because I am busy with speaking familiarly with the dead."

"Are they like this," I asked.

"Yes; if the veil was taken away from your eyes you would see that groups of the dead are sitting speaking to one another."

"Are they bodies or spirits?" I asked.

"Spirits. The faithful, in all comes of the world, do not die unless an order reaches them. In Wadī as-Salām, here and there are chambers of the Garden of Eden, and the highest heavens where the spirits of the believers gathered from far and near."

The Questioning in the Grave.

It can be seen from many hadīths that the spirit has a very special relation with the body in the grave, although the nature of this relation is not clear.

The sixth Imam, Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.) said: "Those who deny the questioning in the grave are not from our party (Shi'a)."

When the dead person is laid in the grave, the angels of the questioning present themselves and ask him about his dīn, his beliefs and his deeds. If the individual has faith and has done good, he joins the believers; if not, he joins the unbelievers and evil-doers. And everyone will pass the period in Barzakh until the Resurrection with their respective group.

Shaykh Ṣadūq - may the mercy of Allāh be with him - writes in his *Risālah al-I'tiqādāt*: "In our opinion, the questioning in the grave is a truth, and he who answers rightly will benefit in the grave from comfort and blessings, and in the next world from the Garden. He who cannot answer rightly will see torment in the grave, and in the Resurrection he will go to the Fire."

The fourth Imam (a.s.) used to exhort people every Friday in the Mosque of the Prophet (s.a.), saying: "O People, prefer abstinence and virtuousness. Your return will be to Allāh. Each person who has done good here, will be advanced there, and each person who has done impure deeds and wishes that a great distance be put between him and his deeds, Allāh will put the fear of your torment into you.

"Alas, O sons of Ādam! What neglectfulness! But they are not neglectful. Death is quicker than anything that tries to overtake it, and it will swallow you. And when it finds you out, it will be as it is said when it overtakes you, and the angel of death will recover your spirit from you and you will rise alone in the chamber (the grave), and the angel of questioning will come in to you for questions and a hard examination.

“The first question will be about your God whom you worshipped, and about your Prophet who was sent to you, and about your dīn which you followed, and about your Book which you believed in and read, and about your Imams whose walāyat you accepted and whose orders you carried out. Then they will ask about the reckoning of your life, what way you went, and about your property and wealth, where you disposed of it and how you spent it. So be careful, and after the questions be ready with your answer!

“If you are with faith, virtuous, know yourself well and follow the truthful leaders; and a friend of the friends of Allāh, Allāh will make your tongue speak the truth, and He will give you the good news of the Garden and your happiness. The angels will come before you with gifts and sustenance. Otherwise your tongue will fall to stammering and you will not reply after the questions, and He will make you the promise of the Fire, and the angels will bring torment before you with the entertainment of boiling water and fire.”

The Torment of the Grave.

Man's placing in Barzakh is intimately connected with his deeds in this world. For those who are virtuous of soul, Barzakh will be a sample of Heaven, and they will see their good deeds reflected in beauty and soft to the eye. Hazrat Imam Ḥasan 'Askarī (a.s.) said: “When a believer dies, six beautiful youths will hurry with him to his grave, one of them more fragrant and more beautiful than all the others. On his right, on his left, above him and below him and in front of him and behind him they will stand. Then the most beautiful of them will ask: “Who are you all.” The one standing on the right will say: ‘I am prayer’; the one on the left: ‘I am zakāt’. The one standing in front will say: ‘I am fasting’; the one behind: ‘I am ḥajj and ‘umrah.’. The

one at his feet will say: ‘I am the goodness which he did to his brothers.’ Then all will ask of the most beautiful: ‘You, yourself, who are you, who is more perfect?’”

“I am walāyat”, he will say, “and love of the Household of Muḥammad (s.a.)”

However on those who had polluted the surface of the earth with unbelief, impurity and indecent acts, constraint and darkness will fall when they enter the grave, and their angel of torment will inflict suffering on them.

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.) was following the funeral procession of one of the Anṣārs; and when he had been buried, he sat down on his grave and lowered his head, saying: “O Allāh, I seek refuge from the torments of the grave!”

The questioning of the grave and its torments are not necessarily to be perceived by the physical eye. That power by which the prophets, the Imams, the pure ones and the righteous ones spoke, is enough, and must be accepted.

Mullā Muḥsin Fayḻ says: “These (physical) eyes are not competent to see what happens in the world of Malakūt, and what happens in the next world and in Barzakh is the business of Malakūt. Did not the companions of the Prophet (s.a.) believe in the descent of Jibra'īl, although they could not see him? So also, the torment of the grave is an affair of Malakūt, and if this is to be perceived, another sense is necessary of which all are deprived save the prophets and the walīs of Allāh.”

The Remembrance of Death.

Some people run away from the remembrance of death, and do not give way to thoughts about it. It is as if they have drunk the water of eternity, and think to remain in this world forever. These people are drunk from the wine of neglectfulness. For they know but do not accept that the only thing that is eter-

nal and will not die is Allāh. From the results of their neglectfulness of death, they will pass their lives aimlessly. They do not think to reform themselves; their time is spent like the hands of a clock, turning round and round, and how often will they be polluted with dreadful sins. There is not so much difference between their lives and the lives of animals.

The manner of their behaviour is completely the contrary of the way of acting of the chosen ones of Allāh. The Prophet of Islam (s.a.) said: "Remember death very often, so that it may purify you from sins and decrease attachment to a world which is not an introduction to the betterment of the spirit."

On the other hand, there are others who remember death much, following the command of the leaders of the dīn - may Allāh bless them - and profit from every occasion that comes their way for the Day of Resurrection. Their world is a world of introduction to the ultimate world. Their search is not for personal benefit and their own desires. From their view the world does not have so much value that they will dirty their hands and clothes with urine and treachery to get it. Rather they are busy with work and pursuits and service in society, so that they will completely take the benefit from this life to the life of the Resurrection.

They do not fear death. The greatest example is Amīr al-mu'minīn, 'Alī (a.s.), whose first words when the sword of the enemy fell to martyr him were: "I swear by Allāh, I have been delivered!"

Truly, the leaving of the constraints of this world and going to eternity of the everlasting world is an ease and a salvation, but only for those who follow the way of Hazrat 'Alī (a.s.) to purity in the straightened circumstances of this life, and who are occupied with piety in their spirits and souls and thoughts, and with worship and slavery to Allāh, and with service to mankind.

Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī was asked: "Why are we disgusted

with death?"

"You have taken up residence in this world," he replied, "but ruined your next world. So you do not desire to migrate from your home to the place of ruin."

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.) said: "Do you all wish to go to the Garden?"

"Yes," they all said.

"So cut short your cravings, and always keep death in sight, since you must always be shameful before Allāh."

To remember those near to you when they met death, and occasional visits to graveyards and the tombs of believers will result in remembrance of death and guidance.

The Garden.

سورہا حجر ٤٥ - ٤٨

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ. أَدْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ آمِنِينَ. وَتَرَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ. لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ

"But the godfearing shall be amongst gardens and fountains: 'Enter you them, in peace and security!' We shall strip away all rancour that is in their breasts; as brothers they shall be upon couches set face to face; no fatigue there shall suite them, neither shall they be driven forth from there."
(XV,47,48)

سورة واقعه آية ١٠ - ٢٤

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ. أُولَئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ. فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ. ثَلَاثَةٌ مِنَ الْأُولَىٰ وَقَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْآخِرِينَ. عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّضَوَّاتٍ. مُتَّكِنِينَ عَلَيْهَا مُتَقَابِلِينَ. تَطَوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُونَ

بِأَكْوَابٍ وَأَبَارِيقٍ وَكَأْسٍ مِنْ مَعِينٍ. لَا يُصَدِّغُونَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يَنْزِفُونَ. وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُونَ. وَ
لَحْمٍ طَيْرٍ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ. وَخُورٍ عَيْنٍ. كَأَمْثَالِ اللُّؤْلُؤِ الْمَكْنُونِ. جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

"The Outstrippers (as-Sābiqūn), those are they brought nigh the Throne, in the Gardens of Delight (a throng of the ancients but how few of the later folk) upon close-wrought couches reclining upon them, set face to face, immortal youths going round about them with goblets, and ewers, and a cup from a spring (no brows throbbing, no intoxication) and such fruits as they choose, and such flesh of fowl as they desire, and wide-eyed hours as the likeness of hidden pearls, a recompense for that they laboured."
(LVI;11-24)

سورة صافات آية ٤٠ - ٤٩

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ. أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ رِزْقٌ مَعْلُومٌ. فَوَاكِهٌ وَهُمْ مُكْرَمُونَ. فِي جَنَّاتِ
النَّعِيمِ تَجْلَى سُرُرٌ مُتَقَابِلِينَ. يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِكَأْسٍ مِنْ مَعِينٍ. بَيْضَاءُ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ. لَافِيهَا عُورٌ
وَلَهُمْ عَنْهَا يَنْزِفُونَ. وَعِنْدَهُمْ فَاصِرَاتُ الْظُرْفِ عَيْنٍ. كَأَنَّهُمْ يَبْتَصُونَ مَكْنُونٌ

"Except for Allāh's sincere slaves; for them awaits a known provision, fruits - and they high-honoured in the Gardens of Bliss upon couches, set face to face, a cup from a spring being passed round to them, white, a delight to the drinkers, wherein no sickness is, neither intoxication; and with them wide-eyed maidens restraining their glances as if they were hidden pearls."
(XXXVII;39-47)

سورة صافات آية ٥٠ - ٦١

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ. قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ بِي قَرِينٌ
يَقُولُ أَإِنَّكَ لِمِنَ الْمُصَدِّقِينَ إِذْ آمَنَّا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَإِنَّا لَمَدِينُونَ قَالَ هَلْ

أَنْتُمْ مُقْتَلُونَ. فَأَقْلَعَفَرَاهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ. قَالَ تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كِدْتَ لَتُرْدِينَ وَلَوْلَا رِغْمَةُ
رَبِّي لَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُخْضَرِّينَ. أَقْمَأُنْحُنُ بِمَتِّينَ. إِلَّا مَوْتَنَا الْأُولَى وَمَا نَحْنُ
بِمُعَذَّبِينَ. إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَرَزُ الْعَظِيمُ. لِيُمِثِلَ هَذَا أَفْلِحَ الْعَامِلُونَ.

The dwellers in the Garden are talking to one another. "One of them says, 'I had a comrade who would say, "Are you a confirmer? What, when we are dead and become dust and bones, shall we indeed be requitted?" He says, 'Are you looking down?' Then he looks, and sees him in the midst of Hell. He says, 'By Allāh, wellnigh thou didst destroy me; But for my Lord's blessing, I was one of the arraigned. What, do we then not die except for our first death, and are we not chastised? This is indeed the mighty triumph and for the like of this let the workers work."

(XXXVII;50-61)

Hell

Hell is the place of the unbelievers and the sinners. Their torment and torture cannot be compared to the torments of this world. Allāh gives us a picture of the horror of it in the Qur'an:-

سورة نساء آية ٥٦

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصَلِّبُهُمْ نَارًا كَلَّمًا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ
بَدَلًا لَهَا مِنْ جُلُودٍ أُخْرَى لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا.

"Surely those who disbelieved in Our signs - We shall certainly roast them at a Fire; as often as their skins are wholly burned, We shall give them in exchange other skins, that they may taste the chastisement. Surely Allāh is All-might, All-wise."
(IV;56)

سورة حج آية ٢٢-١٩

هَذَا نِ حَضْمَانِ اخْتَصَمُوا فِي رَبِّهِمْ فَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا قُطِّعَتْ لَهُمْ ثِيَابٌ مِنْ
نَارٍ يُصَبُّ مِنْ فَوْقِ رُؤُوسِهِمُ الْحَمِيمُ. يُضْهَرُّ بِهِ مَا فِي بُطُونِهِمْ وَالْجُلُودُ. وَلَهُمْ مَقَامِعٌ
مِنْ حَدِيدٍ. كُلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ غَمٍّ أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ
الْحَرِيقِ.

“As for the unbelievers, for them garments of fire shall be cut, and there shall be poured over their heads boiling water whereby whatsoever is in their bellies and their skins shall be melted; for them await hooked iron rods; as often as they desire in their anguish to come forth from it, they shall be restored into it, and ‘Taste the chastisement of the burning!’”
(XXII;19-23)

سورة مؤمن (غافر) آية ٥٠-٤٩

وَقَالُوا الَّذِينَ فِي النَّارِ لِحَرَّتِمْ جَهَنَّمَ ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ يُخَفِّفْ عَنَّا يَوْمًا
مِنَ الْعَذَابِ. قَالُوا أَوْلَمْ نَكْتُمِبِكُمْ رَسُولًا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ، قَالُوا بَلَىٰ قَالُوا فَادْعُوا
وَمَا دَعَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ.

And those who are in the Fire will say to the keeper of Gehema, ‘Call on your Lord, to lighten for us one day of the chastisement!’ They shall say, ‘Did not your Messengers bring you the clear signs?’ They shall say, ‘Yes, indeed.’ They shall say, ‘Then do you call?’ But the calling of the believer is only in error.”
(XL;49-50)

سورة نبا آية ٢١-٢٥

إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْضَادًا. لِلظَّالِمِينَ مَأْبَأً. لِابْتِئَانٍ فِيهَا أَخْفَابًا لَا يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِرَدًّا
وَلَا شِرَابًا. إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَعَسَافًا

“Behold, Gehema has become an ambush, for the insolent a resort, therein to tarry for ages, tasting therein neither

coolness nor drink save boiling water and pus for a suitable recompense.”
(LXXVIII;21-23)

سورة همزة

وَنَبْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ، الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ. يُخَسِّبُ أَنْ مَالَهُ
أَخْلَدَهُ. كَلِمًا لِّيُنْبِتَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ. وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ. نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمَوْقَدَةُ. الَّتِي
تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ. إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَّدَةٌ. فِي عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ.

“Woe unto every backbiter, slanderer, who has gathered riches and counted them over thinking his riches have made him immortal! No indeed; he shall be thrust into the Crusher; and what shall teach thee what is the Crusher? The Fire of Allāh kindled roaring over the hearts covered down upon them, in columns outstretched.”
(CIV)

Amir al-mu'minīn, 'Alī (a.s.) said:

“Know that the delicate skin of your body cannot tolerate or bear the fire of Hell. So pity yourselves! You who have experienced the discomforts of this world, and who know your own incapacities, and who have seen how when a thorn enters your foot and makes it septic, the warm stones of the ground burn it, you take the pain. So how will it be when you are between two walls of fire, when you lie on stones and your companion is Satan.

“O those who are slaves of Allāh; remember Allāh, remember Allāh! While you are well, before you become ill, while you have the opportunity, before you become constrained, strive to be free of the fire of Hell, before the way of salvation becomes impossible for you. Give yourself to the way of Allāh with eyes clear of sleep, and your stomachs empty (i.e. fasting). Walk in His path; give away your possessions in His path; use your bodies to the benefit of your spirit; being sparing.” (Najh al-Balaghah)

Intercession (*ash-Shafā'ah*)

One of the clear matters in the Qur'ān, and also in many hadīths, is the matter of intercession. Intercession is intervention for the pardoning of someone's sins.

This intermediation, which takes place by the permission of Allāh in some sins and in the case of some sinners, is based on the expensive mercy and deep kindness of Allāh, and is a consequence of the hope of believers.

If one believes and obtains worthiness to be forgiven and pardoned, and does not fall back again from these high positions, although one was not able to repent in this world, Allāh will grant one His great Forgiveness by the means of intercession. In the Resurrection, the Prophets, the Prophet of Islam and the Pure Imams - may Allāh bless them all and grant them peace - will, with the permission of Allāh, intercede with Him for some sins. Of course, the sins of some persons will be so grave that they cannot merit intercession until they have met with the torment. But some sins are such that they will be completely removed by intercession. Thus a hadīth says:-

“Our intercession, the intercession of the Household of the Prophet is not the lot of those who take prayer to be a frivolity.”