

BACK COVER

To most people, the word hypocrite does not mean much. Some interpret it as meaning “two-faced” or “liar,” as they use it in everyday speech, but remain unaware of its significance in the Qur’an. People with some knowledge of religion, on the other hand, think of the hypocrites as a group of deniers who lived at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (saas). The fact is, the hypocrites are a group whom Allah mentions in hundreds of verses of the Qur’an and He reminds us to be on our guard against them.

From the Qur’an, we also learn that hypocrites as a group are not encountered only infrequently, but on the contrary, they are “organized” within every community of believers. Allah reveals in many verses of the Qur’an the characteristics of this community that represents a danger to believers. And therefore, hypocrites are one of the kinds of people most often described in the Qur’an.

These people are able to live, sometimes for many years, among those sincere believers who totally dedicate their lives to Allah, and pretend to be like them. But in fact, they are nothing of the sort and are concerned solely with their own interests. This group has been seen in every community of believers throughout history.

This book examines the characteristics of hypocrites, with the details set forth in the Qur’an.

THE SECRETS OF THE HYPOCRITE

They allot to Allah what they themselves dislike and their tongues frame the lie that they will receive the Best. There is no doubt at all that they will receive the Fire and that they are people who go to excess. (Surat an-Nahl: 62)

HARUN YAHYA

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INTRODUCTION

Among the people there are some who say, “We believe in Allah and the Last Day,” when they are not believers. They think they deceive Allah and those who believe. They deceive no one but themselves, but they are not aware of it. There is a sickness in their hearts and Allah has increased their sickness. They will have a painful punishment on account of their denial. (Surat al-Baqara: 8-10)

To most people, the word *hypocrite* does not mean much. Some interpret it as meaning “two-faced” or “liar,” as they use it in everyday speech, but remain unaware of its significance in the Qur’an. People with some knowledge of religion, on the other hand, think of the hypocrites as a group of deniers who mainly lived at the time of our Prophet (May Allah bless him and grant him peace [saas]).

The fact is, the hypocrites are a group whom Allah mentions in hundreds of verses of the Qur’an and He reminds us to be on our guard against them. From the Qur’an, we also learn that hypocrites as a group are not encountered only infrequently, but on the contrary, they are “organized” within every community of believers.

When we look into the Qur’an, we can see that this rule applies to all times: to the followers who accompanied the Prophet Musa (peace be upon him [as]), to those who believed in the Prophet Sulayman (as), to the community of the Prophet Ibrahim (as), to that of our Prophet (saas) who lived 1,400 years ago—in short, whatever Muslim community the Qur’an mentions, one can see that there were hypocrites within it. That is because, as the verse reveals, **“This is Allah’s pattern with those who passed away before. You will not find any alteration in Allah’s pattern”** (Surat al-Ahzab: 62), Allah tests every community of believers in similar ways. If there is any community of believers, then inevitably there will be a group of hypocrites within it. This is an unchanging law of Allah.

For that reason, Allah reveals in many verses of the Qur’an the characteristics of this community that represents a danger to believers. And therefore, hypocrites are one of the kinds of people most often described in the Qur’an.

These people are able to live, sometimes for many years, among those sincere believers who totally dedicate their lives to Allah. They pretend to be like those who struggle on His path, dedicating their lives and property. But in fact, they are nothing of the sort and are concerned solely with their own interests. This group has been seen in every true and honest community of believers throughout history. Indeed, as stated above, the Qur'an provides a great deal of information about the hypocrites in the communities of many prophets, including Prophet Muhammad (saas).

In this book, we shall be examining one by one the characteristics of hypocrites, with the details set forth in the Qur'an. We shall then turn our focus on self-satisfaction, a major defect that hypocrites suffer from.

As later chapters will consider in detail, self-satisfaction is one of the most important distinguishing features of hypocrites. Anyone with a hypocritical character imagines himself to have no need of anything and to be always on the right path. For that reason, as revealed in the verses, **"No indeed! Truly man is unbridled seeing himself as self-sufficient"** (Surat al-'Alaq: 6-7), their unbridled nature and denial constantly increase. Since they regard themselves as superior to others and independent of all needs, they are unable to submit to the commandments of Allah or to take advice.

But the better to understand the true character of the hypocrites and their perverted logic, we first need to grasp the difference between the hypocrite and the typical denying personality.

The Difference between Deniers and Hypocrites

But most people, for all your eagerness, are not believers. (Surah Yusuf: 103)

As the above verse tells us, most people do not have faith. Those who do not believe in Allah have always constituted the majority on Earth. This group, known as "deniers," includes those who openly deny Allah, idolaters and all those with sickness in their hearts, as well as hypocrites. The one characteristic they share in common is that they do not fear Allah as they should and live their lives far removed from His book. However, there is one group among the deniers listed above whom Allah says are **"in the lowest level of the Fire"** (Surat an-Nisa': 145).

So what is the difference that makes the hypocrites so much worthy of punishment than other deniers?

A denier does not believe in Allah and totally rejects His existence—together with moral values and the Qur'an, of course. A hypocrite, on the other hand, does not deny Allah directly, but claims that he believes in His religion and the Qur'an. In contrast to the deniers who openly declare their rejection of Allah, the hypocrite

conceals his denial and gives the impression of being a believer. He will claim to have faith and to fear Allah. Through His verses, however, Allah reveals that a hypocrite does not tell the truth and that the true faith of a believer is absent from his heart. In Surat al-Baqara, it is stated that:

Among the people there are some who say, “We believe in Allah and the Last Day,” when they are not believers. (Surat al-Baqara: 8)

Since the hypocrite claims to have faith, he is to be found among the community of sincere believers. He will sometimes spend his entire life among them. But since he conceals his denial, he constantly seeks conflict among believers, desiring to harm those who truly believe in Allah and to cause them to make concessions regarding their belief. This conflict-producing characteristic of hypocrites is revealed in the Qur'an:

When the hypocrites and people with sickness in their hearts said, “What Allah and His messenger promised us was mere delusion.” (Surat al-Ahzab: 12)

If they had been overrun from every side, and had then been asked to revert to disbelief, they would have done so and hesitated very little about it. (Surat al-Ahzab: 14)

Despite all his denial, the hypocrite will never come out and openly declare “I am a denier.” On the contrary, he will claim to have an exceedingly high level of *taqwa*, or heedfulness. In his view, believers are on the wrong path and he, himself, is on the true one. He maintains that his aim, therefore, is to encourage believers towards the true path. This is another one of the hypocrites' methods of instigating corruption.

Are Hypocrites Irreligious?

One of the most important features of hypocrites is that although they say they believe in religion, their personal conception of religion is incompatible with the Qur'an. The reason is that they insist on their own particular independent reasoning rather than the Qur'an. The logical webs of the hypocrites are described in the Qur'an:

Is it their intellects that direct them to say this or is it that they are an unbridled people? (Surat at-Tur: 32)

As set out above, the hypocrite claims to fear Allah, but his attitudes have nothing in common with those who really do fear Him. His aim is not to please Allah: On the contrary, he exhibits all kinds of behaviors that will call down Allah's wrath upon him. Yet in doing all this, he will fiercely maintain that he fears Allah exceedingly and that all his actions are compatible with the Qur'an.

In addition, the hypocrite will appear to fulfill most acts of religious worship, and may indeed even carry these out. Yet there is a great difference between his

manner of performing these and those of a believer—as well as his objective. For example, the believer performs prayers solely to earn Allah’s approval, while the hypocrite does so in order to show off. Allah reveals this behavior of the hypocrites in this verse:

The hypocrites think they deceive Allah, but He is deceiving them. When they get up to pray, they get up lazily, showing off to people, and remembering Allah only a very little. (Surat an-Nisa’: 142)

Outwardly, hypocrites and believers appear to perform the same acts of worship. The fact is, though, that believers **“are humble in their prayer”** (Surat al-Muminun: 2) and earn a reward for their observances. Hypocrites, on the other hand, suffer Allah’s wrath because of their insincerity and duplicity.

On the surface, therefore, the hypocrite is no atheist but rather, claims to believe in God and to abide by most religious observances. Yet he is still not a religious individual. He is devout only when it comes to his own conception of religion, which is the “Religion of Hypocrisy.” Yet because he seeks to distort religious moral values, even despite his sound knowledge of them, all his endeavors will be in vain in the Hereafter. Allah describes that day in another verse:

Their actions will come to nothing and, on the Day of Resurrection, We will not assign them any weight. (Surat al-Kahf: 105)

This Religion of Hypocrisy is the religion of satan, who established his hidden dominion over people, seeking to turn them from the path of Allah and to dominate their minds in all ways possible. He urges them to do evil, and directly seeks to prevent their doing good. He possesses a most extraordinary logic, which—in the next chapter—we shall describe in full detail and reveal the connection between it and human hypocrisy. Hypocrites are well aware of this logic of satan’s, but to them it makes no difference. Although no hypocrite will ever say, “I follow satan and live by his religion,” still he will exhibit that same twisted logic.

HYPOCRITES ARE THE PARTY OF SATAN

Satan has gained mastery over them and made them forget the remembrance of Allah. Such people are the party of satan. No indeed! It is the party of satan who are the losers. (Surat al-Mujadala: 19)

There are two communities on Earth: those who follow Allah and those who follow satan.

The army of satan is a community of people who have forgotten Allah, Who Created them, and who follow in satan’s footsteps by turning aside from the true path. We can divide this community into various sub-groups, such as idolaters, unbelievers and hypocrites. Yet of these groups, Allah reveals that the hypocrites

will be punished with the most humiliating torment. Hypocrites are a community harboring all the characteristics of satan. Before continuing to examine this, it will be useful to have a brief look at satan's perverted logic.

First, we must concentrate on the least explicable of satan's attitudes, his "mysterious rebellion." In Surat al-A'raf we are told that:

He [satan] said, "By Your misguidance of me, I will lie in ambush for them on your straight path. Then I will come at them, from in front of them and behind them, from their right and from their left. You will not find most of them thankful." (Surat al-A'raf: 16-17)

Satan's chief aim is to prevail upon people to rebel against Allah, as can be seen from these verses. He does all in his power and strives constantly to achieve that goal. Yet alongside his intense endeavors, there is another logic. The following verse informs us of this:

They are like satan when he says to a human being, "Disbelieve," and then when he disbelieves, says, "I wash my hands of you. Truly I fear Allah, the Lord of all the worlds." (Surat al-Hashr: 16)

As can be seen from the above verse, satan commands people to rebel, but he also states that he himself fears Allah. These expressions make his twisted logic plain for all to see. Not only does he rebel against Allah and encourage human beings to do so, but he also claims to fear Him. This of course shows that satan is mentally unbalanced.

One distinguishing feature of hypocrites that bears a close resemblance to those of satan is their mysterious rebellion. On the one hand, hypocrites are arrogant against Allah and seek to create strife, while on the other hand, they claim to believe in Him and the Hereafter and to be obedient to His religion, His prophets, and His commandments. In fact, Allah has warned believers against this very behavior of the hypocrites through various verses:

Don't you see those who claim that they believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you, still desiring to turn to a satanic source for judgment in spite of being ordered to reject it? Satan wants to misguide them far away. (Surat an-Nisa': 60)

In addition to this most obvious shared feature, the Qur'an also refers to various other similarities and relationships between satan and hypocrites, which we can now examine.

Hypocrites Take Satan as Their Friend

As a requirement of the verse, **"Your friend is only Allah and His messenger and those who believe: those who perform prayer and give the alms, and bow"** (Surat al-Ma'ida: 55), those who have faith in Allah perform a most

important observance by taking only Him and believers like themselves as their friends. That is the main reason for their strength.

In the same way that believers adopt Allah as their friend and turn to Him in all they do, hypocrites take satan as their friend and guardian. The position of those who adopt satan as their guardian is revealed in these verses:

. . . He and his tribe see you from where you do not see them. We have made the satans friends of those who have no faith. (Surat al-A'raf: 27)

One group He guided; but another group got the misguidance they deserved. They took the satans as friends instead of Allah and thought that they were guided. (Surat al-A'raf: 30)

If someone shuts his eyes to the remembrance of the All-Merciful, We assign him a satan who becomes his bosom friend. (Surat az-Zukhruf: 36)

As revealed in the above verse from the Surat az-Zukhruf, one of the main characteristics of hypocrites is the way they fail to remember Allah and remain spiritually divided from Him. Again, it is satan who encourages them to behave in this way.

Satan Causes Them to Forget Allah

Satan has gained mastery over them and made them forget the remembrance of Allah . . . (Surat al-Mujadala: 19)

In order for someone to be a hypocrite, he must first and foremost live within a community of believers and on whom he seeks to inflict harm, either openly or in secret.

The hypocrite works his way into a group of believers, as can be seen from the way he manages to adapt to their way of living, albeit on a temporary basis. Together with them, he recalls Allah and learns to read His verses. Nonetheless, he has turned from belief to denial. The position of hypocrites is revealed in one verse, thus:

That is because they have believed and then returned to disbelief. So their hearts have been sealed up and they cannot understand. (Surat al-Munafiqun: 3)

But if someone believes in the existence and oneness of Allah and obeys the Qur'an, how can he suddenly deviate into denial of Allah?

Naturally this does not happen instantaneously. The hearts of the hypocrites are more prone to denial than to belief. Inciting these people of weak faith is, once again, the work of satan, who sets various snares in order to influence them and

distract them away from the true path and into his own. The greatest of these traps is causing people to forget Allah.

Seeking to make the hypocrite forget Allah, satan approaches him with various strategies. Yet from reading the verses of the Qur'an, the hypocrite should know these strategies very well. He is therefore willingly caught in satan's snare because, as is revealed in the Qur'an, he has the sickness of rebelliousness in his heart. That affliction of the hypocrites is revealed in one verse, in these terms:

There is a sickness in their hearts and Allah has increased their sickness. They will have a painful punishment on account of their denial. (Surat al-Baqara: 10)

At this point, however, what must never be forgotten is that satan can influence only the weak in faith. He can never ensnare true, sincere believers in any way. The difference between the deviants and sincere believers is related in another verse:

[Allah said:] "You have no authority over any of My servants except for the misled who follow you." (Surat al-Hijr: 42)

Satan, who constantly seeks to encourage the hypocrite toward arrogance, lack of submission and insincerity, will soon achieve his aim. The hypocrite, who has gone along with him unbelievably quickly out of the weakness of his faith, now stops even bothering to imitate the behavior of a true believer and starts displaying satanic behavior. He begins to display negative behavior towards believers, of a kind he had never exhibited before. For example, he flies into a sudden rage, panics, or behaves in a way that he thinks will harm believers. The influence of satan becomes especially apparent in times of difficulty or in the face of any damages he has suffered himself. The hypocrite who encounters a sudden unexpected difficulty fails to realize that this is taking place under the control of Allah, that he needs to be patient, and that Allah will hear his prayer. He starts to exhibit the exact opposite of the behavior any believer will display in times of difficulty. In the face of a test of his faith, the hypocrite displays a side of him never seen before. But this is the true face of the hypocrite, who has forgotten Allah and submitted to satan.

You see that it is by no means difficult for satan to turn a hypocrite away from the true path. In fact, satan merely calls people to the path of wickedness; it is the hypocrite himself who heeds that call and later fails to repent—and who does all this of his own free will:

He [satan] had no authority over them except to enable Us to know those who believe in the Hereafter from those who are in doubt about it. Your Lord is the Preserver of all things. (Surah Saba': 21)

In the Hereafter, satan will slander those who followed after him and will declare, once again, that he never obliged them to do so, but that they followed him of their own desire:

When the affair is decided satan will say, “Allah made you a promise, a promise of truth, and I made you a promise but broke my promise. I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you responded to me. Do not, therefore, blame me but blame yourselves. I cannot come to your aid nor you to mine. I reject the way you associated me with Allah before.” The wrongdoers will have a painful punishment. (Surah Ibrahim: 22)

Satan Sows in Them the Seeds of Doubt

Anyone who believes in Allah with a sure and certain knowledge never doubts his faith for even a single moment, and seeks refuge in Allah against such a failing. The hypocrite, on the other hand, has doubts on the subject of faith. It is satan, of course, whom he has taken as his friend and in whose path he follows, who inspires these doubts in his heart.

[Satan said:] “I will lead them astray and fill them with false hopes. I will command them, and they will cut off cattle’s ears. I will command them, and they will change Allah’s creation.” Anyone who takes satan as his protector in place of Allah has clearly lost everything. (Surat an-Nisa’: 119)

As stated in this verse, satan seeks to instill in people doubts that are utterly hollow and ridiculous. However, those whose faith is weak regard these as extraordinarily important and adopt them with ease. Since they are far removed from the teachings of the Qur’an, they fail to display the kind of behavior it recommends in such situations:

If an evil impulse from satan provokes you, seek refuge in Allah. He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. (Surat al-A’raf: 200)

Therefore, while believers are victorious over satan, hypocrites are inevitably overcome by him.

Satan Deceives Them with Promises

He makes promises to them and fills them with false hopes. But what satan promises them is nothing but delusion. (Surat an-Nisa’: 120)

Satan makes people empty promises, all of them directed towards the transient life of this world. Satan, who is rather clever despite not having the sort of wisdom given as a blessing to believers, looks for the gaps in everyone’s armor. These

weaknesses are the “idols” that an individual may prefer over the approval of Allah.

By “idols,” one must not think only of the stone images before which pagans bow down and worship. An idol in this sense can be any concept, ideal, or even human being that one chooses in preference to religion. It can be rank, wealth, fame or beauty, or any persons whose possession of those qualities magnifies them in one’s esteem—or any of the transitory baubles of the life in this world. Satan’s promises can come in still other varieties, but are still nothing more than empty promises. That is because all of them are transient. On the day that a person is resurrected, he will find that nothing and nobody he valued in this world remains alongside him.

For hypocrites, however, with their lack of depth of understanding, it is not difficult to be taken in by such empty promises. Blindly devoted to the attractions of this world, hypocrites imagine that satan’s promises will come true and that they will benefit from going along with him. In fact, however, satan’s promises are merely intended to lead a person to Hell. They are of no use in this world, and especially not in the Hereafter. In Surat al-Hashr we are told:

They are like satan when he says to a human being, “Disbelieve,” and then when he disbelieves, says, “I wash my hands of you. Truly I fear Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.” The final fate of both of them is that they will be timelessly, forever in the Fire. That is the repayment of the wrongdoers. (Surat al-Hashr: 16-17)

The only community that is not taken in by satan’s promises, and does not go along with him, is that of the believers. They are not open to the deceptions satan constantly whispers. Since they evaluate all events within a framework of reason and conscience, they never put any trust in his baseless promises.

They Show Satan Their True Faces

Hypocrites make great efforts to portray themselves to believers as “sincere.” They stubbornly persist in this insincerity until their own interests are harmed; and we will consider their aims in detail in due course.

Hypocrites conceal themselves until they split away from believers, and meanwhile they reveal their true faces only to satan. Allah reveals the situation of the hypocrites in a verse:

When they meet those who believe, they say, “We believe.” But then when they go apart with their satans, they say, “We are really with you. We were only mocking.” (Surat al-Baqara: 14)

Here, it's important to note that naturally enough, satan does not appear to hypocrites in his own physical form. He has a number of abilities, including the one of being able to assume human guise.

It will be useful to say a bit more about his taking on this appearance "Like the devil" is a comparison often employed in everyday language to mean "extreme." But how does one become like the devil? If someone shares some of the characteristics of satan, then it's only accurate to describe that person as "like the devil" or "devilish."

As mentioned earlier, since hypocrites bear all the features of satan, they are quite literally devilish. Furthermore, they also possess a keen ability to recognize others like themselves. If they see they have something in common with the person before them, they may well show that individual their true faces.

It is at this point, when hypocrites depart from believers and join with others like themselves, that they go literally "face to face" with satan. As we'll discuss later, they prepare cunning strategies such as rebellion and enmity of the prophets by holding secret conclaves and speaking among themselves in secret.

WHY DO HYPOCRITES WORSHIP AND REMAIN ALONGSIDE BELIEVERS?

When the hypocrites come to you they say, "We bear witness that you are indeed the messenger of Allah." Allah knows that you are indeed His messenger and Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are certainly liars. (Surat al-Munafiqun: 1)

The previous chapter examined the mysterious rebellion which hypocrites share with satan. We have also seen that in dramatic contrast to atheists, hypocrites are possessed of a peculiar logic: Although well aware of the existence of Allah, they fail to abide by His commandments. And in doing so, they conceal their true characters from believers, while portraying themselves as sincerely devout individuals.

Why do they give the impression of believing when in fact they have no faith in their hearts?

It is because their situation is rather different from that of other deniers. The hypocrite has a sufficient understanding of the matters set out in the Qur'an. He himself confirms that in order to fulfill his duty of service to Allah, he must fully implement His verses. But what he says and what he does are two different things. How he speaks the name of Allah, while harboring whispers of skepticism and rebellion in his heart is the greatest sign of his hypocrisy.

It is really impossible for anyone with faith to fully comprehend the hypocrite's darkness of soul, because the words and deeds of one who fears Allah are always

the same. Therefore, a hypocrite's two-facedness and fraud only surprise sincere believers. Nonetheless, the Qur'an describes to believers a number of causes of this hypocritical state of mind.

1. They want to secure material advantages

One of the main reason why the hypocrite presents himself as a friend to the faithful is his desire to secure material benefits. Thanks to the blessing given them by Allah, believers possess both spiritual strength and material dominion. History is full of such examples as the Prophet Sulayman (as), the Prophet Muhammad (saas), the Prophet Dawud (as), Dhu'l-Qarnayn (as) and many other messengers referred to in the Qur'an. For example, the following verse is about the Prophet Sulayman (as):

They made for him anything he wished: high arches and statues, huge dishes like cisterns, great built-in cooking vats. "Work, family of Dawud, in thankfulness!" But very few of My servants are thankful. (Surah Saba': 13)

The arches, statues, large dishes and vats possessed by the Prophet Sulayman (as) are certainly a contemporary expression of splendor and wealth. Another verse refers to the Prophet Sulayman (as) having a mansion with a courtyard paved with glass, thanks to the use of advanced technology—and to the Queen of Saba' (Sheba), Belqis, being most impressed by it:

She was told: "Enter the courtyard," but when she saw it she supposed it to be a pool and bared her legs. He said, "It is a courtyard paved with glass." ... (Surat an-Naml: 44)

Surat al-Kahf describes the power of Dhu'l-Qarnayn (as), who was a believer possessed of knowledge and dominion:

We gave him power and authority on the Earth and granted him a way to everything. (Surat al-Kahf: 84)

Another verse in Surat an-Nisa' states that the Prophet Ibrahim (as), who is much praised in the Qur'an for his moral values, possessed much property together with his family. In addition, Allah promises the faithful that He will make them legatees of places where they have never set foot before. The condition for this is set out in the Qur'an:

Allah has promised those of you who believe and do right actions that He will make them successors in the land as He made those before them successors, and will firmly establish for them their religion with which He is pleased and give them, in place of their fear, security. "They worship Me, not associating anything with Me." Any who disbelieve after that, such people are deviators. (Surat an-Nur: 55)

Allah's promises always come true. The Qur'an states:

"We will leave you the land to live in after them. That is the reward of those who fear My station and fear My threat." They [the prophets] asked for Allah's victory, and every obdurate tyrant failed. (Surah Ibrahim: 14-15)

Allah's constant support of believers leads hypocrites to think that being with the faithful will give them an advantage. For that reason, they enjoy living alongside believers, even though they have actually divorced themselves from religious morality.

Unlike the hypocrites hope to do, however, the faithful do not spend their wealth and assets in the pursuit of their own interests. That's because they know that their wealth and possessions actually belong to Allah and must be expended only on His path. Sooner or later, when the hypocrite becomes aware of this and realizes that none of the wealth of the faithful will be coming his way, he will decide to abandon them altogether.

In addition, the commercial means of wealthy believers are very broad. This makes a deep impression on hypocrites, many of whom perform certain religious observances (such as prayer, fasting, the giving of alms) only in order to gain a reputation among Muslims as being trustworthy and thus expand their own commercial opportunities. In the Qur'an Allah sets out the hypocrites' eagerness when it comes to business, one matter to which they attach the greatest importance:

But when they see a chance of trade or entertainment, they scatter off to it and leave you standing there. Say: "What is with Allah is better than trade or entertainment ..." (Surat al-Jumu'a: 11)

Of course, hypocrites who behave in this two-faced way will fail to find what they hope for, and in addition to the damage they suffer in this world, they will also be disappointed in the Hereafter.

2. They long to broaden their circles and prestige

Believers have wide circles of acquaintances due to their moral values, culture and respect. In addition, because they speak of religious moral values to eminent members of the societies in which they live they also enjoy strong links to them. Furthermore, apart from one group in opposition to them, they also have many supporters among the ordinary public, whose support increases as the strength and sphere of influence of believers rise. As the support for them increases, the respect in which they are held in society, the way they possess a different "quality" to that of ordinary people, and their superior moral values, all begin to be better understood.

Thanks to their pleasing moral values and matchless determination, believers enjoy a justified renown. For example, the public renown and recognition of the Prophet Ibrahim (as) with the determination he displayed from an early age is described in the Qur'an:

They said, "We heard a young man mentioning them. They call him Ibrahim." (Surat al-Anbiya': 60)

In another verse, Allah reveals more about His messenger:

Did We not raise your renown high? (Surat al-Inshirah: 4)

Hypocrites with their weak characters, influenced by all this renown, fame and recognition, seek to acquire an identity of their own by being alongside believers. They imagine that by doing so they will be as influential and admirable as those alongside them.

But because of the strife and corruption they inevitably cause while they remain alongside the faithful, Allah causes them to taste the humiliation they deserve, rather than the glory they expect.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HYPOCRITES

Those who break Allah's contract after it has been agreed, and sever what Allah has commanded to be joined, and cause corruption on the Earth, it is they who are the lost. (Surat al-Baqara: 27)

The lexical meaning of *munafiq* (hypocrite in Arabic) is anyone who gives rise to "confusion and corruption." That is the real motive for entering the communities of the faithful. They are determined in what they do, taking every opportunity to act against the order established by the faithful. Although hypocrites are not believers, they seek to portray themselves as ones and thus, to make use of the opportunities that believers offer them. But whenever a difficulty or trouble arises, they at once depart and cross over to the other side. Their true nature emerges only in times of adversity. This clearly indicates that they remain alongside the faithful for the sake of their own interests. This attitude, described in the Qur'an, has hundreds of different features. Our Prophet (saas) described the features of hypocrites in these terms:

The Prophet said, "The signs of a hypocrite are three:

- 1. Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie.*
- 2. Whenever he makes a promise, he always breaks it.*
- 3. If you trust him, he proves to be dishonest. (Sahih Bukhari)*

However, in order to recognize the character of the hypocrite, we first need to know about their belief in Allah.

Their Belief in Allah and the Hereafter is Superficial

No matter where they may live, everyone has a duty to believe in Allah, and to worship Him as their only God, and to worship Him. They therefore need the Qur'an, the word of Allah.

However, the responsibility of someone with no knowledge—who, in other words, has never been called to the Qur'an—is of course not the same as that of someone who's been invited to live according to the Qur'an and who has grasped its fine details. The latter is responsible for fulfilling his obligation to Allah literally. The hypocrite assumes this responsibility by saying that he believes in Allah and accepts the Qur'an. He has learned that first and foremost, he needs to live for Allah. For as long as he lives among believers, he sees that they constantly call upon Allah and the verses of the Qur'an, and also recognize His messenger. Nonetheless, however, he turns his back on all this. Allah addresses those who engage in such behavior:

How can you disbelieve, when Allah's signs are recited to you and the messenger is there among you? . . . (Surah Al 'Imran: 101)

This verse is significant in revealing the hypocrites' attitude towards the verses of Allah. Reading and listening to the Qur'an enhances a believer's faith. Ordinarily, when a hypocrite sharing the same environment as the Messenger hears verses in which he claims to believe, one would expect his faith to increase and his heart to soften. Yet his true objective is not to increase his faith, but to gain advantages in this life and benefits in this world. For that reason, this miracle occurs: Although he constantly listens to the verses of the Qur'an and is constantly shown how to abide by them, the sickness in his heart remains uncured.

It must not be forgotten that everything done for the approval of Allah may be a criterion and a vehicle for attaining Paradise. Yet one of the hypocrite's most distinguishing features is the concessions he makes in seeking to earn Allah's approval, even though he appears to have faith in some form. In fact, the moment any difficulty arises his flexibility and elasticity manifest themselves immediately. Allah tells us:

. . . Once the matter [of fighting] was determined, being true to Allah would be better for them. (Surah Muhammad: 21)

In times of difficulty, the hypocrite can be seen to forget the promises he made before and display disloyal behavior. At any moment, he is prone to make U-turns and lose his superficial faith. This failure to believe in Allah literally stems from his failure to believe unequivocally in the Hereafter—despite his claiming that he does.

When the believers under the command of the Prophet Muhammad (saas) were fighting against the deniers, one group from within their ranks lost their faith in

the face of the enemy, began imagining things about Allah and the Prophet (saas)—and in this way, revealed their true faces:

At that point the believers were tested and severely shaken. When the hypocrites and people with sickness in their hearts said, “What Allah and His Messenger promised us was mere delusion.” (Surat al-Ahzab: 11-12)

In contrast to the weakness displayed by the hypocrites, however, the faithful’s strength only grew:

When the believers saw the Confederates, they said: “This is what Allah and His Messenger promised us. Allah and His Messenger told us the truth.” It only increased them in faith and in submission. (Surat al-Ahzab: 22)

From Belief They Turn to Denial

They swear by Allah that they said nothing, but they definitely spoke the word of disbelief and returned to disbelief after their Islam. They planned something which they did not achieve. . . . (Surat at-Tawba: 74)

Within their ranks, there may be various types of hypocrites. Some, for example, enter communities of the faithful solely in order to secure their own material interests. Others join with them solely out of hatred, and intend to work against them in secret. Additionally, there may be hypocrites who once had faith when they entered among believers, but who subsequently lost that faith as their hearts grew hard and thus, become divorced from them. Such people, believers at first, have lost their good intentions and turned to denial. In fact, however, they have made promises of loyalty to Allah and to believers, and vowed to remain determined in their faith. This two-faced behavior is described in the Qur’an:

Those who break Allah’s contract after it has been agreed. . . (Surat al-Baqara: 27)

They Generate From the Community of the Faithful

There is a group of you who propagated the lie. . . . (Surat an-Nur: 11)

How can hypocrites enter communities of the faithful? The answer is given in the Qur’an: The hypocrite has an enormous ability to portray himself as a true believer. He can hide his true nature—albeit for a short time—by praying and calling on Allah in the same way a believer does. Another reason why he is able to conceal his true nature is because believers are naturally predisposed to give him the benefit of the doubt. If someone comes among them and says, “I am a believer,” they regard him as such. This acceptance stems entirely from their excellent moral values and efforts to earn Allah’s approval. Even if believers do realize at once that the intentions of that individual are perverted, they’ll

generally permit him to remain among them in the hope that perhaps in time, he will correct himself and come to faith.

It will be useful to examine the general features of hypocrites in the light of these statements.

Their Characters and States of Mind

Their Natures are Prone to Strife

When they are told, “Do not cause corruption on the Earth,” they say, “We are only putting things right.” No indeed! They are the corrupters, but they are not aware of it. (Surat al-Baqara: 11-12)

Because of his fear of Allah, a believer knows that he will be held to account for all his thoughts and deeds when the day comes. He constantly turns to good deeds and will spend all his time thinking of good and moral behavior.

Hypocrites, on the other hand, harbor constant doubts about the reality of the Day of Judgment, and therefore, do not employ their minds for auspicious purposes. All their endeavors are malicious, since they constantly desire to cause corruption and vex believers.

When their strife-prone character emerges, they again seek to deny this and to deceive the messengers of Allah with lying words. But of course, they cannot succeed in this—because Allah has already told believers what they will say:

Among them are there some who say, “Give me permission to stay. Do not put temptation in my way.” Have they not fallen into that very temptation [*fitnah*]? . . . (Surat at-Tawba: 49)

Hypocrites are completely predisposed to strife. They seek to spread dissension, either by covert and cunning means or else quite openly. The Arabic word *fitnah* means creating corruption and confusion in communities of believers. Hypocrites fully meet the meaning of the word, both internally and externally. Their souls are predisposed to dissension and discord rather than to harmony and beauty.

Examining the Qur’an will show that hypocrites have spread strife throughout history. The Qur’an reveals their characteristics with various examples. For instance, people prone to strife have actually never behaved any other way, and the methods they have employed have always been the same.

Another example of one whose character was predisposed to strife is Samaritan, leader of the hypocrites among the followers of the Prophet Musa (as). Seizing the opportunity presented by the Prophet Musa’s (as) absence, Samaritan spread strife among the people and caused most of them to stray from the true path.

They Look for Power and Honor in Deniers

. . . [Do they] hope to find power and strength with them? Power and strength belong entirely to Allah. (Surat an-Nisa': 139)

Since hypocrites' value judgments are all perverted, their view of deniers is also completely misguided. They feel love for these people who do not believe in Allah, who do not live by religious moral values and who strive to ensure that others won't either. That is because from deniers, they can gain certain advantages, and they thus regard deniers' criteria as important. Being praised by them and elevated according to their value judgments is a most important distinction for hypocrites. They cannot comprehend that power and honor belong solely to Allah. The fact that deniers outnumber the believers makes them think that deniers must be stronger and superior.

However, hypocrites are unaware of another fact—or rather, are unable to comprehend it: that Allah always protects and supports believers. Allah has always aided believers in their struggles against the deniers, and has always made them victorious. This is revealed in these terms in Surat an-Nisa':

. . . Allah will not give the disbelievers any way against the believers. (Surat an-Nisa': 141)

They Take Deniers As Their Friends

You see many of them taking those who disbelieve as their friends . . . (Surat al-Ma'ida: 80)

Allah has forbidden believers to befriend deniers, for by not believing in Allah, by not turning to Him and by turning their backs on His verses, deniers prove that they do not have the sort of character that merits being befriended. They have entirely forgotten about the Hereafter. With a devilish effort, they seek to make other people love this world. Believers—well aware of this aspect of theirs—stay away from deniers and never accept them as friends or confidants.

Hypocrites, on the other hand, regard deniers as friends. They are inimical to those who believe in Allah, who spend their lives on earning His approval, and who are exceedingly pure and honest. One verse states: **“. . . those who take the disbelievers as protectors, rather than the believers . . .”** (Surat an-Nisa': 139). The reason for this is that hypocrites and deniers have essentially the same characteristics. Either group can forget the Hereafter by denying Allah and seeking out others headed in that same direction. As we already stated, both groups are the party of satan and render service to him.

They are Untrustworthy

As can be seen from all the characteristics described so far, hypocrites cannot be trusted. They live among believers, but are hostile to them. In addition, they hide

that hostility within themselves—and this enmity and false behavior they conceal within themselves are a clear indication of their cunning and disloyalty. They therefore exhibit not the slightest trace of trustworthiness and almost never keep a promise they make, unless it's to their benefit. It is revealed in one verse:

Those with whom you make a treaty and who then break it every time. They have no fear of Allah. (Surat al-Anfal: 56)

As we have already stated, their eagerness to spread strife and corruption confirms their untrustworthiness. It is impossible for believers to feel confident that these individuals will keep their word in times of trouble or difficulty. For believers, on the contrary, the most important thing at such times is to protect Muslims against anyone who engages in such cunning activities. The Qur'an tells believers of the true characters of hypocrites, whose untrustworthiness generally becomes even more difficult in times of trouble, and invites believers to be on their guard:

They respect neither kinship nor treaty where a believer is concerned. . . . (Surat at-Tawba: 10)

They Tell Lies

Hypocrites have made a habit of lying. They are capable of telling falsehoods quite irresponsibly and even without thinking. Yet Allah has forbidden people to lie, and has warned them against it:

. . . Have done with the defilement of idols and have done with telling lies. (Surat al-Hajj: 30)

As is revealed in the Qur'an "**. . . Allah bears witness that they are truly liars**" (Surat at-Tawba: 107), constant lying is a clear indication of their dishonesty. Furthermore, from the point of view of their spiritual state, it is quite natural that they should lie all the time, because deep in their hearts, they do not believe in the system in which they lead their lives. Behaving like believers leads them to constantly act a role in their society: They need to demonstrate how they live "like believers," even if such is not actually true. They feel obliged to say things they do not truly feel. Their situation is described in the Qur'an:

. . . [They were] saying with their mouths what was not in their hearts. (Surah Al 'Imran: 167)

Indeed, the best known of the lies told by hypocrites is "I am a believer," when they are not. They find it easy to lie for the sake of their own interests. In seeking to deceive others, they even call upon the name of Allah and make Him their witness. One verse regarding these people reads:

Among the people, there is someone whose words about the life of this world excite your admiration, and he calls Allah to witness what is in his heart, while he is in fact the most hostile of adversaries. (Surat al-

Baqara: 204)

In addition to persisting in the falsehood that they are believers, even though they have no faith in their hearts, they also resort to various other lies to secure their own interests. They have no problem in telling these lies both to believers and to their denier friends. Whenever they say anything, what matters to them is to secure the greatest benefit by pleasing others. Some of the falsehoods they employ are revealed in the verses:

If it had been a case of easy gains and a short journey, they would have followed you, but the distance was too great for them. They will swear by Allah: “Had we been able to, we would have gone out with you.” They are destroying their own selves. Allah knows that they are lying. (Surat at-Tawba: 42)

Didn’t you see the hypocrites saying to their brothers, those among the People of the Book who disbelieve, “If you are driven out we will leave with you, we will never obey anyone to your detriment. And if you are fought against we will help you”? Allah bears witness that they are truly liars. (Surat al-Hashr: 11)

Their Words are Inconsistent

You certainly have differing beliefs. (Surat adh-Dhariyat: 8)

As revealed in this verse, hypocrites’ speech is laden with inconsistencies. Since they frequently lie, their statements generally contradict one another. Since they lack the wisdom of believers and use only their intellects when talking, it is perfectly logical that their words should be inconsistent. That is because hypocrites, referred to as an “unreasoning” community in the Qur’an, are, because of their unreasoning nature, unable to grasp fine concepts or see the details in events. In addition, since they are unable to reason they are unable to see how belittling it is to speak words that are so inconsistent. Yet everyone, with the exception of them, is aware of that.

They Lack Submission

A person’s trust in and surrender to Allah are one of the most important signs of faith. This characteristic is one of the main features that distinguish between those with faith and those truly without. Someone who trusts in Allah knows that there is something auspicious in every event that confronts him, and he behaves with due submission. In the Qur’an, believers are described as follows:

Those who are steadfast and put their trust in their Lord. (Surat an-Nahl: 42)

The hypocrites, on the other hand, are not submissive in the face of things that befall them. They believe that everything will work in their disfavor. They live every moment in fear that something bad may happen. The main source of this worry is the fears and doubts that belong to this world, resulting from living so far removed from Allah.

The most important proof of this is when they encounter totally unexpected events. In the Qur'an times of struggle are made clear evidence of this. When war broke out in the time of the Prophet (saas), the hypocrites failed to submit to Allah and were seized by a great fear.

. . . Then when fear comes, you see them looking at you, their eyes rolling like people scared to death. . . . (Surat al-Ahzab: 19)

When they came at you from above you and below you, when eyes rolled and hearts rose to the throats. . . . (Surat al-Ahzab: 10)

In another verse from the Qur'an, Allah emphasizes the fear experienced by the hypocrites:

If they could find a bolt-hole, cave or burrow, they would turn and scurry away into it. (Surat at-Tawba: 57)

They Immediately Fall Prey to Despair

One of the most superior attributes of believers is that when confronted by difficulty or trouble, they never despair but behave with submission, interpreting everything in a positive way. In fact, believers have grasped a most important truth: that Allah is the Creator of everything, every event and every moment. Therefore, everything that befalls them must be under Allah's control. That being so, believers regard the difficulties that befall them not as troubles, but as auspicious events:

Those who, when disaster strikes them, say, "We belong to Allah and to Him we will return." (Surat al-Baqara: 156)

In contrast to the believer, the hypocrite regards everything that befalls him as working against him. He is never happy, but always looks pessimistically on events. He has no idea of how to behave with submission or display patience in the face of any event that appears to be against his interests, and immediately falls into despair. That is because he expects nothing from Allah; he is unable to appreciate our Lord's infinite might. The people from whom he seeks help and the gains he hopes to make in this world are also unable to meet his expectations. Therefore, the despairing state of mind that holds sway is a most natural result of the hypocrite's false expectations.

The hypocrite always wants those things he regards as beautiful to be his and everything to happen as he wants it to. So long as this is the case, he will behave

“normally.” However, the things he wants won’t always happen, in which case he despairs and exhibits manifest ingratitude. This feature of those who lack faith in Allah with true submission and who have sickness in their hearts is noted in the following verse:

When We bless man, he turns away and draws aside. When evil touches him, he despairs. (Surat al-Isra’: 83)

They are Arrogant

When they are told, “Come, and the messenger of Allah will ask forgiveness for you,” they turn their heads and you see them turn away in haughty arrogance. (Surat al-Munafiqun: 5)

Arrogance is the consequence of going along with satan, and modesty and humility are the result of faith. As related at the beginning of this book, the hypocrite is undeservedly proud and arrogant.

With reason and faith, the believer has understood that all things belong to Allah alone and that in the presence of Allah, he is a helpless “servant” for which reason he never becomes proud. However, the hypocrite, weak in terms of his faith, reason and understanding, is conceited and unable to see his own flaws.

The fact is, however, that man is a helpless being, easily vanquished by a virus millions of times smaller than him, who falls ill and takes to his bed on account of a microbe he can neither see nor withstand, and whose hands and legs shake and who is unable to walk properly as he gets older. Since this is so apparent, he really should be submissive. Yet hypocrites, unable to comprehend and reason, behave as if none of this applied to them and live in a state of totally undeserved pride and arrogance. They are therefore belittled both in the sight of Allah and of those able to think clearly. Allah reveals the situation of these people in another verse:

. . . So today you are being repaid with the punishment of humiliation for being arrogant in the earth without any right and for being deviators. (Surat al-Ahqaf: 20)

They are Envious

Or do they in fact envy other people for the bounty Allah has granted them? . . . (Surat an-Nisa’: 54)

Another devilish feature of hypocrites is that they are envious. They are unable to accept the superior features possessed by others. They imagine that only they are worthy of all good things, for which reason they envy blessings of all kinds. The people of whom they are envious are generally believers. Heading the list of the things they covet are believers’ intelligence, grandeur and wealth. This envy

makes the hatred within them to increase still further, for which reason they genuinely wish to see believers stray into denial.

They are Argumentative and Aggressive

. . . They are indeed a disputatious people. (Surat az-Zukhruf: 58)

Hypocrites are as argumentative as deniers, and do not understand pleasant speech. They enjoy only conflict and argument, and imagine that they can resolve all issues by means of aggression. This aspect of hypocrites is also revealed in the Qur'an:

But do not obey any vile swearer of oaths, any backbiter, slandermonger, impeder of good, evil aggressor, gross, coarse and furthermore, despicable. (Surat al-Qalam: 10-13)

They Engage in Excess and Know no Bounds

Anyone who fears Allah is most careful to abide by the bounds He has set. He will be unwilling to have the slightest flaw in His sight. Hypocrites, on the other hand, have no such scruples. They harbor doubts about the Hereafter and, since they do not expect they will have to account for themselves, they exceed the bounds set by Allah. The Qur'an tells us about these people who forget about the Day of Judgment:

Those who deny the Day of Reckoning. No one denies it except for every evil aggressor. (Surat al-Mutaffifin: 11-12)

People who have no fear of Allah and who fail to live by His bounds open themselves to all forms of sin and moral degeneration. Even if some of them do attempt to set certain bounds for themselves, these are still incompatible with the truth.

Hypocrites, displaying this feature can easily adopt the most degenerate lifestyles. Their master, satan, is easily able to turn them from their path and lead them to extremes. Since they deny Allah, fear of His punishment has no deterrent effect on them. The order established by these people who know no bounds is doubtless doomed to be destroyed in the face of Allah's.

They are Ungrateful

The greatest indication of their ingratitude is how they join forces against believers, with great anger and hatred. Yet those believers always look positively on them so long as they remain with them, endeavor to help them, call on them to have faith in Allah, and give them advice so that they may be spared endless suffering in the Hereafter. The way they join forces with deniers and set traps for

believers puts their ingratitude into practice. Of course they will reap no reward for their deeds, but on the contrary, will be recompensed with eternal suffering in the Hereafter. Allah reveals that He will never forgive ingratitude towards His messengers who try to give them advice and call them to His religion:

You can ask forgiveness for them, or not ask forgiveness for them. Even if you asked forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah still would not forgive them. That is because they have rejected Allah and His messenger. . . . (Surat at-Tawba: 80)

They Boast of Wealth

Fierce competition for this world distracted you until you went down to the graves. (Surat at-Takathur: 1-2)

The source of hypocrites' boasting is the worldly values they possess. With their beauty and material wealth, they boast and show off to others.

One point on which they flatter themselves is that the number of deniers is greater than that of believers. Two facts regarding this, which they are unable to grasp because of their lack of reasoning, is that Allah has already revealed this fact in the Qur'an, and that this works in believers' favor, not against them. Indeed, everyone knows that a small group acting in a rational manner will always be victorious in any struggle against a larger one that acts irrationally, and may have many more advantages than the latter.

They Become Spoiled and Rejoice When Blessings are Given Them

Hypocrites are full of self-love and imagine themselves to be always superior and more intelligent than anyone else. They become taken in by the belief that whenever a blessing is given them, their true worth "has at last been realized" and become even more spoiled. For instance, hypocrites grow angry and despair whenever a believer gives them advices and criticizes their mistakes. But they begin to swell up with pride and behave disrespectfully when anyone takes the slightest interest in them or shows them the slightest respect. Alternatively, if they are praised on account of the pleasing behavior they have displayed in an imitative manner, suddenly they begin regarding themselves as above everyone else and look down on those around them. When material blessings are bestowed on them, the same state of mind emerges.

In fact, however, Allah increases His blessings to test people, though they are unaware of this. The state of mind and final end of this community, which is unable to comprehend Allah's order, is revealed in these terms in the Qur'an:

When they forgot what they had been reminded of, We opened up for them the doors to everything, until, when they were exulting in what

they had been given, We suddenly seized them and at once, they were in despair. (Surat al-An'am: 44)

They Regard Their Blessings as a Sign of Superiority

The way hypocrites regard the blessings given them as signs of superiority is encountered in the example of Qarun, a classic denier described in the Qur'an. Given a bounteous fortune as a test by Allah, Qarun swelled with pride because of the blessings he possessed and interpreted them as a sign of his superiority over others. He imagined that he deserved that fortune and failed to bear in mind that it was a blessing from Allah. This, of course, stemmed from his failure to honor Allah with the honor that is due to Him and to comprehend his own helplessness. The example of Qarun in the Qur'an is an important one for hypocrites:

Qarun was one of the people of Musa, but he lorded it over them. We gave him treasures, the keys alone to which were a heavy weight for a party of strong men. When his people said to him, "Do not gloat. Allah does not love people who gloat." (Surat al-Qasas: 76)

They are Timid

They swear by Allah that they are of your number, but they are not of your number. Rather, they are people who are scared. (Surat at-Tawba: 56)

With their odd, satanic logic, hypocrites lack the courage whose impression they seek to give. Times of war and difficulty are important in manifesting the sickness in their hearts. In the time of the Prophet (saas), for example, when the hypocrites were summoned to war, they promised to participate. But when war actually broke out, they turned and fled due to the terrible fear they felt of others. This is clear proof of their timid natures:

. . . when fighting is prescribed for them, a group of them fear people as Allah should be feared, or even more than that. They say, "Our Lord, why have you prescribed fighting for us? If only You would give us just a little more time!" . . . (Surat an-Nisa': 77)

They are Physically and Spiritually Unclean

Hypocrites are members of the Religion of the Ignorant. Those who adhere to it live far removed from the lifestyle that Allah has chosen for people. They determine that lifestyle's rules under the inspiration of satan. Judging one another in terms of material criteria, envying one another, and hundreds of other devilish forms of behavior constitute the elements of their false religion.

Their behavior results in an ugly, ignorant state of mind, one that constantly designs evil, never interprets events in an auspicious manner, works against others and brings to mind the spirit of satan himself.

Indeed, Allah has issued the following provision regarding hypocrites who live according to such an ugly mindset:

They will swear to you by Allah when you return to them, so that you leave them alone. Leave them alone, then! They are filth. Their shelter will be Hell as repayment for what they did. (Surat at-Tawba: 95)

As this verse tells us, these people cannot claim to be physically clean. Indeed, spiritual and physical cleanliness are inter-related concepts. Those with evil in their hearts will inevitably lead an unclean life. Furthermore, Allah reveals in one verse that He increases that uncleanness on account of the sickness in their hearts:

But as for those with sickness in their hearts, it adds defilement to their defilement, and they die while they are disbelievers. (Surat at-Tawba: 125)

The darkness that forms in their souls due to the sickness in their hearts also manifests itself in their faces. The faces of such people are described in these terms in the Qur'an, **"It is as if their faces were covered by dark patches of the night"** (Surah Yunus: 27). It is noteworthy that the light in believers' faces imparts a feeling of ease to those who behold it, while on the faces of the hypocrites darkness prevails.

They are Parsimonious and Encourage Others to be So

The men and women of the hypocrites are as bad as one another. They command what is wrong and forbid what is right and keep their fists tightly closed. . . . (Surat at-Tawba: 67)

Spending generously in the service of Allah is a religious observance commanded in the Qur'an, and that is pleasing to Him. He emphasizes the importance of this in several verses and in particular, reveals that the person who behaves in this way actually stands in need of it. That is because someone who spends generously does so in order to raise his degree in the Hereafter, his place in Paradise. Allah sends believers many blessings from His presence.

Hypocrites, however, cannot understand that this important observance will actually work to their advantage, and so never behave in such a way. Because all their energies are directed towards increasing their material means, they imagine that the more they spend, the greater loss they will incur. In any case, their objective is the fragmentation of the community of believers and to prevent them living by religious moral values by dividing them from one another. Thus they are

able to live as members of the society of the ignorant and distance themselves entirely from religious moral values, without feeling the slightest pang of conscience or encountering any difficulty. For that reason, they wish to be of no material or spiritual use to the community of believers, or for believers to be of any use to one another. Being parsimonious, they encourage others to be tight-fisted, too.

We are told how these people, unable to comprehend that believers have no need of anything and that Allah's help is always with them, call on them to be tight-fisted:

They are the people who say, "Do not spend on those who are with the messenger of Allah, so that they may go away." The treasures of the heavens and Earth belong to Allah. But the hypocrites do not understand this. (Surat al-Munafiqun: 7)

They Spend on Things That They Themselves Do Not Like

. . . Do not have recourse to bad things when you give, things you would take only with your eyes tight shut! Know that Allah is Rich Beyond Need, Praiseworthy. (Surat al-Baqara: 267)

Even if hypocrites do spend generously, nevertheless they spend on things that do not appeal to them. This is at the same time a rule of the Religion of the Ignorant. The things given away by hypocrites, who spend on things that serve no purpose solely in order to put on a show for believers, are unacceptable. Allah states the reason for this in the Qur'an:

Nothing prevents what they give from being accepted from them but the fact that they have rejected Allah and His messenger, and that they only come to prayer lethargically, and that they only give reluctantly. (Surat at-Tawba: 54)

They Have Sharp Tongues

. . . when fear departs they flay you with sharp tongues, grasping for wealth. Such people disbelieve and Allah will make their actions come to nothing. That is easy for Allah. (Surat al-Ahzab: 19)

Despite being timid and weak, hypocrites still seek to attack the faithful and hurt them with their harsh words. Interestingly, the environment in which they find the courage to do this is one where they feel secure and where they imagine there is no question of any danger. The preceding verse makes this clear.

Satan is the source of all this behavior. As we know, satan seeks to block the true path before people and to do them harm. With this satanically inspired aspect,

hypocrites seek to harm believers and make them uneasy, seizing every opportunity of doing so. Yet they can never harm believers in any way.

They are Skeptical

. . . They too were in a state of crippling doubt. (Surah Saba': 54)

Hypocrites constantly feel doubt in their hearts. This skepticism is directed towards such basic elements of the religion as the Qur'an, the messenger and the Hereafter.

Due to the sickness in their hearts, their consciences are never at ease. On the one hand they witness believers' devotion to Allah, and on the other, they realize the false nature of their own desires. Indeed, Allah refers to the hypocrites who constructed a mosque in the time of the Prophet (saas) apart from the Muslims, saying that the skepticism stemming from the sickness in their hearts would continue forever:

The buildings they have built will not cease to be a bone of suspicion in their hearts, until their hearts are cut to shreds. . . . (Surat at-Tawba: 110)

They do not trust people. They doubt everyone, fearing that any moment, someone will set a trap for them or else belittle them. They do this to such an extent that in one verse, Allah says of them **"They imagine every cry to be against them. . ."** (Surat al-Munafiqun: 4). They harbor such concerns because they do not place their trust in Allah and do not take Him as their friend.

They are Cruel

. . . Those who do not judge by what Allah has sent down, such people are wrongdoers. (Surat al-Ma'ida: 45)

One thing that believers seek to achieve in this world is to replace cruelty and wickedness with truth and goodness. Those ideals stem from their proper moral values, and they subscribe to this obligation because of their fear of Allah.

Engaging in a struggle against believers who wish to put an end to the cruelty prevailing in the Society of the Ignorant and to replace it with goodness—and in addition, doing so by entering among them and while in their midst—clearly reveals the cruel souls possessed by hypocrites.

Having gone back on their faith after having believed, hypocrites cannot save themselves from falling into a mindset of cruelty. Therefore, they are unable to live lives full of peace and security, as they had imagined.

Indeed, as is revealed in the verse, **"Those who believe and do not mix up their faith with any wrongdoing, they are the ones who are safe; it is**

they who are guided” (Surat al-An’am: 82), peace and security are a blessing that only the faithful, who act with determination in their faith, can enjoy.

Their External Appearances are Deceptive

When you see them, their outward form appeals to you, and if they speak you listen to what they say. But they are like propped-up planks of wood. . . . (Surat al-Munafiqun: 4)

So long as they live in this world, hypocrites are unaware that they will be gravely disappointed in the Hereafter. On the contrary, they imagine that they are destined for Paradise. One of the chief reasons for their self-deception lies in their technical and physical values.

For example, a hypocrite may be wealthy or physically attractive. But even if that person regards this as an advantage, in fact it represents a test. The hypocrite who is taken in by his wealth, property or attractiveness imagines that everything is going well and continues to live at ease. Unknown to him, however, an account is being kept of all his deeds, and he will be recompensed with suffering in Hell for all the evil he commits.

Furthermore, as already stated, Allah permits them to live in this world for a specific period of time, and when their time comes, He shows His messenger and believers the dark state of mind within the hypocrites. Thus Muslims who perceive hypocrisy will not be taken in by its deceptive external appearances, but rather fulfill Allah’s commandment and engage in a struggle against it.

They are Among the Lowest in Creation

. . . They have hearts they do not understand with. They have eyes they do not see with. They have ears they do not hear with. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! . . . (Surat al-A’raf: 179)

Allah describes them in this way because even though they are aware of His existence, have learned the commandments and recommendations of the Qur’an, and know of the messenger and the believers; they turn their backs on all these and turn away from faith, towards denial. Since they fail to believe when called upon to do so and do not fear Allah as they should, He has evidently created them with a lower character even than that of animals, and has informed believers of the fact.

Our Prophet (saas) has described hypocrites as “the worst of people:”

“You will find the worst of people are the two-faced who come to these people with one face and those people with another face.” (Sahih Bukhari)

They Do Not Think

Not thinking is the best-known aspect of the Religion of the Ignorant. They have brought themselves to believe that by not pondering too deeply, they will be happy and remain mentally healthy. They imagine that thinking will actually harm them! Sometimes they are even unaware that there are certain things they should be thinking about.

One of these subjects they fail to consider is death. They are unaware that they are face to face with death at all times, and that Allah can take their souls whenever He so wishes. They deceive themselves into imagining that they will live for thousands of years and can make use freely of all the blessings of this world.

They also fail to consider the Day of Reckoning after death and the Hereafter. None of them thinks—or rather, doesn't wish to think—about how he will be resurrected after death and held to account for what they did in this world. Most of them refuse even to admit the possibility of eternal life, Paradise and Hell.

They have literally programmed themselves not to think. This characteristic prevents their being thinking entities; they become unable to grasp even the simplest matters. Thinking people, on the other hand, will always seek after the truth. They will reflect on where they came from, and how the universe they inhabit and their own bodies came into existence, and of course, where they themselves are headed. Clinging tightly to the Qur'an, they thus attain the attributes of thinking human being.

Like deniers, however, hypocrites also bring down a "curtain of heedlessness" in front of their eyes by not thinking. Since they imagine that they will live more comfortably by not thinking they spend their lives in this world in emptiness. Since they are far removed from consideration, they cannot see the squalor and darkness in which they live and, most important of all, that they are deceiving only themselves.

They Do Not Use Their Intellect

Simply being human in appearance and possessing certain human attributes is insufficient proof that someone is really a wise entity. Wisdom is a very different concept; it emerges as the result of a number of features. Allah has revealed the secrets of wisdom in the Qur'an, and encourages people to become aware of them. Some of these conditions include unconditional submission to Allah, completely trusting in and surrendering to Him, seeking no other deity or helpmate than Him, feeling an awe filled with respect for Him, and never forgetting Him, not even for a moment. Only believers grasp all this and attain true wisdom.

Hypocrites, on the other hand, seek to imitate wisdom, although with this state of theirs, they exhibit a most facile and superficial attitude. No matter how much they may seek to imitate it, they can never show any real signs of it. Indeed, true wisdom is to be found only in believers.

All deniers—hypocrites included—are referred to in the Qur'an as **“people who do not use their intellect”** (Surat al-Hashr: 14).

Another indication that they are unreasoning is the fact that they are closed to all warnings. They behave as if they have heard believers' warnings about the imminence of death and the suffering of Hell, but still go on displaying the same wrong behavior. Recalling Allah awakens no reaction in their hearts, and they remain insensitive to the reminders issued to them. This is why Allah describes them in the Qur'an as follows:

Deaf, dumb, blind. They will not return. (Surat al-Baqara: 18)

They Cannot Comprehend

By failing to think, as already mentioned, hypocrites have closed their consciences to understanding the truth and have literally placed a lock on their hearts. Allah, in turn, has bolted that lock. This matter is referred to in the Qur'an, in these terms:

Allah has sealed up their hearts and hearing, and over their eyes is a blindfold. They will have a terrible punishment. (Surat al-Baqara: 7)

. . . Their hearts have been stamped so they do not understand. (Surat at-Tawba: 87)

One of the worst losses a human being can suffer is the loss of his reason and his ability to think. Hypocrites have lost all their reason and powers of comprehension in proportion to their own inauthenticity. Since they expend their energies in wickedness and rebellion, they are unable to comprehend even matters of closest concern to them. One of the best examples is their failure to grasp the imminence of death. It is evident that human beings are mortal and will one day die. Yet

these people still busy themselves chasing after their own advantages in this world—clear evidence of their inability to think and comprehend. Allah introduces them thus in one of His verses:

... Allah has turned their hearts away because they are people who do not understand. (Surat at-Tawba: 127)

They Can Be Recognized by Their Faces and Their Words

Hypocrites make great efforts not to be recognized for what they are. In one verse, however, Allah addresses His Messenger as follows:

If We wished, We would show them to you and you would know them by their mark and know them by their ambivalent speech ... (Surah Muhammad: 30)

Evidently, if Allah so chooses, hypocrites can be recognized by His messenger. The characteristics that chiefly give them away are their lack of a balanced soul, the absence of the brightness to be seen in the faces of believers, and how their speech lacks a believer's awareness and consistency. Their faces are shrouded in darkness, as we are told in verses, and their words reflect the doubt and darkness in their hearts:

Those who oppose Allah and His messenger, such people will be among the most abased. (Surat al-Mujadala: 20)

In the faces of believers there is a light, honest and serene expression, which represents an external manifestation of their trustworthiness. Yet the hypocrite's face reflects the rejection and denial in his heart:

When Our signs are recited to them—clear signs—you can detect denial in the faces of those who disbelieve. . . . (Surat al-Hajj: 72)

They are Unhappy

No matter how strongly hypocrites may hope to secure an advantage from the wickedness they perpetrate, actually they achieve nothing but trouble and sorrow. They have rejected the greatest opportunity to come their way, for which reason they have earned the wrath of Allah. Even if they expect to be happy after committing evil, unhappiness, limitations, troubles and disappointment will follow them throughout their lives and, more importantly, in the Hereafter. Allah reveals His punishment for their deeds:

Let them laugh little and weep much, in repayment for what they have earned. (Surat at-Tawba: 82)

No matter how proud hypocrites may be, no matter how much they regard themselves as superior to other people and in a better position, they actually live

troubled lives, as revealed in the verse. This is a kind of punishment inflicted by Allah so that they may be recognized. Since they take no pleasure from the beauties of this world and have lost hope of the Hereafter, they are unable to know happiness and have a constant desire to weep. This may be a grief that is reflected externally from time to time, or else such negative emotions as trouble, dissatisfaction, self-pity and despair will dominate their souls.

They are Fragmented

. . . Their hostility towards each other is intense. They are full of bravado in each other's company. You consider them united, but their hearts are scattered wide. . . . (Surat al-Hashr: 14)

Although they take only each other as their friends and confidants, actually they do not trust each other. The reason for this is that just as they are subconsciously aware of their own two-facedness, they know that the hypocrite before them is equally two-faced. This prevents them from being true friends to one another.

Hypocrites may imagine that there is great unity among them, but never actually experience any form of warm friendship, love or brotherhood among each other. Their hearts are too unclean and hardened to be able to harbor feelings of that kind. They can talk against one another in the face of the slightest difficulty with no qualms at all, and try to ensnare one another. They are perfectly capable of discounting everyone around them for the sake of their own interests.

Their Faith in Allah

One distinguishing characteristic of hypocrites is that their faith in Allah is restricted to words. Every hypocrite claims to have faith, to fear Allah and to believe in the Hereafter and the Day of Judgment. Yet from their lifestyles and states of mind, it can be seen that these claims are not sincere.

In order to understand the state of hypocrites' faith, the following point needs to be clarified: What does "faith in Allah" actually mean?

When people speak of faith in Allah, they generally think that Allah initially created all things and then left human beings to their own "intelligence." (Surely Allah is beyond that!) Yet belief in Allah is a far deeper matter than the way it is popularly conceived. Faith in Allah gives rise to various consequences. For instance, someone with faith is capable of appreciating Allah's greatness, infinite might and justice, and all His superior titles, as revealed in the verse, **"To Allah belong the Most Beautiful Names"** (Surat al-A'raf: 180). In addition, someone with faith in Allah will have a great fear of Him, since he has comprehended His infinite might.

However, people who do not understand true faith have a twisted belief in Allah, as stated earlier. Indeed, these ridiculous beliefs of deniers, “unique to themselves,” are revealed in these terms in verses:

If you asked them, “Who created the heavens and the Earth?” they would say, “Allah!” Say: “Praise be to Allah!” But most of them do not know. (Surah Luqman: 25)

If you ask them, “Who created the heavens and the Earth?” they will say, “Allah.” Say: “So what do you think? If Allah desires harm for me, can those you call upon besides Allah remove His harm? Or if He desires mercy for me, can they withhold His mercy?” Say: “Allah is enough for me. All those who truly trust put their trust in Him.” (Surat az-Zumar: 38)

As can be seen from these verses, people generally regard Allah as the Creator of the Earth and heavens. However, they are unable to appreciate Him properly, and fail to comprehend that He maintains all things under His dominion at all times, and that He is possessed of infinite might.

Hypocrites, as one group from the larger body of deniers, have just such a faith. The only thing separating them from other deniers is that their hearts are even harder. That is because they once had faith, but have now turned to denial, for which reason Allah has closed their hearts to faith:

That is because they have believed and then returned to disbelief. So their hearts have been sealed up and they cannot understand. (Surat al-Munafiqun: 3)

What becomes apparent at this point is that hypocrites have no fear of Allah. Being people who know religious moral values and who have called on all the titles, greatness and might of Allah while they were together with believers, the way that hypocrites fail to fulfill His commandments is clear proof of their lack of fear.

Hypocrites are “fair weather” Muslims, as the saying goes. Since their aims are to secure their own advantages and spread strife—and most important of all, since they fail to fear Allah as they ought—they reveal their true ugly faces at the slightest difficulty. Allah has informed believers just how superficial the faith of hypocrites is in these verses:

There are some people who say, “We believe in Allah,” and then, when they suffer harm in Allah’s cause, they take people’s persecution for Allah’s punishment; but if help comes from your Lord they say, “We were with you.” Does Allah not know best what is in every person’s heart? Allah knows those who believe and He knows the hypocrites. (Surat al-Ankabut: 10-11)

It will be appropriate now to examine the causes and consequences of hypocrites' distant and fearless attitude towards Allah. (Surely Allah is beyond that!)

They Become Caught up in Assumptions Regarding Allah

Since hypocrites are unable to appreciate the might of Allah properly, they have a number of mistaken preconceptions about Him. As described earlier, particularly when they encounter a difficulty, they forget Allah and imagine that whatever is taking place is doing so independently of Him. (Surely Allah is beyond that!) They become caught up in a panic that no true believer in Allah ever displays. They never think that Allah has sent them this difficulty to test them, and immediately turn to rebellion.

The Qur'an describes the thoughts that hypocrites harbored regarding Allah when they went to war along with His Messenger and came face to face with the danger of death or being injured:

When they came at you from above you and below you, when eyes rolled and hearts rose to the throats, and you thought unworthy thoughts about Allah, at that point the believers were tested and severely shaken. When the hypocrites and people with sickness in their hearts said, "What Allah and His Messenger promised us was mere delusion." (Surat al-Ahzab: 10-12)

As we have seen, the moment they encountered a difficulty, they lost their faith, which they had previously claimed to be very strong, and forgot the greatness and might of Allah. This shows that they were never actually sincere in their faith and never possessed a perfected faith. No matter what circumstances or conditions someone may find himself in, it is out of the question for one with true faith in Allah to forget His might, fall a prey to unhappiness, or engage in imaginings about Him. People bound to Allah with a genuine faith know that the Creator of all things tests His servants with the good and the bad.

They Remember Allah Only Rarely

Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and perform prayer. Prayer precludes indecency and wrongdoing. And remembrance of Allah is greater still. Allah knows what you do. (Surat al-'Ankabut: 45)

As the above verse reveals, recalling Allah is one of a believers' most important religious observances. People with true faith know that they live each moment among the blessings imparted by Him and constantly give thanks to Allah. They know that they are in absolute need of auspicious events that come from Him, that they must account for themselves to Him in the Hereafter, and that they can enter Paradise only if He so wills it. Allah is always in their hearts and on their

tongues. They remember Him at every opportunity, and speak of the blessings He has given them, expecting nothing in return, and the perfect equilibrium in the universe created by Him.

Since hypocrites, on the other hand, do not possess such faith in their hearts, they fail to call upon Allah as they ought. The reason behind this is that they do not submit to Him sincerely and have no deep faith in Him. They are therefore unwilling to remember Him, because in doing so, they will also be repeating many things that they do not actually believe in—or which they are responsible for doing, but have failed to do. This may put them off, since it will impinge slightly on their consciences. Even if they do imitate believers and attempt to sincerely recite His names, still they will give themselves away and thus, have no effect on the hearts of those who hear them. Therefore, while in the midst of believers, they attract attention by remembering Him only seldom and in a superficial way.

Indeed, Allah has revealed this important sign that reveals the sickness in their hearts by means of verses:

. . . [They are] showing off to people, and only remembering Allah a very little. (Surat an-Nisa': 142)

Satan has gained mastery over them and made them forget the remembrance of Allah . . . (Surat al-Mujadala: 19)

They Ascribe Partners to Allah

Believing in powers besides Allah, assuming that they can play a part in creation, the running of the universe, or making judgments, for example, is one of the main characteristics of hypocrites. They believe that human beings are independent of Allah and thus set up partners beside Him, no matter how much they may deny it. What gives their sickness away is that they do not like Allah to be remembered as the One and Only. They are unable to recall Allah by praising Him as they ought. This is one of the features that give them away:

We have placed covers on their hearts, preventing them from understanding it, and heaviness in their ears. When you mention your Lord alone in the Qur'an, they turn their backs and run away. (Surat al-Isra': 46)

When Allah is mentioned on His own, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter shrink back shuddering, but when others apart from Him are mentioned, they jump for joy. (Surat az-Zumar: 45)

They Fear Other People, not Allah

Hypocrites claim that they love Allah, and everything they do is intended to gain His approval. However, these words actually represent their way of avoiding putting Allah's commandments and recommendations into practice.

Someone who sincerely believes in Allah feels not only love for Him, but also a fear filled with awe. In other words, the person who loves Allah best is, at the same time, one who fears Him the most because, as we have emphasized from the outset, loving Allah requires one to recognize His all "beauteous names," and that He will manifest His infinite might—and when necessary, justice, through the torments He will give. Those incapable of appreciating Allah's might, who do not understand that He witnesses their every action, do not fear our Lord. If someone says, "I love Allah, but do not fear Him," or gives the impression of thinking along those lines, then that person is insincere in the most literal sense of the word.

Indeed, when we look at the lives of hypocrites, we see that this spiritual condition prevails throughout their behavior. The hypocrite claims to fear Allah, but when we look at the practicalities of the matter, we see that he seeks to harm the believers, works against them and makes up slanders about them. The picture that emerges from this is that this person does not truly fear Allah. Furthermore, as stated above, the hypocrite produces his own religious conception and lives according to the twisted laws of that religion, in order to win the approval of others. Indeed, he believes that all individuals have a unique power. He feels obliged to earn the approval and liking of each and every one.

However, the one fact that he cannot comprehend is that every human being is merely a servant created by Allah. Each is an entity who has come into being at Allah's desire and will die in the same way. The hypocrite is unable to comprehend this—or rather, is unwilling to, because in his own religion, gaining the approval of others is an essential obligation. His fears are equally founded on that basis.

The way hypocrites fear other people and always seek their approval will reveal itself in times of difficulty. The Qur'an refers to hypocrites being terrified when they see people united against them. At first, they promised that they would definitely take part in the war. But when the order for battle came, the fear they felt carried their faith away with it:

Don't you see those who were told: "Hold back from fighting but perform prayer and give the alms?" Then when fighting is prescribed for them, a group of them fear people as Allah should be feared, or even more than that. They say, "Our Lord, why have you prescribed fighting for us? If only You would give us just a little more time!" Say, "The enjoyment of this world is very brief. The Hereafter is better for those

who guard against evil. You will not be wronged by so much as the smallest speck.” (Surat an-Nisa’: 77)

They Betray the Religion of Allah

Hypocrites, who do not fear Allah and who live by their own erroneous understanding of religion, thus exhibit no devotion to His religion. They are constantly betraying the messenger of Allah and the faithful, in their struggle to abide by the moral values of the Qur’an. Their betrayal is described in the Qur’an in these terms:

But because of their breaking of their covenant, We have cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort the true meaning of words and have forgotten a good portion of what they were reminded of. You will never cease to come upon some act of treachery on their part, except for a few of them. . . . (Surat al-Ma’ida: 13)

The hypocrite is aware that he is a fraud. Behaving in such a way as to deceive Allah, His messenger and believers, he lives in a constant spirit of betrayal. Every betrayal leads to another, because the hypocrite is aware of his own treachery. Even if he conceals himself from believers, he cannot hide himself from himself. And since he witnesses his own sins, his excesses increase still further. First he says something bad about the messenger of Allah, and takes pleasure from this. Later he slanders the messenger, and that too he enjoys—because he is moving along the path of satan, his true friend. Then he sets a trap for the messenger. His crimes multiply and increase. However, he is also unaware that his betrayals of Allah, His messenger and the faithful will avail him nothing, but that, on the contrary, they will lead him to Hell. On the basis of this, he is easily able to engage in betrayal. The fact is, however, that in addition to the troubles he will experience in this world, a punishment full of suffering also awaits him in the next. Allah reveals the fate of hypocrites in another verse:

Allah has promised the men and women of the hypocrites and disbelievers the Fire of Hell, remaining in it timelessly, for ever. It will suffice them. Allah has cursed them. They will have everlasting punishment. (Surat at-Tawba: 68)

They Argue about Allah in the Absence of any Evidence

Among people there is one who argues about Allah without knowledge or guidance or any light-giving book. (Surat al-Hajj: 8)

Their highest goal is to turn people from Allah and His religion and to hinder the spread of religious moral values on Earth. They therefore argue about Allah in such a way as to confuse people, and urge them to shape their own speculations

about Him. Since they have a tendency to spread strife, they actively seek to eliminate people's respect for and fear of Allah, but carry out these activities in a sly manner. Using a similar method to that employed by Satan, they address people's subconscious and speak in such a way as to confuse them.

All they manage to do, however, is deceive other hypocrites just like themselves. Allah reveals how the actions they take to turn people away from His path will rebound upon their own heads:

Turning away arrogantly, to misguide people from the way of Allah. He will be disgraced in this world and on the Day of Resurrection We will make him taste the punishment of the burning. (Surat al-Hajj: 9)

They Admire an Ethical Model of which Allah Disapproves

As we have seen so far, hypocrites engage in all kinds of behavior displeasing to Allah. Unaware of the gravity of their situation, they also put forward negative, perverted ideas regarding Islam, the religion selected by and beloved of Allah. With their own defective logic, they regard their own ideas as good and the truth as ugly:

We brought you the truth but most of you hated the truth. (Surat az-Zukhruf: 78)

As is revealed in the Qur'an, these two-faced people, **"who have sold guidance for misguidance"** (Surat al-Baqara: 16), refuse to recognize the revelation of Allah, and regard the truth as something ugly. The proper moral values that Allah revealed to believers through the Qur'an represent a model that they view as totally impractical. Since they themselves are full of hatred and uncleanness, they imagine that others are too and could never abide by such a model.

No doubt, these ideas apply both to themselves and to other deniers of a similar nature. Good moral values can be implemented only through fear of Allah and absolute submission to His commandments. A person can maintain a good character only through faith in the Hereafter and the Day of Judgment and reckoning. For anyone who has forgotten that he will have to account for himself on the Day of Judgment, there is no motive to display patience or make sacrifices for others. He feels the need to engage in such behavior only if it squares with his own interests. Otherwise, for someone who lives far removed from religious moral values, it seems meaningless to display a good character in this world—which is in any case transitory—to people who are in any case mortal.

The hypocrite will receive no reward, either in this world or the Hereafter, for any good behavior he engages in for the sake of his own interests. If someone ignores all Allah's commandments, everything that he does will be in vain, as is revealed by Allah in the Qur'an:

That is because they followed what angers Allah and hated what is pleasing to Him. So He made their actions come to nothing. (Surah Muhammad: 28)

Their Defiance of the Qur'an

First, in order to acquire a sufficient understanding of this matter, it should be useful to examine briefly the denier's view of the Qur'an.

One of deniers' most important characteristics is that they live by the religion of their ancestors instead of the religion of Allah. Under their religion, going along with baseless practices passed on by word of mouth is regarded as "religious observance." By complying with these traditions, they imagine themselves to be virtuous and "obedient." They never take the Qur'an as a criterion in any form whatsoever. The essence of this religion of the ignorant lies in traditions determined by the society, in which "goodness" lies in small matters performed with hardly any effort at all. They perform these in the name of "being good," and thus think that this must make them "good" too.

For example, giving some spare change to a beggar they happen to meet on the street, or donating clothes that are too old for them to ever wear again is in their eyes a "good deed." However, the true definition of goodness and righteousness is provided in the Qur'an:

It is not righteousness to turn your faces to the East or to the West. Rather, truly righteous are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, the Angels, the Book and the prophets, and who, despite their love for it, give away their wealth to their relatives and to orphans and the very poor, and to travelers and beggars and to set slaves free, and who perform prayer and give the alms; those who honor their contracts when they make them, and are steadfast in poverty and illness and in battle. Those are the people who are true. They are the people who guard against evil. (Surat al-Baqara: 177)

When these others are told about the criteria in the Qur'an, they refuse to abandon their distorted beliefs:

When they are told, "Come to what Allah has sent down and to the messenger," they say, "What we found our fathers doing is enough for us." What! Even if their fathers did not know anything and were not guided! (Surat al-Ma'ida: 104)

Whenever they commit an indecent act, they say, "We found our fathers doing it and Allah commanded us to do it too." Say: "Allah does not command indecency. Do you say things about Allah you do not know?" (Surat al-A'raf: 28)

They never want to abandon the “social religion” they’re accustomed to. For that reason, they seek out contradictions in the verses of Allah and strive to prevent people from His path. They are:

Those who bar access to the way of Allah and seek in it something crooked and reject the Hereafter. (Surah Hud: 19)

In short, these people are exceptionally insensitive with regard to the Qur’an and the verses of Allah; and their viewpoints never change in any significant way.

It is at this point comes a parting of the ways between hypocrites and deniers. Unlike the denier, the hypocrite does not completely reject the Qur’an. He will not emphasize that he does not truly believe in and submit to it, but on the contrary, seeks to hide that fact as much as possible. The denier does not implement the observances in the Qur’an unless he views them as a tradition left over from his ancestors; whereas the hypocrite does appear to fulfill a great many observances—on the surface.

Yet the hypocrite has not genuinely submitted to the verses. Whenever they impinge on his earthly desires, he remains completely insensitive to them. Furthermore, he performs only “formal” observances, even though a great many other observances need to be performed: such as complete submission to Allah and His messenger, and genuine acceptance of the messenger’s stipulations. In addition, the hypocrite ignores those commandments of Allah concerning proper moral values that happen to conflict with his worldly interests—which interests include defending those desires, belittling others and regarding oneself as superior.

Great wisdom underlies Allah’s revelation of the Qur’an, in which He warns against the Day of Judgment, and shows people the true path. However, only a few believe in the Qur’an and live by it in a fitting manner: Those are the faithful.

Believers are most respectful of the provisions of the Qur’an and submit to them. Their respect stems from their profound respect for Allah. Every time the Qur’an is recited, they fall silent to listen and fully reflect on the verses. The Qur’an increases their faith, and gives their hearts satisfaction and repose. In one verse Allah describes believers as:

. . . those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, whose faith is increased when His signs are recited to them, and who put their trust in their Lord. (Surat al-Anfal: 2)

The attitude of hypocrites towards the Qur’an is highly two-faced. They abide by some of the verses of the Qur’an, but not by others. Their criteria are their earthly desires. They turn their backs without a qualm on provisions that feel difficult for them, such as spending in good causes or regarding their brother’s desires as superior to their own. They are very flexible when it comes to implementing many

provisions that are actually obligatory, and do not implement others at all if no one is looking.

As the above verse reveals, believers who read the Qur'an grow in faith, while hypocrites grow in denial. This is actually one of Allah's great miracles. That is because despite their reading exactly the same verses, two entirely different spiritual states emerge. Believers perceive the wisdom in the verses, while hypocrites are completely unable to fathom it. They may even be unaware of their inability to understand and imagine that they actually comprehend the Qur'an very well indeed.

The way this miracle comes about is set out in the Qur'an:

When you recite the Qur'an, We place an obscuring veil between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter. We have placed covers on their hearts, preventing them from understanding it, and heaviness in their ears. When you mention your Lord alone in the Qur'an, they turn their backs and run away. (Surat al-Isra': 45-46)

They Do Not Openly Reject the Qur'an

Hypocrites have a strange logic unique to themselves, in the same way that satan possesses a most mysterious and unfathomable logic.

This "satanic logic" that hypocrites manifest reveals itself in every sphere without exception. This logic continues to operate in their perspective on the Qur'an: They do not literally reject it, but neither do they truly believe in it. This is really rather peculiar behavior, because everyone of reason and good conscience knows of the need to abide by the Book of Allah. Abiding by some verses while remaining equivocal before others is an astonishing approach. While their conscience tells them that they need to abide by the Qur'an, their earthly desires make pride seem much more attractive. Although they know the verses "very well," they come up with excuses to deny them and so pursue their earthly desires. Indeed, the pride with which they deny is revealed thus in the Qur'an:

And they repudiated them wrongly and haughtily, in spite of their own certainty about them. See the final fate of the corrupters. (Surat an-Naml: 14)

Hypocrites do not flaunt their flexibility regarding Allah's verses and in fact, avoid doing so. They conceal these sins within themselves or reveal them only to people who have the same twisted logic as themselves. Allah has told us of this twisted logic of theirs:

Each time a sura is sent down, they look at one another, implying, "Can anyone see you?" Then they turn away. Allah has turned their hearts

away because they are people who do not understand. (Surat at-Tawba: 127)

Hypocrites do not openly reject the Qur'an, but actually appear to believe in it. They pray, co-exist alongside believers, give alms and fast. If they completely denied the Qur'an, they would do none of these things and would make their thoughts clear, in the same way that deniers do. However, one important point is that even though hypocrites not reject the Qur'an and appear to perform their religious observances, their intentions are still very different. As already mentioned, their faith lies only in their words, not in their hearts.

In addition, in performing their religious observances, they are actually carrying out those of their own religion. For example, their prayers are those of the religion of the hypocrites, performed for show, and their charitable spending is performed unwillingly, again for show. These, as revealed in the verses, will not be acceptable in the sight of Allah.

They Distort the Meaning of the Qur'an

As already described, the most important characteristic of hypocrites is their endeavors to spread strife and discord. They adopt various means in order to achieve their aims. For instance, they seek to trouble believers by being disrespectful of the messenger, and to spread discord among the faithful by spreading false rumors. In addition, however, they also have one other important way of producing strife. Allah has warned believers that this is a grave danger:

It is He Who sent down the Book to you from Him: verses containing clear judgments—they are the core of the Book—and others which are open to interpretation. Those with deviation in their hearts follow what is open to interpretation in it, desiring conflict, seeking its inner meaning. No one knows its inner meaning but Allah. Those firmly rooted in knowledge say, “We believe in it. All of it is from our Lord.” But only people of intelligence pay heed. (Surah Al 'Imran: 7)

As this reveals, hypocrites make the most unlikely interpretations of Allah's verses, thanks to which they intend to deceive people and make them fall into errors. In fact, in revealing His verses, Allah revealed beforehand that some of them would not be comprehensible to deniers, who would use them as an element of strife. Therefore, the misinterpretations by hypocrites should have no effect on the faithful.

As revealed in the verse, what believers need to do in the face of this cunning approach by hypocrites is to fully submit to the Book of Allah. If the believers do, it will be impossible for hypocrites to inflict any harm on them whatsoever. That's because believers are exceptionally sensitive to the verses of Allah and, thanks to the understanding Allah bestows on them, are exceedingly vigilant against “those with sickness in their hearts.” In the Hereafter, hypocrites will have to render an

account for every single word they spoke, and the twisted interpretations they came up with by their own imaginings, and will see all their traps merely rebounding against themselves.

Their Views of the Religion of Allah

Hypocrites possess a most peculiar logic. Despite their having learned the Qur'an, their perspectives regarding religious morality and the Hereafter are directly opposed to the Qur'an's logic. For them, religious morality, never occupies pride of place. This is really a most interesting position. Hypocrites are different from atheists: Like them, they feel unmoved by religion, yet nonetheless, they are unable to keep their distance from religion and the faithful. Members of this group are described in these terms in the Qur'an: **"They vacillate between the two—not joining these or joining those."** (Surat an-Nisa': 143)

Hypocrites are described as follows in one hadith:

The similitude of a hypocrite is that of a sheep which roams aimlessly between two flocks. He goes to one at one time and to the other at another time. (Sahih Muslim)

When it comes to religion, they are very flexible and perform their observances only for show:

When they meet those who believe, they say, "We believe." But then when they go apart with their satans, they say, "We are really with you. We were only mocking." (Surat al-Baqara: 14)

Hypocrites rely on a foundation that is far removed from the approval of Allah. Despite reading the verses, they are left unmoved by religion and far distant from its moral values. Since they lack the ability to grow in depth, understanding and comprehension, they are unable to analyze their own situation and that of believers. They do not know how to live for Allah, and have declared war on Him, although they lack any basis to rely on. Therefore, they hold no serious beliefs. The slightest difficulty rocks them, and their lack of true devotion to Allah's religion becomes plain for all to see. At moments of difficulty, they immediately join forces with deniers. Their lack of fear regarding religious observances and the stipulations of the Qur'an furnish evidence of this.

There are many signs of their flexibility towards religion. Hypocrites remember Allah very little, for example—important evidence of their laxness when it comes to faith and living by religious moral values. Again, we can see in the Qur'an their unwillingness to perform prayers and how they use spending merely for show. When they are alone, it comes as no surprise that they have nothing to do with these observances, which they perform solely for show, in order to impress believers. The truth is, when they are on their own, one can hardly expect them to perform the observances in question, which they carry out merely for the sake of

their own interests. That would be incompatible with their own logic and would conflict with their own views on religion. Some of the verses in which hypocrites are described read as follows:

The hypocrites think they deceive Allah, but He is deceiving them. When they get up to pray, they get up lazily, showing off to people, and remembering Allah only a very little. (Surat an-Nisa': 142)

So woe to those who perform prayer, and are forgetful of their prayer, those who show off. (Surat al-Ma'un: 4-6)

And also for those who spend their wealth to show off to people, not believing in Allah and the Last Day. Anyone who has made satan his comrade, what an evil comrade he is! (Surat an-Nisa': 38)

Hypocrites perform their religious duties unwillingly. The only subject to which they are completely dedicated is that of gaining other people's approval. For them, other people's liking, praise and approval are the greatest rewards they can receive in this world. Everything they do is to earn that praise. Therefore, so long as they remain in the midst of believers, everything they do consists of a deception. Unaware of their own errors, they even imagine that they are deceiving Allah, His messenger and other believers. (Surely Allah is beyond that!) Since they are never sincere in any of their actions, they will go unrewarded in the Hereafter.

They Do Not Defend the Truth

During their time they spend in the midst of believers, hypocrites play an imitative role in order to blend in and not give themselves away. They seek to imitate religious observances, but never go near those that impinge on their earthly desires. For example, calling people to proper moral values and advising them of the truth are duties that they see as inconvenient. They are not willing to see others implementing this system that they won't implement themselves. They are therefore careful to avoid defending the truth.

In any case, there is an inconsistency here: Clearly, anyone who avoids remembrance of Allah and who harbors a genuine hatred for religion and sincere believers can never properly communicate the stipulations of the Qur'an and the importance of living for Allah. Since such people do not live by proper moral values themselves, naturally they cannot explain these to others. And in any case, they have no wish to do so.

In addition, communicating the message—which Allah, in the Qur'an, commands as an important religious duty—is something they can never do. Recommending what is good and trying to prevent what is evil, and issuing reminders in the light of the Qur'an are observances that hypocrites can never perform. Since their true

desire is to gain the approval of others, they never wish to offend anyone and never intervene in any errors they happen to see.

They Make Excuses to Lag Behind in the Struggle

We have already seen how, one of hypocrites' main objectives—for so long as they remain in the midst of believers—is their own interests. Doubtless the one area that most conflicts with those interests are the times of struggle that have been written as obligatory for believers. Hypocrites can see no logic in striving for an objective that they doubt will give them any advantage in terms of their own interests, nor in which they don't sincerely believe. In addition, due to their lack of comprehension, they think of this struggle as one in which lives and belongings will be lost, not for whose sake there will be a reward in the Hereafter. They cannot understand such superior virtues as making sacrifices for Allah or enduring difficulties.

Hypocrites in the time of the Prophet (saas) began fleeing as soon as the order for war was issued, and resorted to various lies and excuses to cover up their crimes. Some of the verses on this subject are as follows:

. . . They were told, "Come and fight in the way of Allah or at least help defend us." They said, "If we knew how to fight, we would certainly follow you." (Surah Al 'Imran: 167)

If it had been a case of easy gains and a short journey, they would have followed you, but the distance was too great for them. They will swear by Allah: "Had we been able to, we would have gone out with you." They are destroying their own selves. Allah knows that they are lying. (Surat at-Tawba: 42)

Those who were left behind were glad to stay behind the Messenger of Allah. They did not want to strive with their wealth and themselves in the way of Allah. They said, "Do not go out to fight in the heat." Say: "The Fire of Hell is much hotter, if they only understood." (Surat at-Tawba: 81)

When a sura is sent down, saying: "Believe in Allah and strive together with His Messenger," those among them with wealth will ask you to excuse them, saying, "Let us remain with those who stay behind." (Surat at-Tawba: 86)

And a group of them said, "People of Yathrib, Your position is untenable, so return!" some of them asked the Prophet to excuse them, saying, "Our houses are exposed," when they were not exposed; it was merely that they wanted to run away. (Surat al-Ahzab: 13)

This attitude, which becomes apparent in times of struggle, is important evidence of the hypocrites' logic. They abandon their imitation of believers carried out up until then and reveal their true character. Before such times of struggle, however, they will also show evidence revealing their true natures.

Their lack of preparation towards future struggles is characteristic of their attitude. Since they have no such aim, they see no need to make ready. Yet at the same time, this is evidence of the activities they *do* plan. They deliberately fail to fulfill their religious observances and make none of those preparations for the future that are dependent upon believers. In one verse it is revealed that:

If they had really desired to go out, they would have made proper preparations for it, but Allah was averse to their setting out so He held them back and they were told: "Stay behind with those who stay behind." (Surat at-Tawba: 46)

Their View of Believers

Hypocrites have declared war on the religion of Allah. They oppose His messenger and are unable to bear to listen to His verses. Therefore, one cannot expect them to feel any closeness to believers. That they adopt the requirements of a religion that hypocrites are opposed to, and that they abide by Allah's verses are sufficient cause for hypocrites to feel enmity towards the believers.

Hypocrites will naturally conceal themselves. In order to do so, they will play a role among believers and say, despite what lies in their hearts, that they are believers too. Therefore at first glance, it may not be possible to grasp the anger that they harbor in their hearts toward believers. Inevitably, however, this anger will give itself away through various signs, which are given to us in the verses of the Qur'an.

In Their Hearts, They Feel Hatred and Anger Toward Believers

. . . Hatred has appeared out of their mouths, but what their breasts hide is far worse. . . . (Surah Al 'Imran: 118)

Scrupulous adherence to the Qur'an and the proper moral values they take from it are an important element of believers' love and respect, but this works in entirely the opposite way for hypocrites. Everything to do with proper moral values further increases their anger and hatred. That is because they expect degeneration when it comes to religion and morality. They wish to distance themselves from everything that religion regards as good and to implement the exact opposite. Remembrance of Allah, recollection of His verses, and the strengthening and improvement of believers represent the continuing growth of a system to which they are opposed, so all this increases the anger in their hearts.

This anger in their hearts manifests itself in various ways. The various oppressive methods they use, the plans they draw up against believers and the way they take the messenger as their target are some consequences. However, as revealed in the verses, the anger they hide in their hearts is no doubt greater than that which appears on the surface.

Their Real Target is the Messenger of Allah

The real reason for the hatred in their hearts is that believers unconditionally obey Allah and His messenger, constantly remember Allah and the Qur'an, and offer them advice. The more believers warn them about the imminence of death, the reality of the Hereafter and the fact that salvation lies in obedience to Allah and His messenger, the greater their hatred and desire for revenge. They cannot accommodate the concept of obedience because they are unable to appreciate the messenger of Allah, and in the face of the superior virtues they witness in him, their hatred grows still further. For that reason, their real target is the messenger, and their real struggle is waged against him. It is revealed in the Qur'an that hypocrites strove to combat the Prophet (saas):

If they do argue with you, say: "Allah knows best what you are doing." (Surat al-Hajj: 68)

Hypocrites have waged struggles against all the messengers who have ever lived, although all throughout the course of history, their endeavors have proved fruitless. The fact that these attempts against all the messengers have borne no fruit has driven hypocrites to despair, while the messengers and believers have grown ever stronger.

They Seek to Deceive Believers

We have already said that the most distinguishing feature that makes hypocrites of these people is the way they seek to portray themselves as having faith when really they have none. These people, who only reveal their true faces to people they imagine to be just like them, simply act a role alongside believers. The Qur'an, however, refers to hypocrites as seeking to deceive believers but in fact deceiving nobody but themselves:

They think they deceive Allah and those who believe. They deceive no one but themselves but they are not aware of it. (Surat al-Baqara: 9)

The Qur'an refers to hypocrites who lived in the times of the prophets and the messengers saying "We believe," but that actually they had no real faith, thus encouraging all believers to be on their guard against them:

O Messenger! Do not be grieved by those who rush headlong into disbelief among those who say "We believe" with their tongues when

their hearts contain no faith. And among the Jews are those who listen to lies, listening to other people who have not come to you, distorting words from their proper meanings, saying, "If you are given this, then take it. If you are not given it, then beware!" If Allah desires misguidance for someone, you cannot help him against Allah in any way. Those are the people whose hearts Allah does not want to purify. They will have disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter they will have a terrible punishment. (Surat al-Ma'ida: 41)

These characteristics of hypocrites have remained unchanged for centuries. The Qur'an refers to the existence of these people, who have claimed throughout history to be possessed of faith. Since hypocrites have had the same features at all times, and since their actions have always been opposed to the messengers, their deeds and what befell them have always remained the same. According to Allah's promise, they will continue to come to the same "end." It is revealed in one verse that:

Don't you see those who claim that they believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you, still desiring to turn to a satanic source for judgment in spite of being ordered to reject it? Satan wants to misguide them far away. (Surat an-Nisa': 60)

They Feel Enraged by the Strength of Believers

That the actions they take against believers fail to achieve their aims merely increases hypocrites' anger. In the same way, the increasing strength of the faithful also enrages them. The following verses clarify the hypocrites' state of mind:

If something good happens to you, it galls them. If something bad strikes you, they rejoice at it. . . . (Surah Al 'Imran: 120)

If good happens to you, it galls them. . . . (Surat at-Tawba: 50)

Hypocrites attempt to use believers to secure their own interests while they are amongst them, but their calculations prove hollow. They fail to secure their hoped-for advantages, while the believers grow ever stronger. This is an unchanging law of Allah, Who has revealed that He will help those who believe and have faith in Him in the life of this world and will bestow on them the finest of blessings. Hypocrites are also well aware of this. However, as a result of the cunning approach they take, the lives of believers, which are full of constant peace and ease, become sources of anger for them. Believers, always at ease, are rewarded with an abundance that the hypocritical logic is unable to fathom. That explains why hypocrites always desire for communities of the faithful, whom they detest, to be in a constant state of vexation. For hypocrites, the blessings that Allah bestows upon believers, and the abundance in which they live, are a source

of troubling rage whereas any difficulty experienced by believers delights them. This defective state of mind of theirs is revealed in the Qur'an:

. . . They will do anything to harm you. They love what causes you distress. . . . (Surah Al 'Imran: 118)

Since believers are subjected to testing by Allah, from time to time they may encounter what appear to be difficulties, but these are all tests for them. They know that difficulties hone them, increase their capacities for struggle and are the means whereby they can attain Paradise. The way that such difficulties enrage hypocrites is the most evident proof of their inability to comprehend the secret of living for Allah and their unawareness that this world is a place of testing. While believers evaluate these difficulties as auspicious, hypocrites regard them as sources of vexation for believers and as a victory for themselves. Their own natures keep them unaware of the measure of believers' wisdom and the strength of their faith. They imagine that believers will inevitably be downcast by the trials they encounter and that their unity will finally be impaired. They thus harbor great joy and expectations. Yet these expectations will come to nothing. They are unable to understand those who draw strength from and are devoted to Allah, and thus fall into a grave error.

They Fear Believers

The determination of believers, who take Allah's words as their criteria for earning His approval, always makes hypocrites uneasy. Believers' courageous and determined natures reveal that their faith is most powerful, and that nothing has a negative effect on them. This is one of the aspects of which hypocrites are most wary, because though their endeavors are carefully planned and directed towards specific objectives, they never produce the desired results.

By means of believers, Allah instills fear in hypocrites. Although they harbor great hatred in their hearts, the fact that their plans come to naught and their fear of believers are proofs of their helplessness. They themselves know themselves powerless in the face of a society, or even a single individual, guarded by Allah. Since they place no trust in Allah, they live in a state of constant doubt and unease, which increases still more in the face of believers' struggles against them. In the Qur'an, Allah has commanded believers to wage an intense campaign against the hypocrites:

O Prophet! Strive against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be harsh with them. Their refuge is Hell. What an evil destination! (Surat at-Tahrim: 9)

This community of hypocrites, who grow proud when told to fear Allah, becomes caught up in fear in the face of the struggles waged by believers acting with

Allah's support. Their fear of others is intensified because they do not have profound comprehension, as is revealed in one verse:

You are a greater cause of terror in their breasts than Allah! That is because they are people who do not understand. (Surat al-Hashr: 13)

They are Unaware of Allah's Protection of the Faithful

. . . Allah will not give the disbelievers any way against the believers. (Surat an-Nisa': 141)

These people are unaware of their own situation, and equally, unaware of Allah's protection of the faithful, as revealed in the above verse. It is only natural that anyone unable to appreciate Allah properly will be unaware of such support being given to believers. Were they able to understand that Allah would never let them make any progress they would also realize that their endeavors against believers would come to no avail. Their inability to appreciate this merely confirms their lack of understanding. Throughout their time in this world, they expend all their energies in fighting against believers. But as revealed in the verses of the Qur'an, Allah will never let them make any progress, either in this world or in the Hereafter, and He will protect believers against threats of all sorts. That they are unaware of this, despite reading these verses, is an important indication of hypocrisy. They imagine that believers are unguided and without help, while in fact, believers vanquish deniers under all conditions. They are watched over by Allah, and as a result, possess very superior characteristics. Hypocrites' inability to comprehend this compounds their empty and fruitless endeavors, and helps maintain them in a state of confusion.

They Abandon Believers if Their Own Interests are Harmed

The main reason why hypocrites remain among believers is, as already discussed, to maintain their own advantages. In times of trouble or difficulty, when they encounter a situation that may impinge on their own comfort or negatively impact on their interests, immediately they turn tail and abandon believers. These times are generally those of trouble or difficulty. Since they do not live lives aimed at earning Allah's approval they are unable to contemplate living by religious moral values in times of trouble.

One example of the hypocrites who abandoned believers at the first moment of trouble comes from the tribe of the Prophet Musa (as). On the day they set out for war, their true natures emerged: They fled the fighting and also behaved disrespectfully to the prophet of Allah:

They said, “We will never enter it, Musa, as long as they are there. So you and your Lord go and fight. We will stay sitting here.” (Surat al-Ma’ida: 24)

It’s of course interesting that those who do not truly believe in Allah and who reject His verses—for a variety of reasons—are to be found amongst believers. These people’s most important values are their own interests. For the sake of these, and solely to ensure their own advantage, they manage to stay within the community of believers for a certain time. They maintain this enforced togetherness until such time as it impinges on their own interests. But whenever they realize their interests are threatened, however, it is time for them to leave.

Moments of difficulty and trouble reveal who is devout and who is not in a struggle waged for Allah’s approval. For these people whose interests are harmed, there is no longer any binding reason to remain alongside believers. As for the kind of benefits that hypocrites seek to obtain from believers, we shall be looking at these in a later chapter of this book.

Their Struggles Against Allah and the Believers

They Seek to Turn People from the Path of Allah

One of the important responsibilities Allah imposes on a believer is to command what is good and forbid what is evil, and to announce the world the stipulations of the Qur’an’s moral values. It is to warn people to save their eternal lives in the Hereafter by explaining the vital issue of which they are heedless. This responsibility is great, and the work to be done is wide-ranging. For believers, being a vehicle whereby even one person acquires faith is of the greatest importance in obtaining Allah’s approval.

However, the attitude of hypocrites is just about the exact opposite of what it should be. Instead of calling people to the path of Allah, they have undertaken to turn people from it, showing that they act under the inspiration of satan. Instead of being a means whereby people come to faith, the hypocrite’s main objective is, like satan, to turn them aside from that path and attract others to the ranks of the hypocrites:

Among people there is one who argues about Allah without knowledge or guidance or any light-giving book, turning away arrogantly, to misguide people from the way of Allah. He will be disgraced in this world and on the Day of Resurrection We will make him taste the punishment of the burning. (Surat al-Hajj: 8-9)

Hypocrites employ a variety of methods. In applying them, however, their main characteristic is cunning. They seek to hinder believers by following a two-faced

approach while remaining in their midst. This is doubtless the main reason why they will be made “the lowest of the low” in the Hereafter.

They Bear Tales about Believers to the Deniers

. . . and among you are listeners on behalf of them. . . (Surat at-Tawba: 47)

Hypocrites’ greatest desire is to see the society of believers fall apart. For that reason they combine forces with deniers, whom they believe to be very powerful, and embark on a cunning struggle against believers. A unified community of believers represents a severe danger to them. Therefore, they first and foremost seek to eliminate that unity. They aim to wreak as much harm as possible, or rather they strive to do so.

They regard their presence inside a society of believers as an advantage, imagining that while in their midst, they will be able to engage in much covert activity against them, being able to round up news and information. Yet every action they take rebounds as a problem back on their own heads and fails to achieve any aim.

The objective of these people, who initiate co-operation with deniers while still within the community of believers, is to learn the believers’ tactics and then transmit these to the deniers. At this point, however, a factor enters the equation that the hypocrites either do not know or else underestimate. Allah never permits the establishment of any order that works against believers. Over the course of history, all the snares set by hypocrites have collapsed. According to Allah’s promise, this will continue in the future. Everything they do will be condemned to failure.

They Whisper in Secret

Hypocrites engage in secret talk while in the midst of believers, intending to provoke sin, enmity and rebellion:

Don’t you see those who were forbidden to confer together secretly returning to the very thing they were forbidden to do, and conferring together secretly in wrongdoing and enmity and disobedience to the messenger? . . . (Surat al-Mujadala: 8)

While in the community of the faithful, they establish a secret union amongst themselves and draw up plans against the believers. One example of this was seen in the days of the Prophet Muhammad (saas):

As for those who have set up a mosque, causing harm and out of disbelief, to create division between the believers, and in readiness for those who previously made war on Allah and His Messenger, they will

swear, “We only desired the best.” But Allah bears witness that they are truly liars. (Surat at-Tawba: 107)

The hypocrites of that time secured a separate area from the believers from which to observe from afar the Prophet (saas) and those around him, learn what they were doing and set traps for them. The Qur'an particularly mentions this characteristic of hypocrites. The hypocrites who do so imagine that by keeping something hidden from believers and by drawing up secret plans, they will thus achieve success. The fact is, however, that Allah sees all that they do, as is revealed in this verse: **“Don't they know that Allah knows their secrets and their private talk, and that Allah is the Knower of all unseen things?”** (Surat at-Tawba: 78) This behavior stems, of course, from their failure to believe this important secret.

Not only do they adopt an atheistic approach among believers, they also whisper rebellion against the Prophet (saas). But in the Hereafter, when everything they ever did is set out before them, they will realize that what they did was not secret and that it is enough that Allah, the Supporter of the believers, is aware of all plans prepared against them. Hypocrites do not expect Allah to reveal all these activities they seek to conceal from other people, because again, it is human beings whom they fear. In fact, though, all their deeds will be held to account in the Hereafter, and their actions they regarded as secret—which they imagined would never see the light of day—will be laid out, one by one, before them.

They Organize Evil

Believers spend their lives performing religious observances for Allah and undertaking the most serious endeavors on His path. In the light of that objective, they seek to spend every moment of their lives in search of the good; because they know the uncertainty surrounding the time of their deaths.

But hypocrites, as in everything else, behave in a totally contrary way to believers. They seek evil at every moment of their lives. Deliberately planning to slander the innocent or prepare snares for believers, they seek to harm the faithful. All their efforts are directed against believers. The main starting point for their efforts is the resentment they feel towards believers and the verses of Allah. Each warning issued only intensifies the hatred within them and strengthens their desire for revenge, as is revealed in verses:

. . . But then when a warner did come to them, it only increased their aversion, shown by their arrogance in the land and evil plotting. But evil plotting envelops only those who do it. . . . (Surah Fatir: 42-43)

This hatred they feel can cause them to do many things. As prophets come to remind them of goodness and beauty and read the verses of Allah, so the rage inside them grows and leads them towards cunning actions. For that reason, they

begin to organize and plan evil against believers. They plan to hinder believers' activities and seek to provoke discord among them. They endeavor to twist a commandment given to believers and to portray disobedience to the prophet as something desirable. They rebel by committing deeds that the prophet says should not be performed, and seek to garner support. Everything they do is aimed at damaging the existing order and weakening the community of the faithful.

According to what the Qur'an teaches us, however, none of these efforts will have any effect. In all periods of history, those who have plotted against Allah's order have been vanquished. Anyone who is unable to appreciate Allah properly will continue with these endeavors unaware of this great truth. The fact is that, as is revealed in the Qur'an, any scheming will impinge on none but its author.

They Mock the Believers

Another of the actions they engage in is mockery. The inferiority complex and tension that hypocrites suffer because of the strength of believers emerges by means of mockery. Taking advantage of believers' good intentions, they disparage them and seek to belittle them in others' esteem, as a result of their unconquerable anger. Allah informs us of this in their own words:

. . . But then when they go apart with their satans, they say, "We are really with you. We were only mocking." (Surat al-Baqara: 14)

But in fact, they cannot do believers any harm, neither with their mockery nor with other forms of oppression. Allah is aware of and sees all their behavior. In the Qur'an, He tells us that it is actually the hypocrites who are mocked and belittled:

But Allah is mocking them, and drawing them on, as they wander blindly in their excessive insolence. (Surat al-Baqara: 15)

Since hypocrites envy believers, all their behavior is aimed at not letting that hatred show. Since they expect certain advantages from believers, hypocrites take great pains not to make their hatred apparent. Subconsciously, however, their enmity always shows its face. Mockery is a secret sign of the rage and hatred that hypocrites feel in their hearts, which boils to the surface through their words, looks and facial expressions.

The verses clearly describe the behavior that hypocrites engage in solely because believers have faith. Since they regard themselves as superior and far removed from the Hereafter, they attach no significance to what others do for Allah and therefore, can mock a life devoted to Him and the Hereafter:

Those who did evil used to laugh at those who believed. When they passed by them, they would wink at one another. (Surat al-Mutaffifin: 29-30)

Allah also describes how this behavior will be rewarded in the Hereafter:

So today those who believe are laughing at the disbelievers. (Surat al-Mutaffifin: 34)

Since hypocrites act with the cunning cleverness of satan, they do not openly engage in this behavior aimed against believers. They are careful to conceal it afterwards. But subsequently, when their malice does emerge and their mockery is thrown in their faces, then their hypocritical logic manifests itself. In the event of such an event, hypocrites maintain that they harbored no bad intentions and have been misunderstood. They will do all they can to prove their so-called innocence:

If you ask them they will say, “We were only joking and playing around.” Say: “Would you make a mockery of Allah and of His signs and of His messenger?” (Surat at-Tawba: 65)

They Slander the Faithful

Who could do greater wrong than someone who invents lies against Allah or denies His signs? The wrongdoers are certainly not successful. (Surat al-An'am: 21)

Since they aim to weaken the messenger and the faithful and to prevent the dominance of religious moral values, they make groundless accusations against believers, just as they do against the messenger. One of the main ways that hypocrites attack believers is to utter slanders against them. In this way, they imagine that they can show themselves different from believers and therefore, that the truth is on their side. According to that assumption, they will be cleared and believers will lose prestige in others' eyes. The fact is, however, that the slanders they make will not lead to events detrimental to believers. On the contrary, they will always prove detrimental to such slanderous individuals:

. . . Who could do greater wrong than someone who invents lies against Allah thus leading people astray without any knowledge? Allah does not guide the people of the wrongdoers. (Surat al-An'am: 144)

The most significant feature of these slanders is that they are generally aimed at the messenger. Various accusations, employing the exact same methods and referred to in the Qur'an and quoted here previously, have been made throughout the course of history. The deniers, who have always existed and who are named in the Qur'an, have accused the messengers sent to them as being madmen or magicians. Despite the passage of centuries, their actions remain unaltered, and their accusations are always made in the same way. None of their initiatives ever achieves its aims.

They Seek to Harm Believers and to Create Divisions

When those who disbelieve were plotting against you to imprison you or kill you or expel you: they were plotting and Allah was plotting, but Allah is the Best of Plotters. (Surat al-Anfal: 30)

Harboring a subconscious hatred for believers, hypocrites seek to incite strife and division among believers in order to do them harm. As we've already made clear, their true aim is to divide believers, imagining that in this way, their community will be weakened and can be prevented from living by religious moral values.

Unity among believers of course constitutes a major support and strength for them. Yet believers draw their real strength from Allah. With the unity among them, believers fulfill the various responsibilities imposed on them, remember Allah, and wage a common struggle against deniers. The hypocritical mindset, which is unable to comprehend that believers draw their true strength from Allah, imagines that it can deal them a heavy blow by causing rifts between believers. Thus emerges one of the consequences of their perspective, in that they expend great energy on an endeavor that they regard as very important but which is actually fruitless and hollow. In their own view, this is the most effective way of weakening such a strong, unified community. After causing rifts among them, they continue their efforts to provoke strife against believers.

As already seen, hypocrites employ cunning methods to try to create such discord among believers. They never create strife by saying, "We will cause rifts to emerge among you." On the contrary, they maintain that they are trustworthy people who seek to spread truth on Earth. With this cunning behavior, they seek to inspire trust and to create strife without making it apparent. They see this as a major opportunity, but as always, their endeavors come to nothing:

They will not harm you except with abusive words. . . . (Surah Al 'Imran: 111)

Their Beliefs Regarding the Hereafter, and Their Preference of This World Over It

For the believer, the goal of all his endeavors is the life of the Hereafter. Therefore, all the preparations in this world are in order to attain the life of the Hereafter in the best possible manner. When the subject is the Hereafter, having faith with a sure and certain knowledge becomes especially important. That is because people are reluctant to live for something in which they do not fully believe, which in their view seems illusory. In any case, the small number of believers and the presence of hypocrites is the result of this logic. Although what awaits them is a sure and certain fact, most people still live in constant doubt, despite the detailed accounts in the verses of the Qur'an and the countless proofs

that they themselves witness. The reason for their doubts is that because of their earthly desires, they are reluctant to reflect on the truth about the Hereafter that they read in the verses of the Qur'an. Anyone who definitively believes in the Hereafter has understood that this world is of no great worth in comparison to the Hereafter, and will have turned his back on its deceptive baubles. For hypocrites, on the other hand, the world is their most valuable goal, and for that reason, they blind themselves to the Hereafter. Their situation is described in these terms in verses:

No, their knowledge stops short of the Hereafter. In fact they have doubts about it. In fact they are blind to it. (Surat an-Naml: 66)

The main reason why they harbor doubts about the Hereafter is the weakness of their faith and their worldly desires. Since they are unwilling to think about the Hereafter, they are unable to comprehend how imminent it is. As is revealed in the Qur'an in the verse, **"They did not expect to have a reckoning"** (Surat an-Naba': 27), being called to account is something they never expect. The hypocrisy that dominates their desires manifests itself in this vitally important subject.

The reason, of course, is not that they are unaware of the Hereafter's existence. They are merely unwilling to call to mind the Day of Judgment, the Hereafter and Hell. Not reflecting on these great truths, they are knowingly taken in by the deceptive nature of this world. By not thinking, they regard themselves as advantaged; and though they regard themselves as profiting from this, they are actually losing eternal Paradise.

They are Passionately Devoted to the Life of this World

The life of this world is nothing but a game and a diversion. The abode of the Hereafter—that is truly Life, if they only knew. (Surat an-Ankabut': 64)

According to what Allah reveals to mankind in the Qur'an, the world has been created as only a temporary home. Our true home is that of the Hereafter, which is where our true lives will be lived. Moreover, those true lives will not be restricted to a mere 60 or 70 years, and people will remain there forever.

This is a great truth which everyone must bear in mind; and in this world, people must prepare for the true home to which they will go after death. Yet most people are unaware of this. To put it more accurately, they have no wish to think about it. They wish to live out their lives in this world, and avoid any ideas that might impinge on that. The existence of the Hereafter deals a heavy blow to their devotion to their worldly concerns. Since they are unwilling to accept this, they prefer to keep the idea as far away as possible. They disregard the information and spend their entire lives avoiding it. This is one way of not doing what they should.

The reason why they are so devoted to the life of this world is their failure to consider death. That is why, whenever the subject of death is brought up, they immediately try to change the subject: Because death will take away all they possess—their bodies, their goods, their money, their beauty, rank and station.

The fact remains, though, that no matter how they may seek to avoid it, death is a great reality. Every human being is born because Allah so wishes it, lives a destiny determined by Him and dies after an allotted period of time, in line with the destiny He has set out. Every rational human being must consider this with an open mind and at that point, fulfill the responsibility befalling him. That responsibility consists of not devoting oneself to the short, transitory life of this world but of living according to the bounds Allah has set.

But to the hardened hearts of hypocrites, life seems very bright and exciting, because the life of this world has been adorned with many baubles, as a requirement of the testing of human beings. By this, the deniers are deceived. People of faith, on the other hand, understand that these adornments are deceptive and that the life of this world will be over and done with in the blink of an eye.

Hypocrites avoid this reality. So strong is their devotion to this world that they ignore the reality of the Hereafter, even though they are very well aware of it. These people read the Qur'an, learn the true nature of events, and are of course familiar with the true nature of this world. Nonetheless, they never renounce it because, as revealed in the verse, they “**prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter**” (Surah Ibrahim: 3).

Love of the world has literally bewitched them and left them unable to accept the truth. Therefore, hypocrites engage in worldly calculations, as if they were never going to die. They make endless plans, and the cunning schemes they draw up against Muslims also lie within the framework of these worldly calculations. But being taken in by the adornments of the life of this world and forgetting about the Hereafter will in fact benefit them nothing. On the contrary, a worldly life full of difficulties, woes, humiliation and terrified suffering awaits them.

In their own minds, they have very good reasons for not reflecting on such exceedingly important matters as death, judgment, the Hereafter, Paradise and Hell. The main reason, however, is their hypocrisy. For them, life seems so long as never to come to an end, whereas they imagine that in the Hereafter, if they go there at all, they will merit the very best. The story of the vineyard owner in the Qur'an is an excellent example of this:

He entered his garden and wronged himself by saying, “I do not think that this will ever end. I do not think the Hour will ever come. But if I should be sent back to my Lord, I will definitely get something better in return.” (Surat al-Kahf: 35-36)

The main barriers that prevent one from living by religious moral values, turning to Allah alone and living in the light of His wishes in order to attain His Paradise are his earthly desires—in other words, his passions. However, the common feature of all passions is that they distance people from Allah and His path. The important point is that sooner or later, worldly passions will leave them high and dry. When death comes, none of the values they so overvalued will prove of any use. They will leave behind everything they valued in this world and go alone into the presence of Allah.

They Fail to Realize that This World is Transient

Anything you have been given is only the enjoyment of the life of this world and its finery. What is with Allah is better and longer lasting. So will you not use your intellect? (Surat al-Qasas: 60)

Hypocrites learn the Qur'an. From its verses, they know that this world consists of a brief deception, that true life is the life of the Hereafter, that there will be winners and losers there, and that in order to be a winner one has to live by Allah's Book. Yet despite all this, they still choose this world.

But why do hypocrites turn their backs on a path that would prove profitable for them? Why do they choose a path that ends in the flames? The answer to this interesting mindset of the hypocrite is provided in the Qur'an:

They say, "There is nothing but our existence in this world. We die and we live and nothing destroys us except for time." They have no knowledge of that. They are only conjecturing. (Surat al-Jathiyya: 24)

One reason for this behavior is that they regard themselves as exempt from the Hereafter. As discussed above, they act out of the assumption that even if there is such a thing as the Hereafter, whose existence they do not fully believe in, they will enjoy a happy life in it. Therefore, they do not keep their hearts from being caught up in worldly passions. Even though from the outside they may appear to be possessed of faith, they always bear their worldly interests in their hearts. They have set their sights on love of this world, and a passion for worldly things has directed their ambitions. For hypocrites, the reality that the life of this world is brief and transient seems quite hollow and meaningless. In the same way that a deadly illness pervades the whole body, worldly passions pervade their being.

They Destroy the Beauties of the World

On the Day when those who disbelieved are exposed to the Fire: "You dissipated the good things you had in your worldly life and enjoyed yourself in it ..." (Surat al-Ahqaf: 20)

Although they live solely for the life of this world, these people can never be content and are unable to make full use of its blessings. In order to be able to do that, one must turn to Allah in all sincerity. Allah increases the grandeur, beauties, health, wisdom, abundance, success of His servants and rewards those who genuinely turn to Him with many other blessings. True spiritual and physical beauty belongs to the believer alone. The believer expects nothing from this world, and yet is conscious of all the beauties in it.

But as for hypocrites, who knowingly reject the verses of Allah, their blessings continually decline and disappear. This they have achieved by their own hand. They turned their backs when the opportunities were there, and deliberately distanced themselves from their own blessings. All their expectations are worldly ones. Yet they are unaware that this world's peace, comfort and blessings are bestowed by Allah. Their expectations are worldly ones, but they can achieve no worldly gains to which they are so devoted, unless Allah so chooses. Allah will bestow no beauty in this world to people who do not deserve it.

They also imagine that they thoroughly deserve whatever worldly blessings have already been given them, which for them, constitute a token of superiority. The fact is, however, that all the worldly splendors afforded them is but for a single purpose, as is revealed in another verse:

Do not let their wealth and children impress you. Allah merely wants to punish them by them during their life in this world and for them to expire while they are disbelievers. (Surat at-Tawba: 55)

Contrary to what they imagine, the life of this world is not an environment of well-being and comfort. In this world for which they live, Allah will not give such boons to those who have openly declared war on Him. The world is their only expectation, and here they strive and endeavor, yet everything they attain is empty—as Allah informs us by means of the following verse:

People whose efforts in the life of this world are misguided while they suppose that they are doing good. (Surat al-Kahf: 104)

They Forget the Day of Judgment

The Day of Resurrection is a day full of terror when the world will come to an end. According to the verses, the Sun will be compacted in blackness, the stars will fade and fall in rapid succession, the oceans will surge into each other, the heavens will split open, and all human beings will be raised from where they are interred. The Qur'an refers to children's hair turning white and pregnant women miscarrying out of fear on that day. The Day of Judgment awaits people following the resurrection. Believers fear the dread to which the Day of Resurrection will give rise, hoping not to be humiliated when they must account for themselves on

the Day of Judgment, and that they will be able to give their accounts quickly and advance to Paradise.

The hypocrite also knows of the Day of Judgment and its properties. Because he reads the Qur'an, the dread of that day has been described to him also. However, one distinguishing feature of the hypocrite is that despite the information he acquires from the unequivocal verses of the Qur'an, he still harbors doubts regarding the Hereafter. Therefore, he does not plan his life according to this greatest of truths. Indeed, he never thinks about this truth with an open mind, for even a single moment, and he tries to forget it.

But instead, they deny the Hour; and We have prepared a searing blaze for those who deny the Hour. (Surah Furqan: 11)

HYPOCRITES' SELF-SATISFACTION

They allot to Allah what they themselves dislike and their tongues frame the lie that they will receive the best. There is no doubt at all that they will receive the Fire and that they are people who go to excess. (Surat an-Nahl: 62)

People who fear Allah always hope for His help and support in all matters. As reported in the words of the Prophet Musa (as), for example: **"... My Lord, I am truly in need of any good You have in store for me"** (Surat al-Qasas: 24), they are aware that they need their Creator at every moment. This is where the self-satisfaction of hypocrites, whose characteristics are the exact opposite of those of believers, emerges.

The Qur'an uses the word *"istaghna"* (self-satisfaction, self-sufficiency) to describe people who imagine they have no need of anything. Yet the term actually applies solely to Allah, for only He has no need of anything. Humans and all other living things are helpless, needy entities, created by Allah and in need of Him in order to survive. Allah addresses human beings so that they may realize their helplessness:

O humanity! An example has been made, so listen to it carefully. Those whom you call upon besides Allah are not even able to create a single fly, even if they were to join together to do it. And if a fly steals something from them, they cannot get it back. How feeble are both the seeker and the sought! (Surat al-Hajj: 73)

Hypocrites, on the other hand, are unaware of their neediness in the face of Allah. They harbor within themselves an arrogance similar to that of satan. Even though they are belittled in the sight of Allah and in that of believers, they imagine that they can deceive people and imagine themselves to be very intelligent and superior. They imagine themselves to be always on the true path, never admitting

the possibility that they might have deficiencies or be in error. All these things are actually symptoms of a kind of sickness whose name is “self-satisfaction,” as described above.

Indeed, Allah reveals that hypocrites have a sickness in their hearts, which is only increased by their two-facedness:

Among the people there are some who say, “We believe in Allah and the Last Day,” when they are not believers. They think they deceive Allah and those who believe. They deceive no one but themselves but they are not aware of it. There is a sickness in their hearts and Allah has increased their sickness. They will have a painful punishment on account of their denial. (Surat al-Baqara: 8-10)

The disease of self-satisfaction has been seen in all deniers throughout history. Allah has indicated the disease, which leads people directly to Hell, in several verses of the Qur’an.

This disease began with satan. The first sign of self-satisfaction in him, who regarded himself as the most superior of all created beings, came with satan’s refusal to prostrate himself before the Prophet Adam (as), despite Allah’s commanding him to do so. Satan’s own explanation for this behavior was that the Prophet Adam (as) had been created out of earth and he himself, out of fire.

Therefore, every denier since the world began has harbored this same characteristic, due to their sharing the same nature as satan. The self-satisfaction of the hypocrites is the same as that which first manifested itself in satan.

The first symptom of self-satisfaction is a person’s refusal to believe the sickness in his heart, as the Qur’an puts it. Indeed, hypocrites totally reject the idea, which then leads to their sickness increasing still further. That is because someone who is conceited and regards himself as perfect, will feel no need to avoid sin and wickedness. Indeed, Allah reveals in the Qur’an that people who regard themselves as unblemished will develop even greater excesses. It is stated in verses that:

No indeed! Truly man is unbridled, seeing himself as self-sufficient. (Surat al-‘Alaq: 6-7)

The self-sufficiency that hypocrites harbor within themselves has various symptoms and consequences, which are described in detail in verses of the Qur’an—and become even clearer when set out one after the other.

1. They Feel No Responsibility Toward the Verses

One of the groups of deniers who regard themselves as exempt from the verses of the Qur’an—in other words, who are unaware that the verses apply to them—are the hypocrites. Despite reading the Qur’an, they regard the stipulations of many

verses as having little to do with them. For example, the description of Hell only increases a believer's fear, because there is always the possibility of losing Allah's approval and going to Hell. But since hypocrites regard themselves as predestined to enter Paradise, these verses have no effect on them. They are therefore unable to see and understand the many verses that are addressed directly to them.

When the believer is reminded of verses, or given advice by hearing them cited, his fear increases, and he abides by them, displaying exceptional sincerity. But when the hypocrite is reminded of them, he behaves pretty much as if he never heard the verses at all. He never reflects on or takes advice from Allah's wisdom:

What is the matter with them that they run from the Reminder? (Surat al-Muddaththir: 49)

Another distinguishing feature of hypocrites is that their observance of religion is limited to words. Their falsehood can also be seen in terms of abiding by the verses. Allah has revealed in a number of verses just how insensitive they are to His verses and how they seek to distance themselves from their provisions as far as possible:

Don't you see those who claim that they believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you, still desiring to turn to a satanic source for judgment in spite of being ordered to reject it? Satan wants to misguide them far away. When they are told, "Come to what Allah has sent down and to the messenger," you see the hypocrites turning away from you completely. (Surat an-Nisa': 60-61)

Don't you see those who have been given a portion of the Book being invited to let Allah's Book be the judge between them? But then a group of them turn away. (Surah Al 'Imran: 23)

2. They Imagine Themselves to be Very Intelligent

Hypocrites place a great deal of trust in their own intelligence, despite their not actually possessing any true wisdom at all. They are unable to appreciate the dire nature of their situation. They live imagining that their every deed and every decision is the best ones possible. In particular, they regard themselves as their own sole authority on matters of religion. Because of this twisted logic, they also imagine that believers are on the wrong path. Their illogical ideas are revealed in the following verse:

And when the hypocrites and those with sickness in their hearts said, "These people have been deluded by their religion." But those who put their trust in Allah will find Allah to be Almighty, All-Wise. (Surat an-Anfal: 49)

As can be seen from the verse, since they imagine that only they are on the true path, they do not appreciate believers' wisdom. Yet the truth is, believers constitute the only community on Earth on which Allah has bestowed pure wisdom. Nonetheless, hypocrites regard themselves as superior to everybody else, and whenever believers are cited as role models in living by the religious morality, the hypocrites make it clear that they remain unimpressed by their intelligence. These inaccurate ideas on the subject of believers lead hypocrites into a grievous position, as is revealed in another verse:

When they are told, "Believe in the way that the people believe," they say, "What! Are we to believe in the way that fools believe?" No indeed! They are the fools, but they do not know it. (Surat al-Baqara: 13)

As revealed in the verse, hypocrites are "fools" because they tell the most unpleasant lies and imagine that even though they prepare snares with no foundation to them, believers will not catch on and that the messenger will not bring these strategies into the light of day. However, when the time comes, Allah shows them and other people the humiliating position they are in.

3. They Imagine Themselves to be Profiting

Another aspect that separates the hypocrites from the community of the faithful is that in living by the religious moral values, they constantly hold themselves back. It is revealed in the Qur'an that in the struggle waged by the community of the faithful, hypocrites seek to keep themselves as far as possible to the rear, and behaving always in a reluctant manner:

Among you there are people who hang back and if you encounter a setback then they say, "Allah has blessed me in that I was not there with them." (Surat an-Nisa': 72)

By not submitting to Allah and His messenger, not engaging in the struggle, spending generously or performing a great number of other observances, hypocrites imagine that they are profiting, and consider performing these observances disadvantageous. Therefore, since they do not seek Allah's approval and regard themselves as unflawed, performing these observances seems a task of enormous difficulty for them.

We can set out a few points on which hypocrites imagine themselves to be ahead of the game by holding themselves back:

a) They Avoid the Struggle

Since they are devoted to the life of this world, hypocrites have a great fear of death, and the very thought of death makes them very uneasy. They never reflect that death is a commandment of Allah, or consider maintaining their religious observances until the moment of their death arrives. Indeed, Allah describes the

situation of the hypocrites in the time of the Prophet (saas). They imagined that not going to war would keep them out of danger of death, and so regarded making excuses for not going to war as a sign of healthy intelligence. In the Qur'an, Allah tells of the joy they felt at hanging back during the war:

Those who were left behind were glad to stay behind the Messenger of Allah. . . . (Surat at-Tawba: 81)

The fact is, however, that death can strike anyone anywhere. Since hypocrites think on only a superficial level, they never bring this point to mind. There is no guarantee that death will not come to someone who hangs back from danger in his own home. Yet as stated at the outset, hypocrites lack the understanding to comprehend their own superficiality. They therefore see any temporary salvation or brief postponement as putting them ahead of the game.

b) They Do Not Co-exist with Believers

Allah has revealed that He will test the community of the faithful with both good and evil. Believers are subjected to tests in this world in order to attain the Hereafter. Therefore, they experience various events, some of which may appear auspicious and others not, but Allah eventually turns them all to the advantage of believers. Since they are aware of the secret of the testing to which they are subjected, they always display the same enthusiasm and effort in competing to earn Allah's approval. They never fall prey to fear or despair.

However, in the community of the faithful, there is another group who fail to grasp the secret of the test and look only at the surface of events. As discussed a little earlier, hypocrites seek to keep themselves as far from troublesome events as they can. If their means permit, they even stay far away from the community of the faithful, since they are unwilling to face the same difficulties that believers do. Indeed, Allah has informed believers—by means of examples from the past, but with particular reference to times of war—that hypocrites prefer to watch believers from as great a distance as possible:

They think that the Confederates have not departed and if the Confederates did appear then they would wish they were out in the desert with the Arabs, asking for news of you. If they were with you they would only fight a very little. (Surat al-Ahzab: 20)

Another verse reveals how hypocrites, who seek to remain at a distance from believers and not to be affected by the events that befall them, see themselves as profiting from this:

If good happens to you it galls them. If a mishap occurs to you, they say, "We made our preparations in advance," and they turn away rejoicing. (Surat at-Tawba: 50)

c) They Do Not Obey the Messenger of Allah

Obedience to the messenger of Allah means holding Allah and His Book above all things, because obedience to Allah and the Qur'an means obedience to His messenger. Believers who are sincerely devoted and obedient to Allah display the same devotion and obedience towards His messenger. The messenger of Allah is of greater value to them than their own lives or desires. The Qur'an refers to believers who protected the Prophet (saas) at the cost of their own lives, who went off to war with him, and who held him above their own selves.

The hypocrites of the time did not go off to war, however. They regarded themselves as exceedingly advantaged and intelligent because they were not obliged to protect the Prophet (saas). Those hypocrites who did join the troops, but who then became frightened and turned back, failed to heed the call of the Prophet Muhammad (saas) to them, and fled without looking back:

Remember when you were scrambling up the slope, refusing to turn back for anyone, and the Messenger was calling to you from the rear. . . . (Surah Al 'Imran: 153)

They imagined that this flight was their salvation. The fact is, however, that by departing from the command of the Prophet's (saas), they made a grave error. They earned Allah's displeasure and were thus condemned to eternal suffering.

They Claim to be Well-Intentioned

Hypocrites literally compete with one another on the subject of strife and discord. Since they fear believers, however, whenever their wickedness comes to light they swear that they are "well-intentioned" and reconciliatory, and seek to convince believers of this. In all their wickedness, they go to the messenger and make great efforts to convince him of their good intentions. A clear example of this can be seen in the Qur'an:

How will it be when a disaster strikes them because of what they have done, and then they come to you swearing by Allah: "We desired nothing but good and reconciliation?" Allah knows what is in such people's hearts . . . (Surat an-Nisa': 62-63)

Of course, as stated in the verse, Allah knows very well that they are lying and what they are concealing in their hearts. This He will reveal at a time of His choosing. He also makes His messenger aware of their situation.

They Try to Free Themselves from Blame with Self-Praise

Don't you see those who praise themselves for purity? No, Allah purifies whoever He wills. (Surat an-Nisa': 49)

How important the approval of other people is for hypocrites! Indeed, as revealed in the above verse, they constantly praise themselves for the purposes of gaining approval. They seek to cover up all their mistakes and justify their desires, in the event that any of their mistakes do see the light of day. They also take pains to depict themselves as true believers, even though they are actually not.

Naturally, however, their efforts achieve success only among people like themselves. Believers identify their two-faced behavior before much time has passed, and respond with the appropriate behavior themselves.

They Cannot Bear to Receive Advice

As we have emphasized throughout this book, one of the main features of hypocrites is their satanic pride. They have grown so arrogant that they cannot admit that they have any deficiencies or are at fault in any regard. If admonished about these deficiencies or errors, then they inevitably display great anger towards whomever does so.

However, the principle features of believers, and messengers in particular, is enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. In other words, the faithful constantly give one another advice and seek to eradicate one another's errors and deficiencies. Since hypocrites are also found within the community of the faithful, they also frequently become engaged in this religious observance that believers perform in order to earn Allah's approval.

In those verses dealing with the hypocrites who lived at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (saas), we can see how hypocrites, who regarded themselves as flawless, became angry in the face of the advice given them. So excessive was their reaction to the reminders issued to them from the Qur'an that, in the words of one verse, they would **". . . strike you down with their evil looks . . ."** (Surat al-Qalam: 51). They saw no need to hide the hatred and anger they felt towards the Prophet (saas), and made this quite apparent.

No doubt their reactions stemmed from the fact that the Prophet (saas) gave them advice. Had he not reminded them of such matters as the imminence of death, the scale of the torment of Hell in the Hereafter, and that status in this world and the next of those who oppose the Qur'an, and had he instead praised the hypocrites to others, then they would have felt no hatred towards him. However, as an immutable law of Allah, His messengers continue to do their duty and enjoin everyone, no matter who they might be, to do what is good and avoid what is evil.

They Imagine They Will Not be Punished

. . . [they] say to themselves "Why does Allah not punish us for what we

say?" Hell will be enough for them! They will roast in it. What an evil destination! (Surat al-Mujadala: 8)

The reason why they continue doing what they do and refuse to abandon their activities is that they don't imagine any troubles will ever be visited on them. Their mindset is one of "If trouble were going to be inflicted on us, it would already have happened." But this is entirely of their own imagining, because the laws of Allah are very different. He will inflict troubles immediately if He wishes, or else postpone them for a while.

In addition, contrary to what they imagine, hypocrites constantly suffer troubles, of which they themselves are unaware. For example, in addition to their defective speech and mannerisms and inability to reason, they live in a constant state of stress, cannot take pleasure from beautiful things, and lack knowledge of the value of blessings.

Allah postpones the deaths of some of them, giving them time to further increase their denial in this world. Additionally, the suffering they will experience in Hell is also increased proportionally:

Do not let their wealth and their children impress you. Allah merely wants to punish them by them in this world, and for them to expire while they are disbelievers. (Surat at-Tawba: 85)

They Imagine Their Worldly Values will Protect Them

We have already touched on the effect of such people's worldly values, how they imagine themselves to be superior, and their enormous self-confidence. Their families and assets head the list of those elements in which they place the greatest confidence and trust, believing that their families and material assets will protect them in the Hereafter, and thus put themselves at ease. They are unaware that not even the most prestigious and powerful people in this world can protect them against any difficulty that may be inflicted by Allah. Thus, they display a most groundless conceit.

The fact is, however, that they will witness all things disappearing one by one. On the Day of Judgment, they will be accompanied neither by their families nor by any of their assets from this world. On the contrary, they will be all alone and utterly defenseless. In addition, they will realize—by means of various calamities inflicted on them by Allah—that these assets availed them nothing in this world either.

As already discussed, they imagine that through rejecting religious moral values and turning away from the community of the faithful, they will actually profit. They believe that in that way, they will be able to live in comfort, according to their worldly desires. They imagine that death, sickness or trouble will never come to them, and that they will be able to live in peace and security for many years.

But the fact is that, quite the contrary, trouble and sorrow will follow wherever they go. Indeed, Allah has given believers the warning that both in this world and in the Hereafter He will inflict troubles on those who turn their backs on religion:

But if anyone turns away from My reminder, his life will be a dark and narrow one and on the Day of Resurrection We will gather him blind. (Surah Ta Ha: 124)

They Imagine They are Destined for Paradise

One of the characteristics of hypocrites is that their belief in the Hereafter is very weak and distorted. Most of them do not believe that after death, they will have to account for crimes they committed in this world. And even if they do admit such a possibility, they regard themselves as destined to enter Paradise on account of having done everything necessary to do so. Examples of this flawed thinking are given in the Qur'an:

"I do not think the Hour will ever come. But if I should be sent back to my Lord, I will definitely get something better in return." (Surat al-Kahf: 36)

According to their own flawed logic, simply because they live among believers, they must have performed various services, for better or worse. That being so, they will be rewarded for these in the Hereafter and will inevitably be admitted to Paradise. At the very worst, they think they will suffer punishment in Hell and then be admitted to Paradise. Allah reveals these misconceptions in the Qur'an:

That is because they say, "The Fire will only touch us for a number of days." Their inventions have deluded them in their religion. (Surah Al 'Imran: 24)

As the verse informs us, this is an invention, on account of which hypocrites have been deluded in their religion. This verse, which follows on from the one cited above, reveals the kind of end awaiting them as a result:

But how will it be when We gather them all together for a Day about which there is no doubt? Every self will be paid in full for what it earned. They will not be wronged. (Surah Al 'Imran: 25)

DAMAGE WROUGHT BY THE DISEASE OF SELF-SATISFACTION

And so that He might punish the men and women of the hypocrites and the men and women of the idolaters—those who think bad thoughts about Allah. They will suffer an evil turn of fate. Allah is angry with

them, and has cursed them and prepared Hell for them. What an evil destination! (Surat al-Fath: 6)

Self-satisfaction is by itself a source of trouble for hypocrites. However, as you have seen in the preceding chapters, most of the time they are unaware of this. So self-satisfied and conceited are they that they are even able to ask, **“Why does Allah not punish us for what we say? . . .”** (Surat al-Mujadala: 8). As emphasized above, however, they are unaware that instead of the evident calamity they expect, they actually suffer numerous calamities, including physical and spiritual harm.

Allah refers in His verses to this harm suffered by hypocrites. Let us now examine these, one by one.

1. They are not Wise

Wisdom is one of the greatest assets a human being can possess. An unwise person is in a most wretched position, even though, being unwise, he is not even aware of this. He confuses wisdom with intelligence and so makes inaccurate decisions.

The same thing applies to the hypocrite, who may enjoy a particular level of intelligence. But he can never enjoy the wisdom that Allah bestows only on true believers, which allows them to distinguish right from wrong. They are thus deprived of one of the greatest blessings.

Wisdom is also one of a person's greatest needs. At every moment of his life, a person needs it to be able to distinguish right from wrong and to protect himself from evil. The hypocrite's devotion to this world leads to his being unwise. Therefore, he is unsuccessful when it comes to even the simplest matters requiring wisdom. The greatest proof of hypocrites' lack of wisdom is how they imagine that Allah does not see what they do. (Surely Allah is beyond that!) Therefore, they seek to deceive believers and imagine that they can do so with impunity. They are addressed in the following terms in the Qur'an:

Don't they know that Allah knows what they keep secret and what they make public? (Surat al-Baqara: 77)

Another unwise claim they make is that Allah will not bring their iniquity into the light of day. However, on the Day of Judgment, Allah will round up and punish all the hypocrites who have ever lived. Before the Day of Judgment, He will also humiliate them in this world.

2. They are Unable to Comprehend the Verses

Sincere Muslims are, as set out in the Qur'an, **“those who, when they are reminded of the signs of their Lord, do not turn their backs, deaf and**

blind to them” (Surat al-Furqan: 73). They are particularly sensitive to the verses of Allah. All believers know that all the verses of the Qur’an directly concern them and that they cannot remain unconcerned or distant from any of them. However, for possession of this state of mind, there is one very important precondition. An individual must be very humble, and not regard himself as free from any imperfections or defects. Only when a person has this sincerity and humility will Allah bestow the meaning of His verses in his or her heart.

Hypocrites, on the other hand, are very proud and a far cry from being sincere. They can never possess such an understanding due to their self-satisfaction. Although constantly exposed to the messenger’s message, they lack the ability to understand a single word he says. Their lack of comprehension is related in the Qur’an:

You will not make dead men hear; you will not make deaf men hear the call, when they turn their backs in flight. You will not guide blind men from their misguidance. You will not make anyone hear except for those who believe in Our signs and so are Muslims. (Surat ar-Rum: 52-53)

The Qur’an also tells us how hypocrites, unaffected by the messenger’s words, possess a closed understanding due to the effects of their own self-satisfaction:

Who could do greater wrong than someone who is reminded of the signs of his Lord and then turns away from them, forgetting all that he has done before? We have placed covers on their hearts, preventing them from understanding it, and heaviness in their ears. Though you call them to guidance, they will nonetheless never be guided. (Surat al-Kahf: 57)

Again, as a consequence of the self-satisfaction that infects them and their inability to understand Allah’s Book, they misinterpret various of His verses. The reason for this is their pride and unfounded trust in their own limited wisdom. Allah warns believers beforehand against this disease carried by hypocrites by telling how they will seek to create strife in the community of the faithful:

It is He Who sent down the Book to you from Him: verses containing clear judgments—they are the core of the Book—and others which are open to interpretation. Those with deviation in their hearts follow what is open to interpretation in it, desiring conflict, seeking its inner meaning. No one knows its inner meaning but Allah. Those firmly rooted in knowledge say, “We believe in it. All of it is from our Lord.” But only people of intelligence pay heed. (Surah Al ‘Imran: 7)

3. Allah Inflicts Various Spiritual Troubles on Them

Allah inflicts various spiritual woes on people who are arrogant before Allah thinking himself self-sufficient, and He makes a dark and narrow life for them in this world. Hypocrites cannot comprehend the source of the spiritual troubles

visited upon them and live in confusion, since they are quite incapable of fathoming their origins.

They first harbor uneasiness, whose origins they are unable to identify. Yet the reason for it is actually quite clear.

There is evil in every human being's lower self. However, just as he knows this, he also knows to avoid it. That is because—as stated in the verse below—while Allah imparts sin and evil in the human self, He also imparts the inspiration with which to avoid them:

And [I swear by] the self and what proportioned it and inspired it with depravity or sense of duty, he who purifies it has succeeded; he who covers it up has failed. (Surat ash-Shams: 7-10)

As we have seen, in the same way that one side of self calls people to wickedness, a person also possesses a conscience that constantly calls him to goodness. The voice of the lower self is that of satan, and the voice of one's conscience is the voice of truth. By constantly ignoring their conscience, hypocrites bring the wickedness in their lower selves to the fore. At this point they enter a state of spiritual conflict, and as a result, experience unremitting unease.

In addition to this unease, whose cause they are totally unable to identify, they harbor feelings of restlessness, doubt, and fear. The factor underlying all this fear is their distance from Allah and inability to comprehend that all things are under His control. Since they imagine that events are actually under their own control, they assume that they must also calculate every tiny detail regarding them.

Like all deniers, hypocrites are constantly preoccupied by such worldly matters as how to live, how to please others, how to maintain good health and never fall ill. That is by no means the end of the matter; they panic when they see that events are not going as they wish, and chase even more after the things of this world. This state of affairs persists until they die. Since they refuse to submit, admit their need of Allah, and place their affairs in His hands, they live in permanent stress and restlessness. Their psychological states are described in these terms in the Qur'an:

They imagine every cry to be against them. (Surat al-Munafiqun: 4)

In addition, their efforts to make themselves popular and please others actually worsen their uneasy situation. That is because hypocrites, who constantly perform evil and mire themselves in sin, are in fact not liked by many people at all. In the same way that they attract the hatred of believers, they also gain the antipathy of others. Allah depicts them as repellent to others, thus inflicting on them one of the worse troubles they could ever face, that of not being loved, and thus leaving them alone and friendless in both this world and the Hereafter.

These people are unloved by others in the same way that they are unloved by Allah. They seek to give the impression that they are of great stature, though they

are not so at all, and thus fall into a most humiliating position. Actually despised by those around them, they never enjoy true respect, and no value is ever placed on their ideas. That they will be demeaned both in this world and in the Hereafter is revealed in the Qur'an:

. . . They will have disgrace in this world and in the Hereafter they will have a terrible punishment. (Surat al-Baqara: 114)

. . . Do you, then, believe in one part of the Book and reject the other? What repayment will there be for any of you who do that except disgrace in this world? . . . (Surat al-Baqara: 85)

4. They Imagine that They will Inevitably be Forgiven

. . . [They are] taking the goods of this lower world, and saying, "We will be forgiven." (Surat al-A'raf: 169)

Due to the disease of self-satisfaction they bear within them, hypocrites imagine that Allah has a great love for them and will inevitably reward them with good things. They maintain that all their many devilish deeds were actually committed with the best of intentions. They think, along the lines of the verse cited above, "If we do wrong, we will be forgiven." This stems from their refusal to recognize Allah or to appreciate His justice.

Yet Allah is He Who punishes evil. Because of what they have done in this world, hypocrites will be gravely disappointed in the next one. They appear to be as one with the community of the faithful, and may engage in various activities. Yet because of the sickness in their hearts, they will see that all their actions in this world count for nothing. However, their self-satisfaction prevents them from seeing this while they are in this world. The position they will face in the Hereafter is described in these terms in verses:

Say: "Shall I inform you of the greatest losers in their actions? People whose efforts in the life of this world are misguided while they suppose that they are doing good." (Surat al-Kahf: 103-104)

5. The Physical Harm Wrought by Their Self-Satisfaction

We have already emphasized the consequences to which hypocrites' actions will give rise. Instead of thinking that these will inflict harm on them, they imagine that they are actually performing good deeds, as the verses tell us. The warnings and reminders issued to them come as a great surprise. They imagine that the believers they deal with are behaving wrongly and are unnecessarily warning totally innocent people. They imagine that the messenger and believers cannot fully appreciate them. However, believers, and the messenger in particular, are perfectly capable of perceiving the sickness in their hearts, both from their

defective words and from their external appearances. Indeed, Allah has revealed that His messenger will be able to recognize them:

If We wished, We would show them to you and you would know them by their mark and know them by their ambivalent speech. Allah knows your actions. (Surah Muhammad: 30)

But as we have been describing since the very outset, the disease of self-satisfaction actually inflicts great harm on them. Their inner darkness and their uneasy, cunning spiritual state totally impacts on their external appearance. Clear proof can be seen regarding their hypocrisy, both in their speech and in their physical appearance. But as previously stated, only the messenger can establish certain identification on this matter. Following his description, the believers around him witness how their inner darkness is reflected on the outside.

The fact that their ways of speaking and facial expressions are defective, the dark expression that falls over their faces, their inability to understand even the simplest matters, and their lack of wisdom are just a few examples of the damage their sickness inflicts. Yet they cannot see that the blessings in their possession are departing one by one. On the contrary, they imagine that all is well. Indeed, they remain totally unaware of the defects in their external appearance, their gestures, expressions and speech. This is both a great trouble inflicted on them by Allah, and also a trap that will cause their own snares to rebound back on themselves.

HYPOCRITES HAVE NEVER VANQUISHED THE PROPHETS

Those who anticipate the worst for you say, “Were we not with you?” whenever you gain a victory from Allah, but if the disbelievers have a success they say, “Did we not have the upper hand over you and yet in spite of that keep the believers away from you?” Allah will judge between you on the Day of Resurrection. Allah will not give the disbelievers any way against the believers. (Surat an-Nisa’: 141)

All through history, hypocrites have rebelled against the truth and waged a war against believers from inside their community. As revealed in the verse “. . . **But all might belongs to Allah and to His messenger and the believers. But the hypocrites do not know this**” (Surat al-Munafiqun: 8), hypocrites have always claimed that they are superior to believers and will overcome them. Yet despite all these baseless claims, they have never been able to vanquish the believers. Messengers and the believers around them have always emerged victorious. This situation has persisted, just like a law, throughout history.

When events are viewed through the perspective of the Qur’an, the reason for this is easy to see. Allah never permits hypocrites to gain an advantage over the

faithful. On the contrary, he overthrows them by means of the messenger and the faithful. Allah reveals in the Qur'an that He has warned all deniers, hypocrites included, who engage in actions aimed against believers and that He will punish them unless they put an end to their cunning activities:

If the hypocrites and those with sickness in their hearts and the rumor-mongers in Madina do not desist, We will set you onto them. Then they will only be your neighbors there a very short time. (Surat al-Ahzab: 60)

Allah also reveals, with examples, how He will always support sincere believers who turn to Him in all they do against the deniers. By means of Allah's help and support, His messengers have always secured victory, even under the most seemingly difficult conditions.

This is described with several examples in the Qur'an. One of these is Talut, who assumed command of the army in a war waged against the deniers in the time of the Prophet Dawud (as). Talut, placed in command of the believers due to his superior military abilities, made a number of recommendations to the army. However, a number of people of weak faith turned their backs on this advice, though they should have obeyed him, and acted in accordance with their own desires:

When Talut marched out with the army, he said, "Allah will test you with a river. Anyone who drinks from it is not with me. But anyone who does not taste it is with me—except for him who merely scoops up a little in his hand." But they drank from it—except for a few of them. Then when he and those who believed with him had crossed it, they said, "We do not have the strength to face Goliath and his troops today." But those who were sure that they were going to meet Allah said, "How many a small force has triumphed over a much greater one by Allah's permission! Allah is with the steadfast." (Surat al-Baqara: 249)

At the moment of battle, the hypocrites sought to create difficulties for the faithful by their sudden disobedience, though the believers displayed not the slightest disobedience and supported the messenger in the fighting:

When they came out against Goliath and his troops, they said, "Our Lord, pour down steadfastness upon us, and make our feet firm, and help us against this disbelieving people." And with Allah's permission they routed them. . . . (Surat al-Baqara: 250-251)

Allah grants success to believers and victory over the deniers in response to their sincerity and determination. While they enjoy great success in this world, and the approval and paradise of Allah in the Hereafter, deniers are cursed and punished by Him.

THE APPROACH TO BE ADOPTED TOWARDS HYPOCRITES

O Prophet! Strive against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be harsh with them. Their refuge is Hell. What an evil destination! (Surat at-Tahrim: 9)

The approach to be taken towards hypocrites receives much attention in the Qur'an. In the same way as the believer learns all he needs from the Qur'an, he also learns how to behave in this regard.

The exemplary advice given to believers in the Qur'an is this: that believers should never take hypocrites as their friends, and that they should warn the hypocrites by means of the Qur'an so long as the two remain together. And if the advice given bears no fruit, they should expel the hypocrites from among them. At this point, of course, Allah's messenger must take the final decision regarding the hypocrites. By means of His messenger, Allah enables believers to take the correct decision. Let us now examine those verses concerning the attitude to be adopted towards hypocrites.

1. Not to Confide in Them

You who believe! Do not make friends of people with whom Allah is angry, who have despaired of the Hereafter as the disbelievers have despaired of the inhabitants of the graves. (Surat al-Mumtahana: 13)

As we have seen from the beginning, in the light of the verses of the Qur'an, hypocrites are definitely not the kind of people that one should befriend or confide in. Only those of weak faith or in whose hearts faith is not yet fully established take these people, who fail to befriend Allah and who are in consequence not befriended by Him, as their confidants.

The verses revealed by Allah on this subject encourage believers to be on their guard against hypocrites at all times and never to confide in them. It is a matter of great importance to be on one's guard against hypocrites, who hate the believers and wish them to be dispersed and suffer difficulties.

2. To Rule with Justice Among Them

They are people who listen to lies and consume ill-gotten gains. If they come to you, you can either judge between them or turn away from them. If you turn away from them, they cannot harm you in any way. But if you do judge, judge between them justly. Allah loves the just. (Surat al-Ma'ida: 42)

Implementing the stipulation in the above verse is a matter for the messenger at the head of the people alone. The messenger either rules among the hypocrites, as he desires, or else turns his back on them.

3. To Give Advice if They Will Receive That Advice

Allah knows what is in such people's hearts, so turn away from them and warn them and speak to them with words that take effect. (Surat an-Nisa': 63)

As can be seen from this verse, it is recommended that hypocrites be given effective advice. By this important and effective method, they can come to realize what they have done and regret it. The main thing here is to issue reminders so that they can feel such regret. Someone who fails to heed such advice has declared open war on the religious moral values. Therefore, one must never forget that these people should be spurned, not befriended.

Believers give these people advice in the hope that they will mend their ways. But certainly, every piece of advice increases the suffering in the Hereafter of the hypocrite who turns his back on it. All the advice given to hypocrites is actually a snare, set for them by Allah. By remaining among believers and working in secret, hypocrites imagine that they are being very clever, never realizing that in the Hereafter, they will be recompensed for every piece of advice they received while remaining among believers. In this way they fall into an eternal trap while seeking to set their own snares for believers.

4. Not to Insist on Warning Them if They Refuse to Heed Advice

Enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil is the responsibility of every believer. Yet there is a limit to this. Allah states that if the person being given advice rejects it obdurately, then nothing further should be said to him:

Remind, then, if the reminder benefits. He who has fear will be reminded. But the most miserable will shun it. (Surat al-A'la: 9-11)

In the event that hypocrites insist in their fanatic denial, further warnings will be of no avail. Believers should leave them to their own devices.

5. To Combat Them and Behave in a Stern, Deterrent Manner

O Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and hypocrites and be harsh with them. . . . (Surat at-Tawba: 73)

This is a very important piece of advice from Allah. A harsh and determined approach from believers towards hypocrites, who fail to keep their word to Allah, lie and harbor corruption and rebellion in their hearts, has a deterrent effect.

Being on one's guard against the strife they will cause, taking relevant precautions beforehand and identifying them in good time before they can wreak any harm are most important duties for believers. Believers have been charged with being on their guard at all times against the danger from hypocrites, exposing these people who harbor sickness in their hearts, and thereby causing others to avoid them. This is indeed what they do.

Taking all due precautionary measures and at the same time, never permitting them the opportunity to cause strife, acts as a warning to later generations of hypocrites.

6. Not to Allow Them to Struggle Alongside the Faithful

Hypocrites do not actually struggle alongside believers, because they fail to fear Allah as they ought, are devoted to worldly concerns and feel enormous admiration for deniers. Since they remain lagging behind and choose a life apart from that of believers, Allah commanded the Prophet (saas) never to permit hypocrites to struggle alongside the faithful:

If Allah returns you to a group of them, and they ask you for permission to go out, say, "You will never go out with me, nor will you ever fight an enemy with me. You were happy to stay behind the first time, so stay behind with those who are left behind." (Surat at-Tawba: 83)

7. To Remove Them from the Community of the Faithful

He [Musa] said, "What do you think you were doing, Samaritan?" He [Samaritan] said, "I saw what they did not see. So I gathered up a handful from the messenger's footprints and threw it in. That is what my inner self urged me to do." He said, "Go! In this world you will have to say, 'Untouchable!' And you have an appointment which you will not fail to keep. Look at your deity to which you devoted so much time. We will burn it up and then scatter it as dust into the sea." (Surah Ta Ha: 95-97)

The attitude regarding Samaritan, who caused strife among the people of the Prophet Musa (as), is a most effective precaution that should be recommended against all hypocrites, because hypocrites cause strife among believers and to turn them towards denial, in the same way that they themselves have turned in the direction of denial. Even if they fail, they seek to wear believers down psychologically. In such an event, the most rational course is to remove them from among sincere believers.

8. To Refuse to Heed Them

So call and go straight as you have been ordered to. Do not follow their

whims and desires. . . . (Surat ash-Shura: 15)

Obedying or heeding a hypocrite will result in considerable harm. A person who abandons the behavior pleasing to Allah and goes along with hypocrites is actually following the path of satan. Those who go along with satan represent his army and can never attain salvation, either in this world nor in the next. For that reason, Allah warns believers against this danger and forbids them to engage in behavior such as agreeing with hypocrites' suggestions.

9. To Pay no Heed to the Troubles and Woes They Inflict

Allah is believers' Guardian and Protector. In times of difficulty and distress, they seek help from Him, and are patient and submissive. They also exhibit fortitude and submit to Allah in the face of difficulties stemming from hypocrites. They pray for the harm that hypocrites seek to inflict to be visited upon them instead. For that reason, Allah tells believers to pay no attention to hypocrites' actions, since these are all ineffective and invalid:

But because of their breaking of their covenant, We have cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort the true meaning of words and have forgotten a good portion of what they were reminded of. You will never cease to come upon some act of treachery on their part, except for a few of them. Yet pardon them, and overlook. Allah loves good-doers. (Surat al-Ma'ida: 13)

Turn from them and say, "Peace! You will soon come to know." (Surat az-Zukhruf: 89)

10. To Establish with Them no Ties of Affection or Friendship

As the friends of satan, hypocrites have adopted him as their guardian. Therefore, a believer will avoid hypocrites just as he avoids satan. Since they are the enemies of Allah and religion, believers are also hostile to them as well and feel great anger towards them in their hearts. Indeed, Allah forbids believers to take as friends those who war against them on the subject of religion:

Allah merely forbids you from taking as friends those who have fought you in the religion and driven you from your homes and who supported your expulsion. Any who take them as friends are wrongdoers. (Surat at-Mumtahana: 9)

11. To Avoid Them

Hypocrites engage in a constant struggle against believers, persisting in cunning activities against them so long as they remain in their midst. If they leave the

community of the faithful, they carry out these activities from a distance. For believers' security and peace of mind, therefore, it is of the greatest importance to avoid hypocrites as one would shun himself, and to stay as far away from them as one would from the flames.

Allah has promised that so long as believers avoid them, hypocrites will be able to do them no harm:

If something good happens to you, it galls them. If something bad strikes you, they rejoice at it. But if you are steadfast and guard against evil, their scheming will not harm you in any way. Allah encompasses what they do. (Surah Al 'Imran: 120)

CAN HYPOCRITES REPENT?

And others are left awaiting Allah's command as to whether He will punish them or turn to them. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (Surat at-Tawba: 106)

As Allah has revealed in the Qur'an, ". . . **He is not pleased with ingratitude in His servants . . .**" (Surat al-Zumar: 7). In other words, He wishes to lead His servants onto the true path, forgive their sins and admit them to Paradise. But hypocrites insist on turning their backs to this call. Although they know and understand, they remain unmoved by His verses and because of their cruelty and pride, persist in their denial. Yet there may be some among them who long to put an end to such behavior. In that event, anyone who wishes to repent needs to fully understand his own helplessness, beg Allah's forgiveness with the utmost sincerity, and repent definitively in such a way as never to return to hypocrisy.

On condition that he is truly sincere, it may be possible—if Allah so wishes—for Him to accept a hypocrite's repentance. Indeed, we are told that ". . . **if anyone repents after his wrongdoing and puts things right, Allah will turn towards him. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful**" (Surat al-Ma'ida: 39).

A number of verses in the Qur'an deal with hypocrites repenting. It may be hoped that Allah will accept the repentance of those who confess the sins they have committed and sincerely intend to exhibit a genuine attitude towards His messenger:

But others have acknowledged their wrong actions and mixed a right action with another which is wrong. It may well be that Allah will turn towards them. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Surat at-Tawba: 102)

Allah has given examples of hypocrites who lived in the past and how some of them repented. As is revealed in verses, some members of the people of the

Prophet Muhammad (saas) made all kinds of excuses in order not to go to war and sought the permission of the Prophet (saas) to remain behind. Since they did so, they rejoiced and regarded themselves as very advantaged. In their own minds they had escaped the danger of death and ensured their own survival by not participating in the fighting. They did not think that the death they were seeking to avoid might still find them, even in their own homes. The fact is, however, that had they submitted to the Prophet (saas) and gone to war, then even if death did catch up with them, they would have been martyrs and by the mercy of Allah, would have earned, the right to enter Paradise.

However, since they harbored doubts about the Hereafter, they regarded death in battle as a serious loss. They regarded remaining behind with their families and saw taking care of business and similar matters as much more advantageous.

The Qur'an refers to "three people" from among this community who wished to remain behind. Like the others, they failed to participate in the war, failed to act alongside the believers and support the faithful against the deniers. However, these three differed from the others who "remained behind" in one important respect: According to what is revealed in the Qur'an, these people regretted not having gone to war, were ashamed of themselves and sincerely repented, seeking Allah's forgiveness. Allah accepted their repentance.

Why were they forgiven? The main reason was that they sincerely feared Allah, beseeched Him in their need and begged Him for forgiveness. One verse from the Qur'an describes their sincerity and the pangs of conscience they suffered:

And also towards the three who were left behind, so that when the Earth became narrow for them, for all its great breadth, and their own selves became constricted for them and they realized that there was no refuge from Allah except in Him, He turned to them so that they might turn to Him. Allah is the Ever-Returning, the Most Merciful. (Surat at-Tawba: 118)

In addition, Allah refers to hypocrites' repenting as being auspicious for them. This is a great blessing on them. If He so wishes, Allah will forgive them despite their wickedness, and forgive their sins—as is revealed in the following verse:

. . . If they were to repent, it would be better for them. But if they turn away, Allah will punish them with a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. . . . (Surat at-Tawba: 74)

Most hypocrites imagine that they can commit all kinds of evil and then repent in their old age or when they realize they are about to die. Yet Allah reveals in a verse that He will not accept any repentance they make when they feel they are about to die:

There is no repentance for people who persist in doing evil until death comes to them and who then say, "Now I repent," nor for people who die

disbeliever. We have prepared for them a painful punishment. (Surat an-Nisa': 18)

The repentance which will be acceptable is described in these terms in the Qur'an:

Allah only accepts the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and then quickly repent after doing it. Allah turns towards such people. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (Surat an-Nisa': 17)

THE STATE OF HYPOCRITES IN THE HEREAFTER

Don't they know that whoever opposes Allah and His messenger, will have the Fire of Hell, remaining in it timelessly, for ever? That is the great disgrace. (Surat at-Tawba: 63)

The reward meted out to hypocrites who declared war on Allah and His religion is that which they thoroughly deserve. Throughout their eternal lives, hypocrites will experience physical and spiritual torment.

Hypocrites' infernal torment actually begins while they are in this world. In addition to terrible humiliation and belittlement, many other forms await them while they are still living on Earth. The greatest suffering, however, will without doubt be that of Hell—an endless, eternal burning fire.

Moment of Death

All human beings live out the destiny set out for them by Allah, and they die at the moment determined by Him. The souls of believers—those who live their lives in the light of His wishes—are gently taken by angels as a blessing from Allah, and are welcomed to Paradise. Allah imparts these glad tidings to believers in the Qur'an:

Those the angels take in a virtuous state. They say, "Peace be upon you! Enter the Garden for what you did." (Surat an-Nahl: 32)

This does not apply to deniers, however. Angels do not gently bear their souls away. On the contrary, they take their souls by striking them on the back and on the face. In addition to the physical pain they will experience, this is also a terrible humiliation for them. Allah has terrified all hypocrites and deniers with this humiliation and suffering:

If only you could see when the angels take back those who disbelieved at their death, beating their faces and their backs: "Taste the punishment of the burning!" (Surat an-Anfal: 50)

How will it be when the angels take them in death, beating their faces and their backs? (Surah Muhammad: 27)

As the angels bear away their souls in this way, they begin to realize the kind of recompense that awaits them for everything they did in this world. The prestige they sought so hard to maintain on Earth is suddenly destroyed. They die in humiliation and are later cast into Hell:

Say to those who disbelieve: “You will be overwhelmed and crowded into Hell. What an evil resting-place!” (Surah Al ‘Imran: 12)

Those who disbelieve spend their wealth barring access to the way of Allah. They will spend it; then they will regret it; then they will be overthrown. Those who disbelieve will be gathered into Hell. (Surat an-Anfal: 36)

Those who are herded headlong into Hell, such people are in the worst position. They are the most misguided from the way. (Surat al-Furqan: 34)

Torment in Hell

1. The Worst Torment

Hypocrites, whom Allah describes in the Qur’an as deserving of even worse, will be punished with the greatest suffering in the Hereafter—in other words, with the torment of Hell:

. . . Do you, then, believe in one part of the Book and reject the other? What repayment will there be for any of you who do that except disgrace in this world? And on the Day of Resurrection, they will be returned to the harshest of punishments. Allah is not unaware of what you do. (Surat al-Baqara: 85)

2. An Unremitting Suffering

Those are the people who trade the Hereafter for this world. The punishment will not be lightened for them. They will not be helped. (Surat al-Baqara: 86)

Hypocrites will remain in Hell for all eternity and their suffering will never be lightened in any way.

3. A Fierce Punishment

Give news to the hypocrites that they will have a painful punishment.

(Surat an-Nisa': 138)

According to the Qur'an, the torment of Hell will be fierce and very great. Everyone there will be cast into the flames. Escape will be impossible. They will be bound with chains and iron shackles. They will be scourged with whips of iron. Hypocrites, whose only foods will be boiling water, pus, the tree of Zaqqum and thorns, will wish to leave Hell, but their suffering will never end or ever be alleviated.

The reason is that although they knew everything Allah required of them in this world, they followed their Earthly desires and turned their backs on the truth, declaring war on Allah and His religion.

4. The Most Humiliating Torment

The people in Hell will assume a frightening appearance and experience torment in all respects. Their bodies will be torn apart with fire, boiling water will be poured over their heads, and they will be forced to wear clothing made of tar and flame:

But those who strive against Our signs, trying to nullify them, will have a punishment most humiliating. (Surah Saba': 5)

5. The Curse of Allah

As we have seen, hypocrites will be surrounded with torments in all respects in Hell. Yet there is one torment even greater than all of these, and that is the curse of Allah—His refusal to speak with them and His humiliation and disparagement of them:

The repayment of such people is that Allah's curse is on them and that of the angels and of all humanity. (Surah Al 'Imran: 87)

Those who conceal what Allah has sent down of the Book and sell it cheap, take nothing into their bellies but the Fire. On the Day of Resurrection Allah will not speak to them or purify them. They will have a painful punishment. (Surat al-Baqara: 174)

6. They Will be All Alone

The people they imagined to be their friends in this world will be far distant from them in the Hereafter. Each will have his own sufferings, for which reason they will be able to find no friend or comforter, and they will remain all alone.

. . . You will not find any one to help them. (Surat an-Nisa': 145)

In the Hereafter, moreover, they will curse the people they called closest to them in this world.

. . . But then on the Day of Resurrection, you will reject one another and curse one another. The Fire will be your shelter. You will have no helpers. (Surat al-'Ankabut: 25)

7. They Will Suffer Terrible Loss

There is no doubt that in the Hereafter they will be the losers. (Surat an-Nahl: 109)

Leaving behind the life of this world, which they imagined to be so profitable, they will die and enter Hell, their true abode. There they will see the true face of all things and realize that rather than having gained any profit, they have actually suffered a terrible loss. They will realize that everything they did in this world has been meaningless and cannot benefit them at all.

The Lowest Level of Hell

The hypocrites are in the lowest level of the Fire. You will not find any one to help them. (Surat an-Nisa': 145)

As Allah reveals to us in the above verse, hypocrites inhabit "the lowest level of the Fire." The reason for that, of course, is their two-facedness and their moral model based on strife.

We have touched on dozens of elements that determine hypocrites' cunning natures. One aim behind our setting out these defects one by one is to show that hypocrites are among the cruelest people who have ever lived, and to provide a means of imparting that knowledge to all.

The reason why the hypocrites described right throughout this book are to be regarded as cruel and extreme is because they are people to whom knowledge has been given. In other words, they have been told of religious moral values and have learned the truth from believers, and even from the messenger of Allah himself. They have lived for a while according to those religious moral values, but then turned their backs on them and, of course, on Allah, on His messenger and the faithful, imagining that their life would be easier as deniers. Allah reveals that:

They swear by Allah that they said nothing, but they definitely spoke the word of disbelief and returned to disbelief after their Islam. They planned something, which they did not achieve and they were vindictive for no other cause than that Allah and His messenger had enriched them from His bounty. If they were to repent, it would be better for them. But if they turn away, Allah will punish them with a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter, and they will not find any protector or

helper on the Earth. (Surat at-Tawba: 74)

Therefore, they bear a greater burden of responsibility than—and are quite distinct from—those to whom knowledge has not been imparted; in other words, to people who have not been called to religious moral values and the Qur'an, and who have thus never been followers of Islam. The suffering they experience in the Hereafter will be far worse than the latter, as is revealed by Allah. That is because hypocrites appear to be religious during the course of their lives, avoiding any number of telltale sins that would enable them to be identified by believers. In their hearts, however, they harbor no obedience towards Allah and His messenger but on the contrary, feel a cunning hatred of and enmity towards them. It is only natural and just that such people should deserve the worst punishment in Hell, because hypocrites have witnessed the finest examples of moral values in the community of the faithful, have lived in the most peaceful environment, and have experienced great love and respect. However, although they have known nothing but goodness and beauty from believers, still they manage to feel hatred for them because of the sickness in their hearts.

Moreover, because they were proud and arrogant in the face of believers during their time in this world, Allah will humiliate and belittle them.

The position of the hypocrites is described thus in one hadith:

On the Day of Qiyamah, the one in the vilest of conditions will be a two-faced person. (Sahih Bukhari and Muslim)

They seek to deceive believers in this world but in the Hereafter, will beg them for even the slightest help. Yet of course believers will not be taken in by this. Thanks to the infinite justice of Allah, they will live for all eternity among His blessings.

Verses speak of hypocrites' endless lamentation in Hell:

That Day the men and women of the hypocrites will say to those who believe, "Wait for us so that we can borrow some of your light." They will be told, "Go back and look for light!" And a wall will be erected between them with a gate in it, on the inside of which there will be mercy but before whose exterior lies the punishment. They will call out to them, "Were we not with you?" They will reply, "Indeed you were. But you made trouble for yourselves and hung back and doubted and false hopes deluded you until Allah's command arrived. The deluder deluded you about Allah. So today no ransom will be accepted from you or from those who disbelieved. Your refuge is the Fire. It is your master. What an evil destination!" (Surat al-Hadid: 13-15)

CONCLUSION

Hypocrites are two-faced people who assume a mask of devotion and enter the community of the faithful, whom they seek to harm for as long as they remain alongside them. They tell tales to the deniers, and seek to damage the unity and solidarity among believers. Most of them do dwell among believers, but harbor secret intentions, and work for their own material interests for so long as they remain among them. When sooner or later, such people understand that they can secure no such gains from believers, they of course see this as sufficient reason for them to depart from them.

Some actually have faith initially, when they enter the community of the faithful. But their consciences gradually wither and they submit themselves to satan. Because of the sickness in their hearts, satan weakens their devotion and sensitivity to the verses of the Qur'an. They then naturally enter the Religion of the Ignorant, or in other words, the secret religion of satan.

These people view events not in the light of the contents of the Qur'an, but from the perspective that applies in any society that does not live by religious moral values. The clearest example of this occurs during moments of difficulty. While the Qur'an foresees trust in Allah and a refusal to despair in times of trouble, at such times, hypocrites display a similarity to the Society of the Ignorant. They either overreact or else panic, thus exhibiting their unbalanced attitude for all to see.

All the characteristics we have described reveal to us the position of hypocrites, both in this world and the next, and introduce us to their features and general spiritual condition. The views of hypocrites are set out in detail in verses of the Qur'an. These people, who fail to fear Allah as they ought, engage in constant activity against the faithful in this world. They adopt this literally as a duty and maintain that attitude with great stubbornness. This is their natural way of behaving. Satan suggests to them that what they do is good. And so as satan wraps himself around them, these hypocrites, heedless of Allah and His verses, turn away from faith towards denial.

As we have seen, these characteristics of theirs may take many forms. But at the end of the day, the aims and intentions behind all of them are identical. That is, to multiply their own interests as soon as possible and to depart from the faithful by inflicting as much harm on them as they can.

No matter how long these hypocrites remain alongside believers, they know that they will abandon them eventually. The time they determined for such departure is generally times of difficulty. As we know, every prophet has been sent to societies devoid of faith, to warn them. Deniers, who live by the religion of their forefathers which they've grown up with and to which they are accustomed, have always opposed these chosen individuals and insisted on rejecting what they had to say. They have sought to neutralize their influence by means of various verbal and physical assaults. Yet throughout the course of history, all the deniers who

behaved in this manner have failed to achieve their aims, as a consequence of a hidden law—and have been disappointed in this world and in the Hereafter.

This hidden law is the fact that believers are under the protection of Allah and deniers can never harm them. In verses we are told that:

. . . Allah will not give the disbelievers any way against the believers. (Surat an-Nisa': 141)

. . . The stratagems of the disbelievers are nothing but errors. (Surah Ghafir: 25)

Deniers are unaware of this law, however, and have always sought to oppress messengers and the believers and attempted to convert them to their own religion. Hypocrites, fearful of deniers' assaults, have always sought believers' permission to lag behind in the struggle, always imagining that they could save themselves from any likely harm by fleeing in this manner.

By such behavior, however, hypocrites earn themselves a terrible place in the Hereafter, no matter how much they imagine themselves to have profited. They never once thought of repenting during their time in this world. Completely hardening their hearts against the truth, these people were **"like rocks or even harder still"** (Surat al-Baqara: 74), in the words of the Qur'an. They lived heedless of Allah and waged a great war against His religion.

That is why they will be so humiliated in the Hereafter. Messengers have been sent to warn them, and they have been told the truth and forbidden to commit evil. They are well aware of the concepts of good and evil and of living for Allah, yet still turn their backs. Since they fail to understand the existence and might of Allah, the threat of punishment does not alarm them. By not believing in the existence of Hell, they imagine that they are far removed from it, and that it is a purely imaginary place.

When the subject of the Hereafter is raised, the disease of self-satisfaction that infects their souls manifests itself. They have no thoughts of retribution. The most important evidence of this is that they never even consider the possibility of suffering in the Hereafter. But even a moment's reflection on the possibility of having to account for oneself in the Hereafter and that one might go to Hell because of the sins one has committed should be enough to spur a person into action or at the very least, to reconsider his position. The fact that they declare war on religious moral values is proof that they have never considered this eventuality.

Yet their self-satisfaction will bring them nothing but humiliation in this world. In the Hereafter, on the other hand, they will encounter the very things they despised and be cursed for their actions. That is what they deserve as a result of all their endeavors. Allah has revealed the fate of hypocrites thus:

**Remaining in it timelessly, for ever, as long as the heavens and Earth endure, except as your Lord wills. Your Lord is the Doer of what He wills.
(Surah Hud: 107)**