

Purpose of Life

From an Islamic perspective

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Dedication

In the 2000 movie “Cast Away,” the main character's plane crashed, and he was isolated alone on a remote island for years. He struggled to survive because he thought his woman and friends are still waiting for him and looking for him. When he went back home, he found everybody thought he had died, so they were not looking for him. Even his girlfriend got married to another man. However, love is a strong motivation to survive, even if this love is not mutual.

So, do we love to survive? Why does the moon revolve around the earth? Why are the waves attracted to the beach? Why does the fruit go down to the one who wants to pick it? What is the secret of love?

Everyone says: "My heart is full of love," but do you know what love is? You do not know a thing until you know its opposite. Love and hate are not antipodes. Both are different degrees of care. Control is the opposite of love. Love is accepting whom you love as they are, appreciating our diversity and forgiving the imperfection. When you try to change everything to be as you believe it should be, you do not love anything except yourself. People who try to change the world, cannot love. If they love it, they would not try to change it.

Conditional love would disappear when its condition disappears. You love whom you love, not because they are beautiful, generous, or nice. You just love them even if they desert you. There is no reason for love, because it is the reason for our life. God is love. He loves your parents, so He created them and provided for them. Your parents loved each other, and that is why you are alive now.

So, this book is dedicated to the love, that motivates our life and gives us the passion.

Why This Book?

This book was inspired by questions asked of me by a Muslim man about the purpose and meaning of life. Naturally, I sought answers in Islamic Sacred Texts, such as the Quran and the prophetic traditions, but I argue that this book is not only for Muslims because its topic, sources, aim and methodology are more spiritual than religious.

Topic

This book does not give instruction for a particular religious practice. Rather it seeks answers to life's essential questions about purpose, meaning and worth. It is intended to address a universal topic that is not specific to any nationality or religious group.

Sources

Even though I searched for the answers in Islamic sacred texts, beliefs, and worship practices, I did not limit myself to the Islamic sources. I opened my mind and heart to history, the Bible, Talmud, as well as different psychologists, philosophies and even movies because I believe the truth is truth regardless of its source.

Aim

This book does not aim to convert anyone or question anyone's belief or teach anyone how to practice a particular religion. Rather it is trying to answer spiritual and metaphysical questions about human existence. While I am Muslim, my aspiration is to offer a good example and broader perspective for others who are seeking answers for the same questions within their faith. Since the questioner was a terrorist, the answer includes the differences between Jihad and terrorism to send a message to all terrorists that terrorism does not fulfill our purpose but violates it.

Methodology

This book is a creative writing, not academic; because it meant to challenge the frozen condition of Islamic civilization.

In 7th century CE, the Muslim nations moved from first civilizational stage (childhood or pre-civilization) to the second stage (youth or golden age). They were open to learn from other civilizations until their civilization reached its peak from the 8th century to the 13th century. They became creative in all fields and taught the whole world.

After that, the Islamic civilization started the third stage (aging, post-civilization or Dark Age), and it has been frozen until now. The Muslim nations stopped being creative, not only in science and technology, but even in their religious thoughts. The current Islamic civilization does not develop an Islamic thought that can cope with changes and challenges in modern Muslim's lives to help them practice their religion in different eras from the early Muslim era. That explains why most current Islamic books just explain older books, and most current Islamic scholars just follow older scholars and sanctify them.

Islam, like other religions, was subjected to a hijacking attempt. The split between Islamic sects and school of thoughts started very shallow, and deepened over time. Each sect and school of thought went farther and extreme in their opinions. Therefore, Muslims need to remember the preeminence of scripture rather than fallible guidance. What God and his prophet said is more important than what the scholars said. As a Muslim, I follow the Quran blindly. I believe there is not even one mistake in the Quran, and I follow the Prophet Muhammad's traditions with opened eyes for possible fabrication. Evidence suggests many of these traditions were fabricated after his death. I follow our scholars' opinions with a rational filter. For example, I follow the Salfi (Orthodox) methodology, when they go back to the roots of Islam, but I do not agree with their focus on the ruling of Islamic law more than the spiritual meanings and objectives of Islam, or when they refuse to leave any space for the reason to interpret the Quran, even though the Quran encourage us to do it.

I. Search for the Purpose

Chapter One

Dead Man Asking about Life

It was my first time visiting the SHU (Special House Unit), even though I had been working in prison ministry for five years. The SHU is individual cells for high security inmates, a prison inside the prison. It has its own gate, control unit and staff. When the last gate electronically opened before me, I moved through, and then it was closed behind abruptly. As I observed the view in front of me, I saw two floors of cells, which bore the name of each inmate at the top of each cell door. I passed my eyes over the names to find the inmate I came to meet. I had previously seen his photo on TV and online, but this would be the first time I would see him face to face. I was not sure what to expect to find because I knew that he was shot when he was arrested and from my experience working in prisons, I know that prison life changes people. I read his name across his cell and I walked slowly toward him with his visual in my mind as a body builder and a handsome young man. As I approached the cell and peered into the big window of his door, I was surprised to see a small man in a wheelchair moving from the back of the room toward me. A guard approached and opened the small window on the door.

I began a conversation with the frail looking person behind the door through this small window. I asked his name, because I doubted if I was speaking to the right person. He confirmed his name and we began to talk. I introduced myself and asked if he wanted to discuss a particular topic, if he had any requests or questions. He was very humble and down, but suddenly he looked at me with sharp eyes and said in a firm voice, “Yes, I have a question! What is the purpose of life?” His question shocked me because I expected questions about the purpose of my visit with him, as this was our first meeting. I replied, “What do you mean?” He continued, “What is the reason behind human existence? What did God aim by creating us? What is the meaning of our life? What are the

objectives that we need to achieve when we live on this earth? Why did God put us here? Moreover, why should we continue? To do what? And for what?”

I was confused by his line of questioning because I could not understand why he was concerned about the purpose of life while his life is almost over and he awaited his execution. I quietly asked, “Are you afraid of death?” He answered me with a tone as if I were stupid and said “No! I am ready for death, but I am instead more afraid of life. I was sentenced to death, but according to the law, my case could be appealed. I am more concerned about receiving a life sentence to life of imprisonment.” Puzzled, I asked, “So why do you ask about the purpose of life?” He patiently explained, “Look! My life is over, but I am not dead. Therefore, I want to see if I have achieved the objectives that I was created to achieve. I want to judge myself before God judges me. I want to know if I will be in a good place after death or not. I am more concerned about the hereafter than life itself.”

Before our meeting in person, I thought that my job was to help him confess his crime and find forgiveness. However, after our meeting, I realized that my job would be more difficult and complicated than Sister Helen Prejean’s in the movie “*Dead Man Walking*.” Yes, both inmates, the one in the movie and the one I went to see, were both awaiting execution after receiving a death sentence for murder. However, I noted major differences between the two individuals. The person I was working with is an intelligent person, well educated, multicultural, an insatiable reader, and had a great professional career. He did not need anyone to help him confess his crime or to seek forgiveness as he did not deny his crime or the role he played in the death of others. Moreover, he was proud of what he had done but was uncertain as to whether or not God approved of his actions and deemed them as a good deed as he believed. Everything about him seemed fine on the outside but I believed that the problem was on the inside.

While it is logical to ask these types of questions about the purpose of life, we do not often ask them when life is going as we will it, we simply enjoy living. However, when life goes

differently than we thought, we begin to question the purpose of our existence. We are seeking something worth surviving and fighting for, something that connects us to life when we do not enjoy it. We are in truth trying to find something that keeps us from suicidal thoughts or depression. We need something that is greater than our challenges to look forward to that we might weather our storms. Actually, when we care about life, we do not typically ask about its purpose. Only when we do not care about life, we begin introspection and ask about our purpose in this existence. That means this inmate did not care about life, and that scared me!

Two years later, I began asking the same question about the purpose of life. Not because I hated my life, but rather because I love it and I see life as a limited opportunity that I do not want to miss or waste away! At this time in my life, I had achieved one of my professional goals to teach in a University. I was professionally successful and earning a good living. However, my personal life felt empty. My wife had left me, my daughter never called me unless she had a problem, and my son only spoke to me when he wanted money. I began to ask myself the question, “What is the benefit of being professionally and financially successful if you are failure personally? Why do you try to make money for others who care only about your money but do not care about you?” I had believed that if I have a good position and make good money, I would be able to enjoy life more. I did not find that to be true in my case.

Chapter Two

Does Life Have a Purpose?

Is there a purpose?

Is there a reason for our existence? Are there objectives we need to achieve? Do human beings have a designated purpose or do we just enjoy life as a limited chance and endless continuation? Do we just live and die without any meaning?

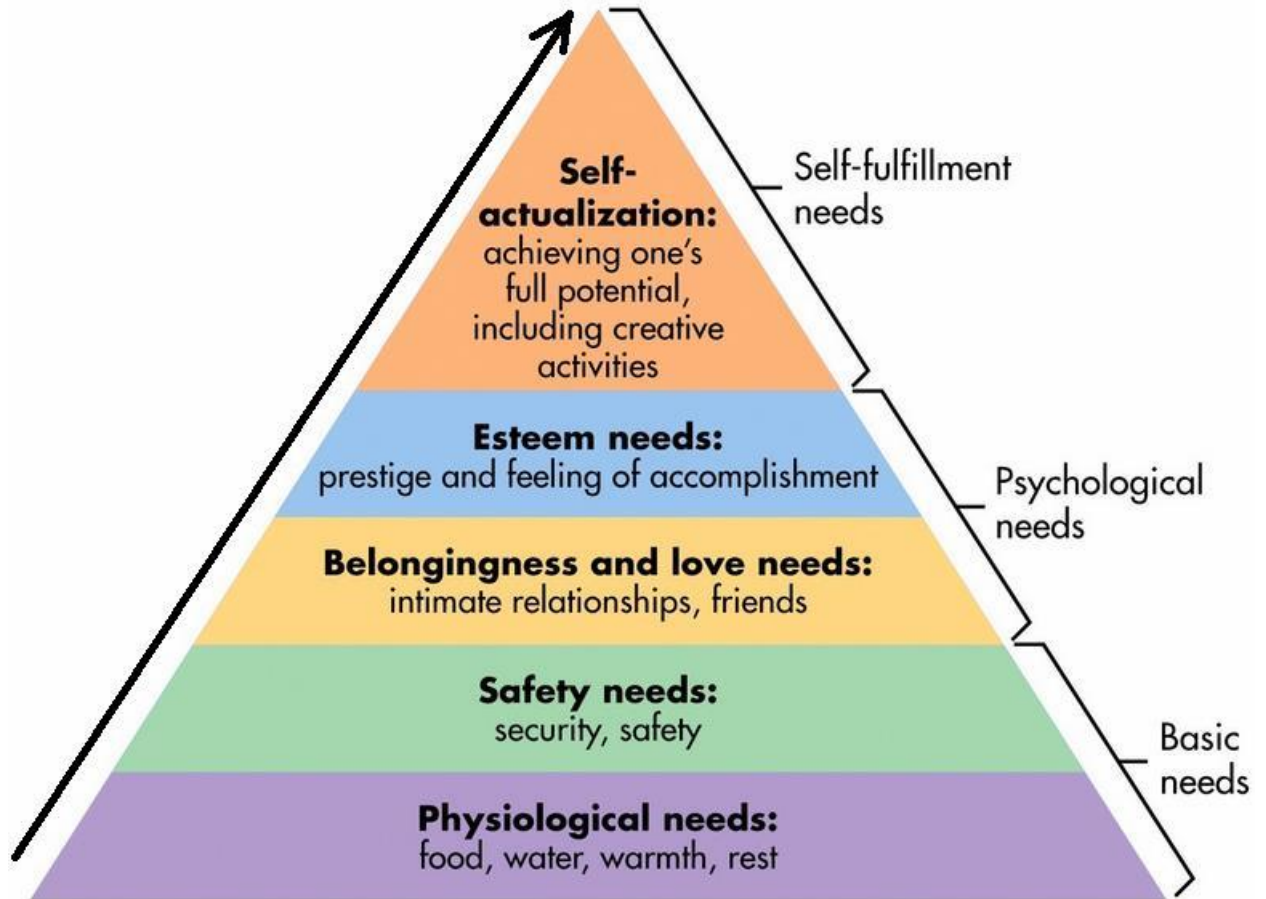
The nihilists argue that life does not have any objective meaning, purpose, or intrinsic value. This idea is very dangerous. It means there is no inherent morality; accepted moral values are abstractly contrived; knowledge is not possible; reality does not actually exist, and there are no necessary norms, rules, or laws.

If they are correct, why do we fight so hard to survive? What attaches us to life when we cannot enjoy it? What keeps us from committing suicide when depression or disasters strike? Where do we find the fortitude to withstand our challenges if we do not believe we have a greater purpose?

There is a purpose that motivates us for survival, gives us a sense of connectedness regardless of what happens, and fortifies us to face our challenges.

Why do we need to find it?

We need to find a reason to continue our life. Yes, it is a need, but not a physical need. Maslow's hierarchy of needs explains that humans' needs are not just physical needs, as figure 1 explains. First, we need to secure our survival by providing what is basic and necessary, such as air, food, water and shelter. With survival secure, we look for the meaning and purpose of life. The physical needs are common between us and the animals, but searching for our purpose makes us humans.



(Figure 1, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs)

We become frustrated and depressed when we feel we are living a life without meaning. That explains why some people commit suicide even though they have everything others wish, such as money, power, and fame...etc. What is the value of a pen that does not write or a car without wheels or television without a screen? We perceive that there is no value if the objectives are not being fulfilled.

How can we find it?

Can you answer the question about the purpose of life secularly, without religion? An individual can secularly answer the question about his own life purpose, but I think there is no secular answer to the question about the purpose of humans' life. When we live only from a secular

vantage, is that not when we feel the emptiness of true purpose? Living and thinking on surface levels is one of the greatest sources of pain and doubt. It is only with a deeper connecting that we feel more whole and complete.

Like the nihilists, when existentialist philosophers ignore the Creator, they see life as meaningless and absurd, and consider that individuals are solely responsible for giving their life purpose and meaning. The difference between the nihilists and the existentialists is that the existentialist proposed that each individual - not the human race - is solely responsible for giving meaning to life and living it passionately and sincerely. Figure 2 compares the different answers to the question about the purpose of life.

Answers to the question about the purpose of life		
Secular answers		Religious and spiritual answer
Nihilist	Existentialist	
There is no purpose.	Every individual is solely responsible for giving his life a purpose.	There is a purpose for the human existence.

(Figure 2, Answers to the question about the purpose of life)

Can we find the purpose of our existence without considering the Founder that created existence? Did God create us for an aim or did He forget about us after we were created? Does God care about us?

In many verses, the Quran denies that God created us in play, aimlessly, or uselessly, as stated in the following verses:

<p style="text-align: right;">وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ</p> <p>And We did not create the heaven and earth and that between them in play. (Quran 21:16)</p>
--

And this verse too:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ۖ

And We did not create the heaven and the earth and that between them aimlessly. (Quran 38:27)

In the following verse, the Quran uses an interrogative discourse to declare the same meaning.

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا

Then did you think that We created you uselessly?" (Quran 23:115)

So, if our life has a purpose, what is it? Why did God create us? To approach an answer to these questions, I think we need to go back to the creation story to see why God created us from the beginning.

Chapter Three

Creation Story

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ . وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ . قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ . قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَلَّمَا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ . وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ . وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ . فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ . فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ . قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَلَمَّا يَأْتِينَكُمْ مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ .

Behold, your Lord said to the angels:

- "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a vicegerent (successive authority)."

They said:

- "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?"

God said:

- "Indeed, I know what you do not know."

And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He showed them to the angels and said:

- "Tell Me the names of these, if you are truthful."

They said:

- "Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise."

He said:

- "O Adam, tell them their names."

And when he had told them their names, He said,

- "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing?"

And behold, We said to the angels:

- "Prostrate to Adam";

So, they prostrated, except for Satan. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers. And We said:

- "O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in the Garden and eat therefrom in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers."

But Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been. And We said:

- "Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth an abode and enjoyment for a while."

Then Adam received from his Lord [some] words, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, it is He who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful. We said:

- "Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve."

(Quran 2:30-38)

Chapter Four

Dr. Lang's View

Unlike western cultures, eastern cultures do not tend to use “Whole picture” perception where the scene, image, or situation is "taken in" all at once. Instead, easterners obtain understanding through analysis of the discrete components or elements that comprise it. Therefore, most Islamic scholars tried to explain the different Quranic verses separately.

In his lecture “Purpose of Life”, Dr. Jeffrey Lang read the Quranic creation story through western culture’s lense in attempt to present a “whole picture” story. He did not invent a new interpretation of the Quranic story, but he was able to present Quranic interpretations in a manner that was a “whole” perspective by connecting the verses together to look at the whole story.

As a former Catholic, he used comparative methodologies to correlate common events and their different meanings from the Bible and the Quran.

In addition, as a mathematic professor, he used western philosophical methods of analysis and assemblage. He analyzed the Quranic discourse of the story to be able to assemble the meanings that answer the two questions of, “Why did God create us?” and “What makes humans qualified to fulfill our Godly designed purpose?”

Purpose of Humans’ Existence

Before God created man, He had determined our purpose and where this purpose take place.

إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

Indeed, I will make upon the earth “khalifah”. (Quran 2:30)

God did not ask the angels whether to create man or not. Rather He informed them because they have jobs and tasks to do with this creature. For example, some angels protect people from death until its

decreed time. Other angels keep track of every good and bad deed that each person performs; a third brings down blessings; and a fourth parts the soul from the body of the dead.

Linguisticly, “Khalifah” is an Arabic word that means "successor", "steward", or "deputy." It is derived from the word “Khal-fa” which means “behind.” Terminologically, “Khalifah” is the caliph who succeeded Prophet Muhammad in leading the Muslim nation, or the one that God selects to succeed Him on the earth.

Why did God call mankind “khalifah”? In his famous commentary on the Qur'an, the exegete “Ibn Kathir” mentioned the following three interpretations as answers to this question:

- 1- Mankind inhabits the earth, constructs it and reproduces generation after generation, century after century, as God said:

وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ

and He makes you “Khulafaa” of the earth. (Quran 27:62)

“Khulafaa” is the plural of “khalifah,” and the last verse means God makes mankind successors, viceroys, inheritors, succeeding each other, and generations coming after generations, replacing each other. Since they succeed each other, they have to die, because the new generations will replace the old generations. This meaning is individual or generationally obituary.

- 2- Mankind succeeded another creature on the earth. God swept this creature out of existence and replaced them by mankind. Accordingly, the angels measured what humans will do with what another creature did, they predicted the humans will cause corruption and shed blood on the earth. So, they were wondering about the purpose of repeating the same trial again. This meaning is an obituary for the whole human race.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ. إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ. وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ

O mankind, you are those in need of God, while God is the One Free of need, the worthy of all praise. If He wills, He could blot you out and bring forth a new creation. And that is not difficult for Allah. (Quran 35:15- 17)

3- Mankind succeeds God in his power in managing the earth. God gave a part of his absolute power to the man, and He made everything on the earth subject to the humans. So, everything interacts and respond to the human actions. He rubs the stones so the fire is ignited, and he waters the seeds so they grow plants and produce fruits.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ

Do you not see that God has subjected to you whatever is on the earth? (Quran 22:65)

However, the man is deceived by how the earth interacting to him, and forgets God who subjected it to him.

كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُفٍ. أَن رَّاهُ اسْتَعْصَمَ. إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَىٰ.

No! [But] indeed, man transgresses all bounds,

Because he sees himself as self-sufficient.

Indeed, to your Lord is the return. (of all). (Quran 96:6-8)

Also, Mankind succeeds God in his power in ruling His creatures with justice on the earth.

“Khalifa” here is not the whole mankind, but only those who can fulfill their purpose. This divinely connected representative of God embodies the divine attributes of mercy and compassion to the world. For example, Prophet David, as the Quran said, was a khalifah, which means a king who was enjoining what is right and forbidding the wrong.

يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

"O David, indeed We have made you khalifah upon the earth, so judge between the people in truth and do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of God." (38:26)

So, which interpretation is correct? All of them could be correct. God is perfect and His speech is perfect, so it could be interpreted in more than one correct way.

When God informed the angels about His new creature, He did not determine only our purpose. He determined also where this purpose takes place. Based on that, our role is to be God's representative,

vicegerent, emissary and successive authority, and this role takes place on the earth. So, our purpose is to rule and serve the earth in God's name.

Multiplicity of views is a healthy phenomenon even before Adam was created. The angels asked God about the wisdom of creating such creatures since they will cause trouble in the earth and spill blood. Their question expressed opposition to the creation of the humans because they predicted evil deeds. They could not foresee the power of our goodness.

قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ

They said:

- "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?"

The Creator did not scold the angels because they expressed their opinion on the creating of Adam. Rather, He explained to them the limitations of their knowledge compared to His knowledge. Yes, humans would cause corruption on earth and shed blood. But that is just one side of humans... the evil side. However, as humans have another side, a good side that we cannot deny, and our lives would be too difficult without it.

إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ.

"Indeed, I know what you do not know....and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing?"

So, God knows about our capacity for righteousness that the angels could not predict.

Humans' Qualifications

What are our qualifications to be God's representatives on the earth? Actually, God gave us some tools that help us grow ourselves throughout our lives on the earth, to fulfill this role (as His representatives), and to prepare us to enter the next stage of life (the hereafter). Dr. Lang noticed three of these tools in the creation story; they are intellect, free will and suffering.

Reason and Intellect

God honored humans with reason. He preferred them over His other creatures by giving them this divine grace... the mind, as an intelligent tool for learning. This intelligent tool helped Adam to be creative and name the things while the angels could not. That is why He commanded the angels to prostrate to Adam,

Because God favored Adam, He endowed him with His knowledge and asked the angels to prostrate to him.

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ . قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا^٥
إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ . قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ^٦ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنَّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا
كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ . وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ

And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He showed them to the angels and said:

- "Tell Me the names of these, if you are truthful."

They said:

- "Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise."

He said:

- "O Adam, tell them their names."

And when he had told them their names, He said,

- "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing?"

And behold, We said to the angels:

- "Prostrate to Adam";

Freedom of Choice and Free Will

The angels did not have any choice whether to prostrate to Adam or not when God commanded them to. On the other hand, Adam chose to eat from the tree when God forbade it. That means he had free will to

choose between listening to God's command and submitting to Satan's seduction. So, the forbidden tree was not the tree of knowledge or the tree of eternity. It was just a tree to test Adam's ability to choose. That is why the Quran describes Adam and Eve's eating from the forbidden tree, as a slip... just a slip, not the greatest sin in human history, the original sin, or humanity's sin. They just ate a piece of fruit. This slip did not challenge God at all. God is self-sufficient. He was neither angry nor jealous. God is the most merciful and compassionate. He accepted their repentance.

This slip was the sign that proved Adam and Eve ready to go to the earth that they were already created for. Remember, in the beginning of the story before God created Adam, he had said that He would make him to live upon the earth, not in the Garden.

إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

"Indeed, I will make upon the earth a vicegerent (successive authority)." (Quran 2:30)

However, God let Adam and Eve live in the garden until they were be ready for the earth. Therefore, life on the earth is not a punishment. Actually, God described it as an abode and enjoyment for a while.

وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ .

You will have upon the earth an abode and enjoyment for a while."

Challenges and Sufferings

However, why did God tell Adam and Eve the following verse when they left the garden for the earth?

اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ

Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another. (Quran 2:36)

Why is there conflict? Conflict is an important device in any developmental process. It is the challenge that forces us to leave our comfort zones and step into new zones. In philosophy, dialectic is a method comprising stages of development through a conflict between opposing forces.

وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

And if it were not for God checking [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted, but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds. (Quran 2:251)

The conflict between good and bad distinguishes both. It reveals the evil and makes people hate it. It clarifies what is good and what is bad when people get confused sometimes, or when the evil becomes more accepted and familiar.

وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَهْذَمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَن يَنْصُرُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ

And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of God is much mentioned. And God will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, God is Powerful and Exalted in Might. (Quran 22:40)

However, this conflict is painful. Why do we suffer? We suffer because we do not always know what is right until we chose what is wrong and suffer the consequences of it. Therefore, suffering is a very important part of our growth journey. Through suffering, we become stronger, humbler and more submissive to God, develop patience, and remember that it is God's Will, not ours that controls the worlds. God wants us to submit ourselves to his will by our choice.

II. Our Purpose

Chapter Five

Why were We Created?

To Represent God

As we mentioned in the last chapter, God created Man to be His representative, vicegerent, emissary and successive authority on the earth to establish His law and reclaim the earth, which mean to populate, utilize, cultivate, erect, construct and build on it, as the Quran said:

اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ هُوَ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا

Worship God: you have no other god but Him. It is He Who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein. (Quran 11:61)

The conflict of our life is between ambition and contentment. On one side, we aspire to develop and better our life. On the other hand, time we should accept God's decisions for us. How can we be ambitious without greed, content without laziness, and satisfied with God's judgment without passiveness? Many people fail to solve this equation. That is why God said about the disbelievers of Mecca:

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۖ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا
وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۖ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those before them? They were superior to them in strength: they tilled the soil and populated it in greater numbers than these have done: there came to them their messengers with Clear (Signs). (Which they rejected, to their own destruction): It was not God Who wronged them, but they wronged their own souls. (Quran 30:9)

That is the role of humans on the earth, to rule the earth in the name of God. However, what does that mean? Look, into the following two examples.

In the National Election, we elect someone from each state to be our representative in the Capital of Washington, D.C. We elect them to this high position and pay their salaries from our taxes so they can focus

on the job we send them to do. However, of course, some representatives forget about the people who elected them and focus on political deals, personal agendas and business interests once they get there.

When the government sends an ambassador to a foreign country, they give him instructions to follow to be a good representative of their country and to honor the laws in that country. In the same way, God has subjected everything on the earth for us to represent Him.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا

It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth. (Quran 2:29)

Representing God on the earth does not mean ruling, governance or to managing people's lives. It is a way of life that tries to please God by having the sense of responsibility for all the blessings and boons that God offers us on this earth.

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned. (Quran 17:36)

Prophet Muhammad defined the Muslims as the one who does not use God's blessings (such as his body and senses) to hurt others.

أَخْبَرَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ ابْنِ عَجَلَانَ، عَنِ الْقَعْقَاعِ بْنِ حَكِيمٍ، عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ النَّاسُ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُ مَنْ أَمِنَهُ النَّاسُ عَلَى دِمَائِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ " .

It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that:

The Messenger of God [SAW] said: "The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the people are safe, and the believer is the one from whom the people's lives and wealth are safe."

Grade : **Sahih** (Darussalam)

Reference : Sunan an-Nasa'i 4995

In-book reference : Book 47, Hadith 11

English translation : Vol. 6, Book 47, Hadith 4998

In addition, Quran emphasizes the responsibility of the word.

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ. تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ
الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ . وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ

Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord. And Allah presents examples for the people that perhaps they will be reminded. And the example of a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability.
(Quran 14:24-26)

The Arabic words for “Ask”, “Question” and “Responsibility” are from one root, < س - أ - ل > or < S - A - L >; because if you are trusted to be responsible for something you would be asked about it: Did you care for it or did you waste it?

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو النُّعْمَانِ، حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ، عَنْ أَيُّوبَ، عَنْ نَافِعٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ،
فَالْإِمَامُ رَاعٍ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَهِيَ مَسْئُولَةٌ، وَالْعَبْدُ رَاعٍ عَلَى مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ وَهُوَ
مَسْئُولٌ، أَلَا فَكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ "

Narrated `Abdullah bin `Umar:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Everyone of you is a guardian and everyone of you is responsible (for his wards). A ruler is a guardian and is responsible (for his subjects); a man is a guardian of his family and responsible (for them); a wife is a guardian of her husband's house and she is responsible (for it), a slave is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible (for that). Beware! All of you are guardians and are responsible (for your wards).

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 5188

In-book reference : Book 67, Hadith 122

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 7, Book 62, Hadith 116

That is why God will ask us on judgement day about the blessing that He provided for us in the worldly life.

وعن أبي برزة -براء ثم زاي- نضلة بن عبيد الأسلمي، رضي الله عنه، قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "لا تزول قدما عبد يوم القيامة حتى يسأل عن عمره فيما أفناه، وعن علمه فيما فعل فيه، وعن ماله من أين اكتسبه، وفيما أنفقه، وعن جسمه فيما أبلاه" ((رواه الترمذي وقال: حديث حسن صحيح)).

Abu Barzah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:

Messenger of God (ﷺ) said, "Man's feet will not move on the Day of Resurrection before he is asked about his life, how did he consume it, his knowledge, what did he do with it, his wealth, how did he earn it and how did he dispose of it, and about his body, how did he wear it out."

[At-Tirmidhi].

Arabic/English book reference : Book 1, Hadith 407

In addition, we are advised to not waste His blessings and boons.

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى، حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ لَهْيَعَةَ، عَنْ حُيَيِّ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْمَعَاذِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ الْحُبُلِيِّ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ -صلى الله عليه وسلم- مَرَّ بِسَعْدٍ وَهُوَ يَتَوَضَّأُ فَقَالَ " مَا هَذَا السَّرَفُ " . فَقَالَ أَفِي الْوُضُوءِ إِسْرَافٌ قَالَ " نَعَمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَى نَهْرٍ جَارٍ " .

It was narrated from 'Abdullah bin 'Amr that:

The Messenger of God passed by Sa'd when he was performing ablution, and he said: 'What is this extravagance?' He said: 'Can there be any extravagance in ablution?' He said: 'Yes, even if you are on the bank of a flowing river.'

Sunan Ibn Majah - Grade: Da'if (Darussalam)

English reference : Vol. 1, Book 1, Hadith 425

Arabic reference : Book 1, Hadith 460

Our lusts and desires are necessary for survival. If we do not desire food, drink and sex, our species would be extinct. However, exaggerated means to feeding desires is very dangerous. This way makes us like animals, and prevent us from representing God and following His instructions and law. As humans, we need set and fix standards that show us the limit between necessary and exaggerated desires.

We need to ask ourselves whether we consider God when we use His blessings and boons to feed our desires. Do we feed our desires in any way or only in the way that does not take us away of representing God and performing the mission that we were created for? That is the test of our life. For example, you need good health to feed your desire for sex, and you can feed this desire by responsible way (marriage) or non-responsible way (adultery). Figure 3 explains the responsible and non-responsible use of God's blessings to feed your desires

We use God's blessings	To feed our desires	In	
		Responsible way	Non responsible way
Good health	Sex	Marriage	Adultery

(Figure 3. Responsible and non-responsible ways to feed your desires.)

God distinguished these ways of using His blessings to feed our desires.

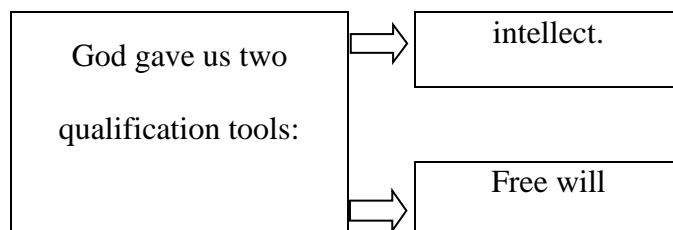
فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَى . وَآثَرَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا . فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى . فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى . وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَى . فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى

So as for he who transgressed. And preferred the life of the world, then indeed, Hellfire will be [his] refuge. But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge. (Quran 79:37-41)

Why us?

Of course, we will not elect just anyone to represent us in the capital and a government chooses carefully who they hire as an ambassador. Those chosen for these types of positions should be qualified and trustworthy.

In the same way, God gave us tools to qualify and enable us to be His representatives. We see two of these tools in the creation story; they are intellect and free will, as figure 4 explains. We will study these qualifications in chapter six and chapter seven.



(Figure 4. Humans' qualification tools.)

Why to Represent God?

Why does God want us to represent Him on the earth? God the Almighty is above everything. He is established over His Throne that is located above the heavens.

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ

The Most Merciful [who is] above the Throne established. (Quran 20:5)

So where is His Throne?

أَأَمِنْتُمْ مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ

Do you feel secure that He who [holds authority] in the heaven would not cause the earth to swallow you and suddenly it would sway? (Quran 67:16)

The word “heaven”, in the previous verse, could refer to the state of loftiness because God has the absolute superiority. However, the word “heaven” could also refer to the well-known heavens or skies, then God is over them. He is above all of His creation, and exalted from settling in places. He surrounds everything, and there is nothing that surrounds Him.

So, can we say that God is everywhere since the Quran said that He is with us wherever we are?

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

The answer for the previous question is “No”, because the previous verse means that God is with us wherever we may be by His Knowledge, not by His existence.

All existents have a time that begins and ends, and they have a place that limits. Therefore, all perceptions of the human reason are surrounded by a specific time and place. We cannot imagine the absolute, the timeless, or the nowhere. Can the sun enter a hole? Could you pour the ocean into a cup? It is illogical to ask about a place where the existence and presence of the founder who created the time the place and all creatures. His creativity is in all of his creatures, his knowledge absorbs all times, and his qualities are everywhere.

We are just one creature of many creatures on one planet of many planets of one galaxy of many galaxies of the universe that is created by God. Who are we to know what God wants except what He told us? He just told us that He created us to be His representatives on the earth. Why? Maybe because He is not present on the earth? We really do not know. At least we know our task.

Chapter Six

The Reason in Islam

Is there a conflict between religion and the thinking, rational mind? The atheists say: “The mind is enough, so we do not need religion,” and the fundamental conservative religious say: “We cannot use our mind in religion.” So, the question is this: “Does giving credence to religion disqualify the rational mind from discovering and judging truth? And does giving credence to the mind disqualify religion as truth?” Are religion and the mind mutually exclusive?

Religion does not exempt the mind

Giving credence to religion does not exempt the mind from discovering or confirming truth. Religion needs the mind in order for religion to be understood. That is why Islam encourages people to use their reason to think.

God honored humans with the innate capacity for reason. He showed His preference for them over His other creatures by giving them this divine grace... the mind, as an intelligent tool for learning.

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference. (Quran 17:70)

That is why He asked the angels to prostrate in front of Adam when Adam was being taught concepts and the words used to name them. That is why the first verse in John's Gospel was "In the beginning was the Word", and why was the first word revealed from the Quran was “Read”:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ . خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ . اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ . الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ . عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Read! In the name of your Lord who created. He created the human from a clot (of blood). Read! And your Lord is the most Generous. Who taught (writing) by the pen. He taught the human that which he

did not know. No! (But) indeed, man transgresses all bounds. Because he sees himself self-sufficient.

Indeed, to your Lord is the return. (Quran 96:1-5)

God praises those who use their minds to realize, think, contrive and reflect.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ . الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ
وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding.

Who remember God while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire. (Quran 3:190-191)

In addition, God considers wisdom to be one of His best blessings with which He blesses humans.

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَن يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ۚ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

He gives wisdom to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good. And none will remember except those of understanding. (Quran 2:269)

Also, the Quran exhorts and demands us to use our minds to realize, think, contrive and reflect.

قُلْ انظُرُوا مَاذَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَمَا تُغْنِي الْآيَاتُ وَالنَّذْرُ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

Say, "Observe what is in the heavens and earth." But of no avail will be signs or warnings to a people who do not believe. (Quran 10:101)

In contrast, the Quran disparages those who fail in using their minds.

أُولَٰئِكَ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ ۚ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكَافِرُونَ .
أُولَٰئِكَ يَسِيرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُونَ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَنَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۚ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

Do they not contemplate within themselves? God has not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them except in truth and for a specified term. And indeed, many of the people, in [the matter of] the meeting with their Lord, are disbelievers.

Have they not traveled through the earth and observed how the end of those before them was? They were greater than them in power, and they plowed the earth and built it up more than they have built it up, and their messengers came to them with clear evidences. And Allah would not ever have wronged them, but they were wronging themselves. (Quran 30:8-9)

Furthermore, Islam makes the human mind the subject of His mandates, so that the discourse of legitimacy will apply only to the sane, while there is no commission or responsibility for those who have “lost” their minds.

رفع القلم عن ثلاثة عن النائم حتى يستيقظ وعن الصغير حتى يكبر وعن المجنون حتى يعقل أو يفيق

"The pen has been lifted from three: From the sleeper until he wakes up, from the minor until he grows up, and from the insane until he comes back to his senses or recovers." (Sunan an-Nasa'i 3432)

So then, how can we use the mind to understand religion? Can we use it to understand the Quran, explain its meanings, exegete its juristic rules, and interpret its senses, references, implications? Actually, God commanded us to do just it.

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from [any] other than God, they would have found within it much contradiction. (Quran 4:82)

In fact, that was what older generations of Muslims were confident enough to do before the Islamic civilization got frozen. The use of the rational mind to form an opinion-oriented explanation is one of two main methods employed to explain the meanings of the Quran. This method is not interpretation by raw opinion; on the contrary, mere opinion is prohibited:

حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ بْنُ وَكِيعٍ، حَدَّثَنَا سُؤَيْدُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو الْكَلْبِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَوَانَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ الْأَعْلَى، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ جُبَيْرٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " اتَّقُوا الْحَدِيثَ عَنِّي إِلَّا مَا عَلِمْتُمْ فَمَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَى مُتَعَمِّدًا فَلْيَتَّبِعُوا مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَنْ قَالَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ بِرَأْيِهِ فَلْيَتَّبِعُوا مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ " .

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Beware of narrating from me except what I taught you, for whoever lies about me on purpose, then let him take his seat in the Fire. And whoever says (something) about the Qur'an according to his (own) opinion, then let him take his seat in the Fire." (At-Tirmidhi. Vol. 5, Book 44, Hadith 2951)

So, opinions must be based on the reliable sources of Islamic knowledge, such as using another portion of the Quran, or sayings of Prophet Muhammad or his Companions. Also, the Quran may be interpreted based on linguistic and historical sources, and it may be interpreted to preserve the general goals of the Islamic law, which are the preservation of religion, life, lineage, intellect or property. So, any interpretation that threatens these goals may be discarded or ruled otherwise in order to secure these goals. The most distinctive feature of valid scholarly judgment is the inclusion of the reasoned opinion [*ra'i*] of the commentator, thus forming an objective view on Quranic verses.

Also, when we explain the meanings of the Quran, we need to take into account the cultural and social environment to which it has been revealed, and also take into account the conditions of the scholars' own time and place when understanding that scholar's commentary. The universality of the Qur'an must make us realize that we cannot confine verses to a single time interval, but rather interpret and apply them according to the needs of our time.

That is why Prophet Muhammad did not explain the whole Quran. He just explained some verses when his companions asked him about them. Since Prophet Muhammad did not fully explain the whole Quran, it leaves open the possibility of different valid interpretations, especially in new historical contexts.

Yes, Prophet Muhammad applied the Quran in his life, as an example for us to apply it in our life. But the problem is that our cultural and social life is different from his life, and that is why we need the reason. That is why protecting the mind is one of the five goals of the Islamic law (Shariah). All the teachings of Islamic law aim to preserve and protect five major benefits and necessities that are essential to

the honorable human life. They are religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property. Also, the reason is one of the sources of the Islamic law's rules.

Yes, Prophet Muhammad applied the Quran in his life, as an example for us to apply it in our life. But the conflict is that our cultural and social life is different from his life, and that is why we need to use reason. That is why protecting the mind is one of the five goals of the Islamic law (*Shari'ah*). All the teachings of Islamic law aim to preserve and protect five major benefits and necessities that are essential to the honorable human existence. Again, they are religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property. And again, reason is one of the tools or resources used in extracting the rules of Islamic law.

The mind does not exempt religion

On the other hand, the mind does not exempt religion; because religion is a standard quality control inspector to protect the mind from delinquency.

Islam sets straight and thus frees the mind, and removes all obstacles and barriers of the mind, whenever these barriers seduce the mind from within, or dominate the mind from outside. Some of these barriers seduce the mind from within when the person loves an illusion or misguided people. It is a problem of the mind when a person follows his predecessors or his religious authorities blindly. As a result, he disrupts and deactivates his mind so as to be in alignment with those traditions, customs and conventional ways of his fathers and grandfathers, or in order to submit to those who made him subject—in the name of religion—to a way that does not satisfy either the mind or religion.

Yes, we must be respectful to the righteous ways of our fathers, but being righteous ourselves is different from being misguided by them without understanding their insight. That is why the Quran warned us against turning off our minds and following our predecessor blindly:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا آبَاءَكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَوَلَّيْكُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

O you who have believed, do not take your fathers or your brothers as allies if they have preferred disbelief over belief. And whoever does so among you - then it is those who are the wrongdoers. (Quran 9:23)

In fact, this is actually what the disbelievers do.

إِنَّهُمْ أَفْوَا أَبَاءَهُمْ ضَالِّينَ . فَهُمْ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ يُهْرَعُونَ

Indeed, they found their fathers astray. So, they hastened [to follow] in their footsteps. (Quran 37:69-70)

The customs and traditions of our predecessor provides a comfort zone for us. Staying there — without examining our predecessors' time and place, could allow you to avoid your self-blame or lead to your being irresponsible for your personal mistakes.

وَكَذَلِكَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أَمَةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمْ مُقْتَدُونَ . قَالَ أُولُو حِجْلِكُمْ بِأَهْدَىٰ مِمَّا وَجَدْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَكُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ

And similarly, We did not send before you any warner into a city except that its affluent said, "Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are, in their footsteps, following." [Each warner] said, "Even if I brought you better guidance than that [religion] upon which you found your fathers?" They said, "Indeed we, in that with which you were sent, are disbelievers." (Quran 43:23-24)

Also, some people use their customs and traditions as an excuse to justify their bad deeds.

وَإِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا آبَاءَنَا وَاللَّهُ أَمَرَنَا بِهَا قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

And when they commit an immorality, they say, "We found our fathers doing it, and God has ordered us to do it." Say, "Indeed, God does not order immorality. Do you say about God that which you do not know?" (Quran 7:28)

Nevertheless, the Quran negates and condemns this line of reasoning when it insists that everyone is responsible for his own personal choices, and no one can consider his customs and traditions as an excuse for his mistakes, because following these customs and traditions is an option you chose.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ

And when it is said to them, "Follow what God has revealed," they say, "Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing." Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided? (Quran 2:170)

That is why the Quran blames the disbelievers: because they turn off their reason and reject the truth just to follow their predecessors blindly. The Quran paints this mentality as ignorance.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَىٰ الرَّسُولِ قَالُوا حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا ۖ أَوَلَوْ كَانُوا هُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ

And when it is said to them, "Come to what God has revealed and to the Messenger," they say, "Sufficient for us is that upon which we found our fathers." Even though their fathers knew nothing, nor were they guided? (Quran 5:104)

By way of contrast, God praised Prophet Abraham because he used his reason to examine his people's customs and traditions:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ ۖ إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ۖ قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ أَصْنَامًا فَنَظَّلُ لَهَا عَافِيِينَ ۖ قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُونَكُمْ إِذْ تَدْعُونَ ۖ أَوْ يَنْفَعُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَضُرُّونَ ۖ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا كَذَٰلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ۖ قَالَ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ ۖ أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ الْأَقْدَمُونَ ۖ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَدُوٌّ لِّي إِلَّا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۖ الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ

And recite to them the news of Abraham, when he said to his father and his people, "What do you worship?" They said, "We worship idols and remain to them devoted." He said, "Do they hear you when you supplicate? Or do they benefit you, or do they harm?" They said, "But we found our fathers doing thus." He said, "Then do you see what you have been worshipping, You and your ancient forefathers? Indeed, they are enemies to me, except the Lord of the worlds, Who created me, and He [it is who] guides me. (Quran 26:69-78)

Yes, we have to ask the people of revealed knowledge when we do not know, as the Quran advises us.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رَجَالًا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ ۖ فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

And We sent not before you except men to whom We revealed [Our message]. So ask the people of the message if you do not know. (Quran 16:43)

However, the people of knowledge, who do not get benefit from their own knowledge, cannot benefit others. That is why Islam did not give any authority to the clerics over the consciences of others, nor did He give them any ability to forbid, allow, condemn or forgive. In addition, the Quran alerts us of the consequences of those who have surrendered themselves to the deceit of such clerics:

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides God, and [also] the Messiah, the son of Mary. And they were not commanded except to worship one God; there is no deity except Him. Exalted is He above whatever they associate with Him. (Quran 9:31)

Moreover, Islam insists on removing all obstacles and barriers that can dominate the mind from outside, such as alcohol and other mind-altering substances, as well as authoritarian rule.

That is the very reason why everything that prevents the mind from performing its functions, such as alcohol and drugs, is forbidden in Islam.

Due to fear of tyrannical political leaders, people have often turned off their minds to blindly endorse what their leaders say. Islam encourages these people to resist this authoritarian rule. This is a problem of local circumstances, not a problem of wrongly engaging the mind.

Accordingly, Muslims are to be blamed for submission to tyranny in the place where they continue to live if they are able to leave it but do not do so. If they cannot resist tyrannical authority, then they must try to move to another place far from this authority.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا قَالُوا لَكَ مَاؤَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves - [the angels] will say, "In what [condition] were you?" They will say, "We were oppressed in the land." The angels will say, "Was not

the earth of God spacious [enough] for you to emigrate therein?" For those, their refuge is Hell - and evil it is as a destination. (Quran 4:97)

Figure 5 displays the connection and interplay between religion and the use of reason, the rational mind.

Religion needs the mind		The mind needs religion			
To understand the meanings of the Quran	To exegete the juristic rules	Religion protects the mind from delinquency because of			
		What seduces the mind from within		What dominated the mind from outside	
The use of reason and mind to form an opinion-oriented explanation is one of two main methods to explain the meanings of the Quran.	Reason is one of the sources of Islamic Law.	Following predecessors.	Following religious authority.	Alcohols and drugs.	Authoritarian rule.

(Figure 5. Religion and reason.)

Chapter Seven

Free Will and Freedom of choice

Imagine if you have two sons: one nine years old and one nineteen years old. Neither of these sons wants to go to school. Which one of these sons would you give the freedom to choose? I believe you would pick the nineteen-year-old son; because you trust him more. You know that he has the mental capacity to learn from his experiences and the experiences of others. The nineteen-year son can best choose what is best for him.

Because we have a mind, God trusts us and gave us the freedom of choice.

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

“Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man bears it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.” (Quran 33:72)

We have the choice to worship God or not, follow His instructions or not, but the angels worship God with no choice.

All creatures are subjected to serve God's will. Even though humans cannot challenge God's will, God gave us the freedom to submit ourselves to His will by our choices, not compelled. Adam chose to eat from the tree that God had forbidden. That means he had free will to choose between listening to God's command or submitting to Satan's seduction. However, this free will is not absolute. It operates only within a range that is determined by God, and it cannot expand to operate in other domains. There are many things beyond our sphere of choice or capacity to influence. That is why God challenges us in the following verse:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ إِنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ أَنْ تَنْفُذُوا مِنْ أَقْطَارِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَانْفُذُوا لَا تَنْفُذُونَ إِلَّا بِسُلْطَانٍ

O company of jinn and mankind, if you are able to pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass. You will not pass except by authority [from God]. (Quran 55:33)

We are free in what we know, and we are compelled in what we do not know. Therefore, knowledge frees us. Accumulation, generation and application of knowledge distinguish the human race from any other creatures. It seems that humans are developed, generation after generation, to reach a point. This point could be the judgement day!

Predestination

Does our belief in Predestination (divine decree and will) mean that humans do not have freedom of choice? No, because Predestination (divine decree and will) does not mean fatalism, something which Muslims do not believe. Predestination means prior knowledge, which is the ability to know for sure, in advance what will happen; it does not mean choosing it or causing it to occur. It is exactly like a person on the top of the mountain that can see two cars down below that will be in an accident, without that viewer being a reason or a cause of this accident. Or, it is like an experienced teacher who can tell from the first day in school which student will pass the final exam and who will not.

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ

And whatever strikes you of disaster - it is for what your hands have earned; but He pardons much.

(Quran 42:30)

Of course, the two cars can avoid the accident, if they change their lanes. The slow student can pass the final test, if he pays more attention and study more.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ

Indeed, God will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.

(Quran 13:11)

Freedom of choice means you are free to choose right or wrong. However, it does not mean there is no accountability for your choice. Accountability means that there is a reward for those who chose right, and a punishment for those who chose wrong. Life is like a super market. You are free to choose what you buy, but you will pay for everything you choose. Even in secular laws, you are free to break the traffic

light laws or not. However, if you do it, you will be fined. Therefore, humans are free to choose, but they bear responsibility for their choices.

Religion and Religions

Freedom of religion is a big part of freedom of choice. However, how can a religion guarantee the freedom of religion for those people who do not follow it? Does not every religion believe that other religions are wrong?!! The answer to the last question might be “yes” for all religions except Islam!

Consider these two reasons:

First, Islam is not considered as a new religion. It is the same eternal message revealed through the ages to all of God’s prophets and messengers. Muslims believe that all of God’s prophets, which include Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, brought the same message of pure Monotheism. That is why Islam talks highly and respectfully about people who follow other religions.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Indeed, those who believed and those who were Jews or Christians or Sabeans - those who believed in God and the Last Day and did righteousness - will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve. (Quran 2:62)

There are some interpreters who try to interpret these verses to apply only before the time of Prophet Muhammad, but these interpretations ignore the fact that the following verse is in the present tense.

وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ خَاشِعِينَ لِلَّهِ لَا يَشْتُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

And indeed, among the People of the Scripture [the Bible] are those who believe in God and what was revealed to you and what was revealed to them, [being] humbly submissive to God. They do not exchange the verses of God for a small price. Those will have their reward with their Lord. Indeed, God is swift in account. (Quran 3:199)

Every religion tells its followers that they are the only people who are saved and are going to the Paradise, but Islam tells Muslims something different.

لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِي أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَ بِهِ وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا

Paradise is not [obtained] by your wishful thinking nor by that of the People of the Scripture [the Bible]. Whoever does a wrong will be recompensed for it, and he will not find besides God a protector or a helper. (Quran 4:123)

In addition, Quran advises Muslims to focus on the commonalities, not the differences, with other religions.

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

And do not argue with the People of the Scripture [the Bible] except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are submitted to Him." (Quran 29:46)

Second, being wrong is different than being free. Therefore, humans are free even to be wrong. Why? Because they learn from their mistakes. That is why God forgives those who right their wrongs. But what about those who did not right their wrongs?

وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ فَإِنَّمَا حِسَابُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ

And whoever invokes besides God another deity for which he has no proof - then his account is only with his Lord. Indeed, the disbelievers will not succeed. (Quran 23:117)

It is God's decision, not any Muslim's decision, to forgive or to punish them.

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

And to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. (Quran 3:129)

Freedom of religion means that you are free to choose a religion or no religion at all. However, it does not mean that I need to believe in all religions so as to allow others to make their choice. God Himself does not accept any religious orientation except *submission to God*, which is the meaning of the Arabic word, *Islam*, but he has allowed his creatures to practice all these different religions and beliefs on the earth.

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers. (Quran 3:85)

Like God, I do not need to approve your faith in order for me to permit you to practice it; because not believing in a religion does not mean disallowing it or disrespecting it. God asked Muslims not to insult any religion.

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ زَيْنًا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلُهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا

يَعْمَلُونَ

And do not insult those they invoke other than God, lest they insult God in enmity without knowledge. Thus, We have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do. (Quran 6:108)

It is one of the biggest stereotypes about Islam that Islam was spread by the sword. Yes, there is a Muslim group that killed people just because they refused to be Muslims, but the truth is that freedom of religion is guaranteed in Islam, more than a thousand years ago, before the United Nations was formed. Freedom of religion is guaranteed in the Quran, in Prophet Muhammad's traditions, in the history of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, and in Islamic law (*Shari`ah*). And it is not logical to judge fifteen centuries

of the Islamic history by the last decades. It is not fair to judge two billion Muslims by a few hundred of people claiming to act in the name of Islam.

The Quran

The Quran demonstrates the freedom of choice very clearly in the following verse.

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ

عَلِيمٌ

There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing. (Quran 2:256)

The Muslim scholar “Al-Wahidi” explained, through the following story, the historical context in which this Quranic verse was revealed.

كان لرجل من الأنصار من بني سالم بن عوف ابنان ، فتتصرا قبل أن يبعث النبي - صلى الله عليه وسلم - ثم قدما المدينة في نفر من النصارى يحملون الطعام ، فأتاها أبوهما ، فلزمهما وقال : والله لا أدعكما حتى تسلما ، فأبيا أن يسلما ، فاختصموا إلى النبي - صلى الله عليه وسلم - فقال : يا رسول الله ، أيدخل بعضي النار وأنا أنظر ؟ فأنزل الله عز وجل : (لا إكراه في الدين قد تبين الرشد من الغي) فخلى سبيلهما .

“A man from the Helpers, from amongst the Banu Salim Banu 'Awf, had two sons who had converted to Christianity before the advent of the Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace. [After the migration of the Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, to Medina,] these two sons came to Medina along with a group of Christians to trade in food. Their father went to them and refused to leave them, saying: 'By Allah! I will not leave you until you become Muslim'. They refused to become Muslim and they all went to the Messenger of God, God blesses him and gives him peace, to settle their dispute. The father said: 'O Messenger of God! How can I leave a part of me enter hell fire while I just sit and look?' God, glorious and majestic is He, then revealed (There is no compulsion in religion...) after which he let them go”. (Asbab Al-Nuzul by Al-Wahidi)

Therefore, even our kids, we can raise them up with Islamic values and in Islamic environment, but we cannot force them to be Muslims.

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ

And say, "The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills - let him believe; and whoever wills - let him disbelieve." (Quran 18:29)

Even for the prophet Muhammad, God determined his job to be simply a reminder, not an authoritarian or overseer, so even he could not force any one to be Muslim.

فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ ۚ لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ

So, remind, [O Muhammad]; you are only a reminder. You are not over them a controller. (Quran 88:21-22)

When he was very sad that his uncle had died as a non-Muslim, God told him:

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

Indeed, [O Muhammad], you do not guide whom you like, but God guides whom He wills. And He is most knowing of the [rightly] guided. (Quran 28:56)

The prophet

The Prophet ﷺ applied these Quranic teaching, so he never forced anyone to convert to Islam.

When one of his Companions, Tufail bin `Amr Al-Dausi, asked him to send a military force with him to force his tribe to convert to Islam, the Prophet refused, and told him: "Go back to your people, treat them gently." That is how the Islamic mission should be, and that is how Muslims should invite people to Islam, as the Prophet taught us.

Even when this companion came back to the prophet to complain about his people and ask the prophet to supplicate to God against them, the prophet supplicated to God to guide them,

فَقَامَ طُفَيْلُ بْنُ عَمْرِو الدَّؤُسِيُّ وَأَصْحَابُهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنَّ دَوْسًا عَصَتْ وَأَبَتْ، فَادْعُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْهَا.

فَقِيلَ هَلَكْتَ دَوْسٌ. قَالَ " اللَّهُمَّ اهْدِ دَوْسًا وَأَنْتَ بِهِمْ "

Tufail bin `Amr Ad-Dausi and his companions came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, "O God's Messenger (ﷺ)! The people of the tribe of Daus disobeyed and refused to follow you; so invoke God against them." The people said, "The tribe of Daus is ruined." The Prophet said, "O God! Guide the people of Daus." (Sahih al-Bukhari 2937)

In addition, Prophet Muhammad had treaties that gave non-Muslims the freedom to practice their religion: one with the Jews of Madinah and another one with the Christian of Najran. Not just that, but he also permitted the delegation of Najran (fourteen Christian Chiefs) to pray in his mosque, which they did facing towards the east.

The Rightly Guided Caliphs

The Rightly Guided Caliphs followed the Prophet's traditions in their treatment of non-Muslims. So, the second Caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab, gave to the people of Jerusalem an assurance of safety and security of their persons, their families, and their possessions.

Umar was given a tour of the city, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. When the time for prayer came, the Patriarch invited Umar to pray inside the Church, but Umar declined. Not because the church is not a good place for Muslims to pray, but because he was worried that if he prayed there, later Muslims would use it as an excuse to convert it into a mosque – thereby depriving Christendom of one of its holiest sites. Instead, Umar prayed outside the Church, where a mosque would later be built: The Mosque of Umar.

After 3 years, The Muslims won the war against the Byzantines in Egypt. The Pope of Alexandria (the Coptic Orthodox Church) was exiled by the Roman governor. The leader of the Islamic military expedition sent out a proclamation of safe conduct for the pope and an invitation to return to Alexandria. When he arrived, after thirteen years in concealment, the leader of the Islamic military treated him with respect, and instructed him to resume control over the Coptic Church and to restore their monasteries that had been ruined by the the Byzantines –which still exist as functioning monasteries in the present day.

Islamic law

Muslim scholars consider that the first objective of Islamic law (*Shari`ah*) is to preserve and protect religion. It is forbidden, in Islamic law, to afflict people in their faith or to force them to embrace another religion, even if this other religion is Islam. Furthermore, your Islam is not valid if you convert to Islam just to marry your Musliim spouse, or to gain a worldly benefit.

That is why we can say that the Islamic principle of preserving religion is the equivalent of “Freedom of Religion” in our modern language usage. If “preserving religion” means preserving only the religion of Islam, then why did Prophet Muhammad have treaties that gave non-Muslims the freedom to practice their religion!

More to the point, we can understand the Prophet’s life as a struggle for Freedom of Religion! He left Mecca because he did not have this freedom, and he fought for this right among the peoples conquered by his armies; he did not fight to convert them by force to the Guidance received by him.

Chapter Eight

Why were We Created diverse?

Diversity as mercy

Imagine if all our representatives in the Capital were from one political party! What would happen? Would that not be the beginning of tyranny and dictatorship? What would prevent this party from abusing their power to enslave people or eliminate those who disagree with or challenge them? What would force this party to waive their agenda or negotiate? We need to imagine this scenario to appreciate our diversity and pluralism.

If God is one, why are His representatives so diversified? God is absolute and limitless while people are limited. The unlimited one cannot be represented by a limited one, but can be represented collectively by those who represent various aspects and attributes of God such as knowledge, power, compassion, mercy or establishing laws. If one representative goes astray, the others can correct him. If there was only one representative of God, he would have absolute authority to deem others wrong or worthless. God is merciful; therefore, He made representation collective.

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۚ وَلَا يَرَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ ۚ إِلَّا مَن رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ ۚ وَلِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ

And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community; but they will not cease to differ. Except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He created them." (Quran 11:118-119)

What does God mean by “that” in last verse? Does He mean our differences or his mercy? Did He create us to differ or to get his mercy or both? Which means He created us diverse because of his mercy. Therefore, our diversity came from His mercy.

Some scholars estimated the meaning of this verse based on the absence of the adverb “diverse”, so the interpretation of the verse would be “Except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He created them diverse”.

Diversity as a motivation

A child would call everything "white" until he will see the black color. When you own a piece of land, you will not think about its boundaries unless you have a neighbor that owns the adjacent land and controls your dreams for expanding. Thus, the other is necessary and harmful.

The other is necessary, therefore, God created Eve. In addition, he is harmful; therefore, Cain killed Abel, as the first displacement of the other in the religious history of humankind. Before that, there was a failed attempt by the angels and Satan to displace humans. So, God created Adam, He showed the angels things and said, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful." They said, "We have no knowledge except what You have taught us." He said, "O Adam! Tell them their names", and Adam did it, so the angels knew themselves.

Knowing the other is how we carry out Socrates' advice "know yourself," because the other implicates the self with itself. The other reveals the self's potentials, so he blows up, discourages or urges it to overcome them. In addition, the other invites the self to interact with him, destroy, circumvent, avoid, follow or control him. The absence of the other means that the self's existence is absolute, which mean it is in nothingness.

So, the other is not only necessary for self-knowledge, but also for self-existence, because when I think of the other, I have begun to know my limits and identify my subjects, and because the self is the center and the others are subjects of it. A self without the other is a self without a subject. Even before the creation of Eve, Adam had had the other that He taught him all names.

We are created with different gender, race and nation to know each other and learn from each other, not because some of us are better than others.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

“O humankind We [God] have created you male and female, and made you into communities and tribes, so that you may know one another. Surely the noblest amongst you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you. God is All-Knowing and All-Aware” (Quran 49:13).

Our diversity was meant to be a motivation for us to learn about what we do not know, not a motivation for prejudice. So, if our diversity motivates you to be prejudiced, you deny God's will, defy it and try to change it. If our diversity bothers you, so you hate God's will.

After God had explained the purpose of our diversity, He determined the most noble of us, in His sight, as the most righteous of us.

Diversity as a test

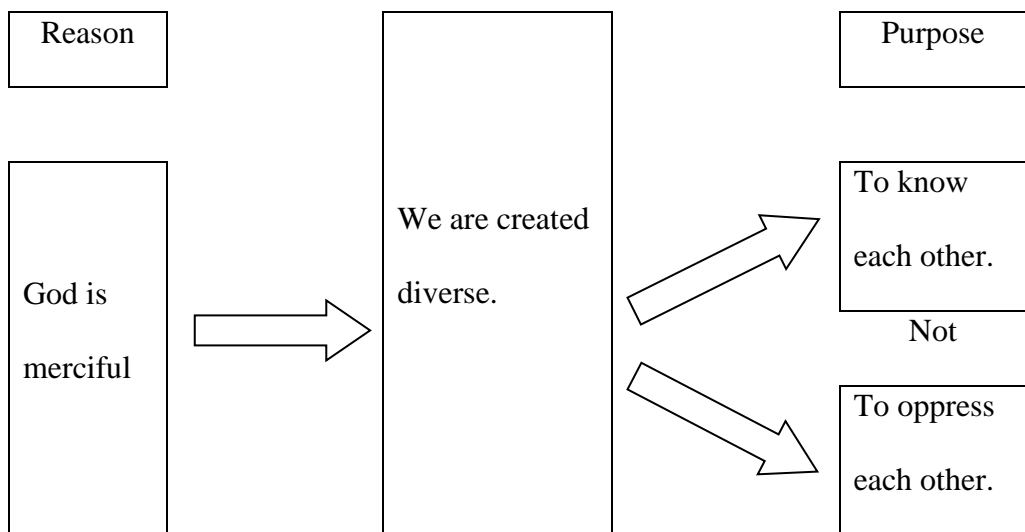
In addition, God made us into many nations to test us.

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ

If God had willed, He would have made you one nation, but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; (Quran 5:48)

How will we use our diversity? Will our diversity be a motive to know each other, as God meant, or will it be motive to oppress each other? Figure 6 explains the reason and purpose of our diversity.

It seems that the humans did not pass this test yet, because the history shows that international relationships are based on conflict and wars more than cooperation, and our personal lives show that the strong use the weak, the smart use the stupid, and the rich use the poor.



(Figure 6. The reason and purpose of our diversity.)

That is why God warned us about hatred, jealousy and selfishness as motives sometimes for people to differ. So being diverse is a normal thing, but some people try to be different than others because they hate them.

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنْذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ۚ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

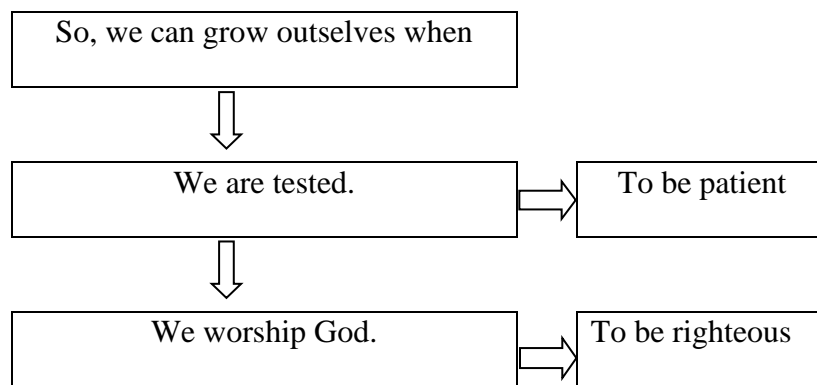
Mankind was [of] one religion [before their deviation]; then God sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed. And none differed over the Scripture except those who were given it - after the clear proofs came to them - out of jealous animosity among themselves. And God guided those who believed to the truth concerning that over which they had differed, by His permission. And God guides whom He wills to a straight path. (Quran 2:213)

III. Our Life

Chapter Nine

Divine Test

Our life is a journey to grow ourselves through suffering and worship. Suffering is a divine test we have when we face our challenges, and worship builds a relationship with our creator. In this chapter, we will focus on suffering as a divine test, and we will focus on worship in chapter 11. (Figure 7 explains how we grow through suffering and worship).



(Figure 7. Our growth through suffering and worship.)

Two divine tests

There are two different types of educational assessment: summative assessment and formative assessment. The summative assessment evaluates student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark. However, the formative assessment monitors student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need work, so they can improve their learning.

In the same way, God assesses us by summative assessment on the judgment day, and by the formative assessment in worldly life everyday. Figure 8 explains the differences between these two assessments.

	There are two different types of educational assessment:	
	Formative assessment.	Summative assessment
	It is to monitor student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need work, so they can improve their learning.	It is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark.
In the same way, God assesses us by	In worldly life everyday.	
	Pleasant	Unpleasant
	Good, ease and prosperity.	Bad, hardship, tribulation and adversity.
	In the judgment day	
	It is an accountability and consequences of our performance in the formative assessment.	

(Figure 8. Summative and formative assessments.)

But why does God assess us? For the same reason teachers assess their students. Sometimes, we need feedback in our spiritual journey. We need motivation to review our ways and to turn us back to God. The final test is on judgment day, when everyone will have his record of his reactions to the daily assessment, to support the decision about his final destination: the garden or hell fire.

أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ . وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ

Do the people think that they will be left to say, "We believe" and they will not be tried? But We have certainly tried those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars. (Quran 21:2-3)

God tests us to sort his people. After each test, God excludes and rules out the failures, until he gets righteous people who can carry His message, to be his vicegerent (successive authority) on earth. That is how divine selection works.

This divine test is very important. God did not give us eternity to assess us. That is why we live a mortal life. There would be no test if we would not die.

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ . الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ

Blessed is He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent - who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed - and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving (Quran 67:1-2)

Everything we face in our life is part of this assessment.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

And it is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days - and His Throne had been upon water - that He might test you as to which of you is best in deed. (Quran 11:7)

How does God assess us? He assesses us by two different ways: a pleasant way and an unpleasant way.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۖ وَنَبْلُوكُمْ بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً ۖ وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ

Every soul will taste death. And We test you with evil and with good as trial; and to Us you will be returned. (Quran 21:35)

Both pleasant and unpleasant events are just a test. They have meant neither that God hates you nor that He prefers you over his creations. They have meant neither that you are a bad person nor a good person. Based on your reaction to these events, you would be a good or bad person.

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا . وَإِنَّا لَجَاعِلُونَ مَا عَلَيْهَا صَعِيدًا جُرُزًا

Indeed, We have made that which is on the earth adornment for it that We may test them [as to] which of them is best in deed. And indeed, We will make that which is upon it [into] a barren ground. (Quran 18:7-8)

Both tests are good for you if you are a believer; because God will reward you if you were grateful when He tested you with good, and if you were patient when He tested you with evil.

عَجَبًا لِأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ لِأَحَدٍ إِلَّا لِلْمُؤْمِنِ إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَاءٌ شَكَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَاءٌ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ "

Strange are the ways of a believer for there is good in every affair of his and this is not the case with anyone else except in the case of a believer for if he has an occasion to feel delight, he thanks (God), thus there is a good for him in it, and if he gets into trouble and shows resignation (and endures it patiently), there is a good for him in it. (Sahih Muslim 2999)

Figure 10 explains the differences between these two tests.

Pleasant Test

The pleasant test can be goodness, ease and prosperity. God would bless you with money, properties, kids, good health, powerful skills, fame or high positions...etc. So, He blesses us to test us: will we deny his blessings or be grateful?

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا . إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing. Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful. (Quran 7:2-3)

God promised those who are grateful and thankful enough to appreciate His blessing to increase it for them.

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]. (Quran 14:7)

However, some people are deceived by this blessing, so they think that God loves them more than others, or they are better than others, since God bless them but did not bless others like them. In addition,

self-inflation blinds the eyes and makes people believe that they deserve this blessing because they are good enough to get it, and they got it only because of their intelligence and abilities. If these people tried to imagine their lives without this blessing, they would be able to appreciate it. However, they forget that the blessing will not remain because of our abilities, and God is the unchangeable changer. Therefore, they do not realize God's blessing until they lose it.

يَعْرِفُونَ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُونَهَا

They recognize the favor of God; then they deny it. (Quran 16:83)

So, why does God test the disbelievers with pleasant tests? Sometimes, God tests the disbelievers with a pleasant test in the worldly life because He will not give them any portion in the Hereafter. He grants them respite that they may grow in their iniquity to deserve the severe punishment of hell fire.

وَلَا يَحْزَنُكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَنَبَصُرُوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حِطًّا فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَعَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ . إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اسْتَنَرُوا الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ لَنَبَصُرُوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ . وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّامُ نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّأَنفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ

And do not be grieved, [O Muhammad], by those who hasten into disbelief. Indeed, they will never harm God at all. God intends that He should give them no share in the Hereafter, and for them is a great punishment. Indeed, those who purchase disbelief [in exchange] for faith - never will they harm God at all, and for them is a painful punishment. And let not those who disbelieve ever think that [because] We extend their time [of enjoyment] it is better for them. We only extend it for them so that they may increase in sin, and for them is a humiliating punishment. (Quran 3:176-178)

It is like a student who never gets feedback from his teacher until he fails in the final exam.

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْأَعْلَى، عَنْ مَعْمَرٍ، عَنْ الزُّهْرِيِّ، عَنْ سَعِيدٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: " مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِ كَمَثَلِ الزَّرْعِ لَا تَزَالُ الرِّيحُ تُمِيلُهُ وَلَا يَزَالُ الْمُؤْمِنُ يُصِيبُهُ الْبَلَاءُ وَمَثَلُ الْمُنَافِقِ كَمَثَلِ شَجَرَةِ الْأَرْزِ لَا تَهْتَرُ حَتَّى تَسْتَحْصِدَ " .

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

The parable of the believer is like the fresh tender green plant; the wind does not stop causing it to sway, and the believer does not stop suffering trials, afflictions and calamities. While the parable of the hypocrite is like the cedar pine tree, it remains hard, stiff and straight until it is cut down. (Sahih Muslim 2809 a)

Unpleasant Test

On the other hand, the unpleasant test could be bad, hardship, tribulation, straitness, adversity, trials, afflictions and calamities. God would test you with fear, famine, hunger, diseases, poverty, a financial downturn, a loved one passes away, a cheating spouse or loss of position or beloved people...etc. Therefore, He causes hardship sometimes to test us: Will we be patient or lose our trust in Him?

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالتَّمَرَاتِ ۖ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ۚ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient. Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to God, and indeed to Him we will return. Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided. (Quran 2:155-157)

Grief is something that saddens a person so it is normal to feel down. So, it is not a question whether to grieve or not. The question is how to grieve. There is a harmful way to grieve and a beneficial way to grieve.

When people face unpleasant calamities such as these, most of them lose their trust in God and ask questions such as: Why then does God allow bad things to happen to good people? Is God powerless to prevent evil? Does not God know when or where evil will happen? Are there other evil gods (Perhaps Satan) who spread corruption on this earth? Is God Himself evil?

A believer believes that God is The Almighty, the All-Powerful, The All-Strong, and the All Capable, so He is not powerless to prevent evil. In addition, He knows when or where evil will happen;

because He is The All-Knowing, The All-Seeing, The All-Hearing, and The Constant Owner and Controller of Everything. In addition, God is The One, The One and Only, The First, and The Last. The Quran stresses that there is no god besides God. Therefore, there is no other evil god to spread corruption on this earth. In the end, God is The Most Loving, The Most Kind, and The Most Generous, the Most Merciful, The Most Beneficent, The Most Forgiving, The Lord of Infinite Grace, and the Ultimate Source of Peace and Safety, so He is not Himself evil.

Yes, all these unpleasant calamities are from God, so adapt to reality, accept it and try to deal with it. Anxiety, anger, depression, dissatisfaction, craziness, impatience and despondency will not change reality, but they make you gain God's wrath.

We should not grieve in the same way as those who have no hope. Wailing, lamenting and questioning God's will would bring us closer to unbelief. We learned that shouting out and wailing is against the tradition of our prophet. We have been taught that sadness is a natural feeling that we express by shedding tears while adopting patience.

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو نُعَيْمٍ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، حَدَّثَنَا زَيْدُ الْيَمِيِّ، عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ مَسْرُوقٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَطَمَ الْخُدُودَ، وَشَقَّ الْجُيُوبَ، وَدَعَا بِدَعْوَى الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ " .

Narrated `Abdullah:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "He who slaps his cheeks, tears his clothes and follows the ways and traditions of the Days of Ignorance is not one of us."

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 1294

In-book reference : Book 23, Hadith 53

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 2, Book 23, Hadith 382

In 1969, the Swiss-American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced the "the five stages of grief" model as reflecting how people cope with unpleasant calamities, such as death. These stages include denial, anger and frustration, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. However, your religion teaches you

that do not waste your emotions and time, and go direct to the acceptance, because as a believer, you should accept God's decision, whether you like it or not. Your acceptance will make this disaster manageable.

Why does God test the believers with hardship? God tests the believers with hardship sometimes for two purposes: to forgive their sins and raise their degree. Prophet Muhammad explained both of these purposes in this Hadith:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، قَالَتْ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

"مَا يُصِيبُ الْمُؤْمِنَ مِنْ شَوْكَةٍ فَمَا فَوْقَهَا إِلَّا رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ بِهَا دَرَجَةً أَوْ حَطَّ عَنْهُ بِهَا خَطِيئَةٌ"

'A'isha reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

A believer does not receive (the trouble) of running into a thorn or more than that but Allah elevates him in rank or effaces his sins because of that. (Sahih Muslim 2572 b)

The first purpose is to atone and expiate the believers' sins, because there is a recompense for every action we do.

مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَ بِهِ

Whoever does a wrong will be recompensed for it. (Quran 4:123)

We learn from our experience. We do not learn how to choose the right until we suffer from choosing the wrong.

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكُمْ

What comes to you of evil, [O man], is from yourself. (Quran 4:79)

Sometimes, hardship is God's punishment for our sins.

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِيمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ

And whatever strikes you of disaster - it is for what your hands have earned. (Quran 42:30)

Therefore, it is good chance God gives us to atone and expiate our sins in this worldly life.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ "مَا يُصِيبُ الْمُسْلِمَ مِنْ نَصَبٍ وَلَا وَصَبٍ وَلَا هَمٍّ وَلَا حُزْنٍ وَلَا أَذًى وَلَا غَمٍّ حَتَّى الشَّوْكَةِ يُشَاكُهَا، إِلَّا كَفَّرَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ خَطَايَاهُ".

Narrated Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri and Abu Huraira: The Prophet said,

"No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that."

(Sahih al-Bukhari 5641, 5642)

To be punished for our sins in this worldly life and to wipe them out before death is much better than to be punished for them in the hell fire.

عَنْ أَنَسٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

"إِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بَعْدَهُ خَيْرًا عَجَلَ لَهُ الْعُقُوبَةَ فِي الدُّنْيَا، وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بَعْدَهُ الشَّرَّ أَمْسَكَ عَنْهُ بِذَنْبِهِ حَتَّى يُوَافِيَ بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ".

Anas narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"When God intends good for His slave, He punishes him in this world, but when He intends an evil for His slave, He does not hasten to take him to task but calls him to account on the Day of Resurrection."

(Jami` at-Tirmidhi 2396)

The second purpose of the hardship is to raise the believers' status, stature, and memory, and to multiply their benefits as reward for their patience.

عَنْ جَابِرٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

يَوَدُّ أَهْلُ الْعَاقِبَةِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حِينَ يُعْطَى أَهْلُ الْبَلَاءِ الثَّوَابَ لَوْ أَنَّ جُلُودَهُمْ كَانَتْ فُرْصَتٍ فِي الدُّنْيَا بِالْمَقَارِيضِ

Jabir narrated that the Prophet (s.a.w) said:

On the Day of Judgement, when the people who were tried (in this world) are given their rewards, the people who were pardoned (in life), will wish that their skins had been cut off with scissors while they were in the world." (Jami` at-Tirmidhi 2402)

But I do not mean the reward in the hereafter only.

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ إِذَا سَبَقَتْ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَنْرَلَةٌ لَمْ يَبْلُغْهَا بِعَمَلِهِ ابْتِلَاءُ اللَّهِ فِي جَسَدِهِ أَوْ فِي مَالِهِ أَوْ فِي وَلَدِهِ

Narrated Muhammad ibn Khalid as-Sulami:

When God has previously decreed for a servant a rank which he has not attained by his action, He afflicts him in his body, or his property or his children. (Sunan Abi Dawud 3090)

Sometimes, God causes unpleasant calamities for good people in order to mold them into the type of people He wants them to be, so they would be able to receive a greater good that will come to them in the long run. It is God's decision to close a door for them to force them to leave their comfort zones, look at the other door He wants them to enter and step into new zones.

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - أَنَّهُ قَالَ

عِظْمُ الْجَزَاءِ مَعَ عِظْمِ الْبَلَاءِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ إِذَا أَحَبَّ قَوْمًا ابْتَلَاهُمْ فَمَنْ رَضِيَ فَلَهُ الرِّضَا وَمَنْ سَخِطَ فَلَهُ السُّخْطُ "

It was narrated from Anas bin Malik that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

“The greatest reward comes with the greatest trial. When God loves a people, He tests them.

Whoever accepts that wins His pleasure but whoever is discontent with that earns His wrath.” (Sunan Ibn Majah 4031)

That is why the prophets were tried severely more than others were.

عَنْ مُصْعَبِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، قَالَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّ النَّاسِ أَشَدُّ بَلَاءً قَالَ " الْأَنْبِيَاءُ ثُمَّ الْأُمَمُ ثُمَّ الْأَمْثَلُ فَلَا مَثَلُ فَيَبْتَلَى الرَّجُلُ عَلَى حَسَبِ دِينِهِ فَإِنْ كَانَ دِينُهُ صَلُوبًا اشْتَدَّ بَلَاؤُهُ وَإِنْ كَانَ فِي دِينِهِ رِقَّةٌ ابْتُلِيَ عَلَى حَسَبِ دِينِهِ فَمَا يَبْرَحُ الْبَلَاءُ بِالْعَبْدِ حَتَّى يَتْرَكَهُ يَمْشِي عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مَا عَلَيْهِ خَطِيئَةٌ "

Mus'ab bin Sa'd narrated from his father that a man said:

"O Messenger of God (s.a.w)! Which of the people is tried most severely?" He said: "The Prophets, then those nearest to them, then those nearest to them. A man is tried according to his religion; if he is firm in his religion, then his trials are more severe, and if he is frail in his religion, then he is tried according to the strength of his religion. The servant shall continue to be tried until he is left walking upon the earth without any sins." (Jami` at-Tirmidhi 2398)

Because of our limited vision, we consider every suffering as a bad thing, and every prosperity as a good thing. However, Quran teaches that not everything we love is good for us and not everything we hate is bad for us.

وَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you.

And God Knows, while you know not. (Quran 2:216)

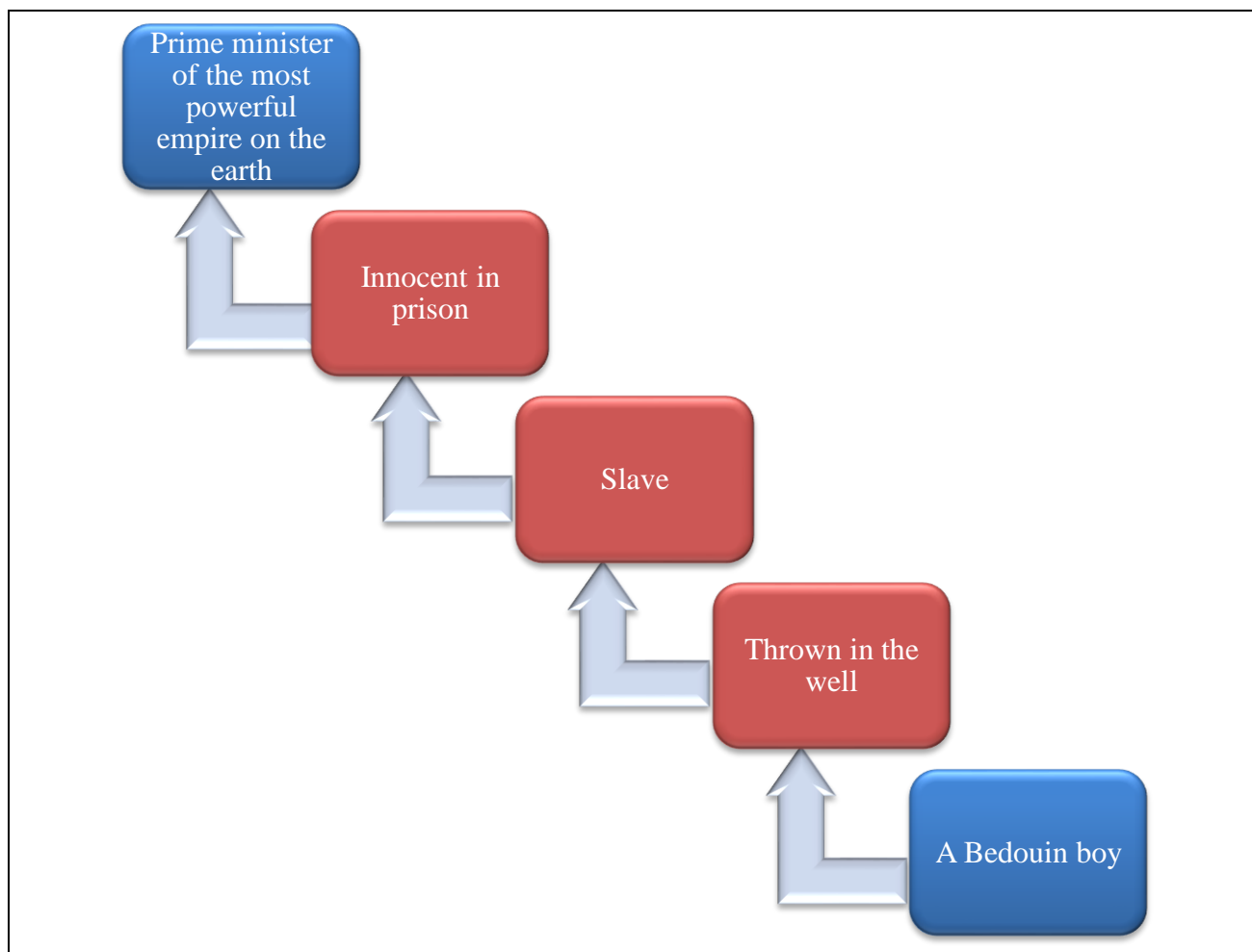
For example, God wanted Prophet Joseph to be His representative and rule the earth in His name, so He wanted him to be the Prime minister of Egypt... the most powerful empire on the earth in this time. But Prophet Joseph could not attain this position by his actions; because he was a bedouin boy. So, God afflicts him to be thrown in the well by his own brothers, a slave and unjustly imprisoned and locked up. Of course, Prophet Joseph did not like these disasters at these times. He could not see that each one of these disasters made him closer to the position that God wanted for him; because human vision is limited. But when God closes a door, he opens another one. But we would not look at the other door until the first one is closed. (Figure 9 explains the role of disasters in Prophet Joseph's life).

Suffering is a very important tool in our growth journey. It works sometimes like a siren to warn us when we go in a wrong direction; it reminds us to change our path and turn towards God for help. How can we have empathy with the misery and the deprived people if we never suffer like them? Disasters should help you remember our destination, and see the reality of our life, so you will not be deceived by false desires. Humans tend to forget God in good times, and remember Him during times of distress. They are like sailors who do not worship God until the wind threatens their ship.

رَبُّكُمُ الَّذِي يُرْجِي لَكُمْ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا . وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُونَ إِلَّا إِلَاهَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّأكُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ أَعْرَضْتُمْ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا

It is your Lord who drives the ship for you through the sea that you may seek of His bounty. Indeed, He is ever, to you, Merciful.

And when adversity touches you at sea, lost are [all] those you invoke except for Him. But when He delivers you to the land, you turn away [from Him]. And ever is man ungrateful. (Quran 17:66-67)



(Figure 9. The role of disasters in Prophet Joseph's life.)

Through suffering, we develop steadfastness, strength, patience, humility and submissive to God. When we face the great adversities, we remember that it is God's will, not our will that is in the charge of controlling the worlds. Also, we learn how to correct ourselves, and to choose right when we suffer of choosing the wrong.

It was said "If you knew the unseen, you would choose reality," because God's choices for us are better than our choices for ourselves, as we see in the following story:

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَتَاهُ لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّى أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا . فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنَهُمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا . فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِقَتَاهُ إِنِّي غَدَاةٌ لَّفَقِينَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هَذَا نَصَبٌ . قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوَيْنَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ الْخُوتَ وَمَا أَنَسَانِيهِ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ

أَذْكُرُهُ ۖ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا . قَالَ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ ۖ فَارْتَدَّ عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا . فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِن لَّدُنَّا عِلْمًا . قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَن تُعَلِّمَ مِن مَّا عَلَّمْتَ رُشْدًا . قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَن تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا . وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خُبْرًا . قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ صَابِرًا وَلَا أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا . قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ أُحْدِثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا . فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا ۖ قَالَ أَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ أَهْلَهَا لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا إِمْرًا . قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَن تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا . قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذْنِي بِمَا نَسِيتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِي مِنْ أَمْرِي عُسْرًا . فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ قَالَ أَقْتَلْتَنِي نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ لَّقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُكْرًا . قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَّكَ إِنَّكَ لَن تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا . قَالَ إِن سَأَلْتُكَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا تُصَاحِبْنِي ۖ قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِن لَّدُنِّي عُذْرًا . فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَيَا أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ اسْتَطْعَمَا أَهْلُهَا فَأَبَوْا أَن يُضَيِّقُوا لَهُمَا فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَارًا يُرِيدُ أَن يَنْقَضَ فَأَقَامَهُ ۖ قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَاتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا . قَالَ هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ ۖ بِنَاوِيلٍ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا . أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسَاكِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَعِيبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَاءَهُمْ مَّلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا . وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ فَكَانَ أَبَوَاهُ مُؤْمِنَيْنِ فَخَشِينَا أَنْ يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا . فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ يُبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ زَكَاةً وَأَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا . وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِّنَ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي ۖ ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا .

Behold, Moses said to his attendant,

- "I will not give up until I reach the junction of the two seas or (until) I spend years and years in travel."

But when they reached the Junction, they forgot (about) their Fish, which took its course through the sea (straight) as in a tunnel. When they had passed on (some distance), Moses said to his attendant:

- "Bring us our early meal; truly we have suffered much fatigue at this (stage of) our journey."

He replied:

- "Sawest thou (what happened) when we betook ourselves to the rock? I did indeed forget (about) the Fish: none but Satan made me forget to tell (you) about it: it took its course through the sea in a marvellous way!"

Moses said:

- "That was what we were seeking after:"

So, they went back on their footsteps, following (the path on which they had come). So, they found one of Our servants, on whom We had bestowed Mercy from Ourselves and whom We had taught knowledge from Our own Presence. Moses said to him:

- "May I follow you on [the condition] that you teach me from what you have been taught of sound judgement?"

(The other) said:

- "Verily thou wilt not be able to have patience with me!" "And how can you have patience about a thing which you do not know?"

Moses said:

- "You will find me, if God wills, patient, and I will not disobey you in [any] order."

The other said:

- "If then thou wouldst follow me, ask me no questions about anything until I myself speak to thee concerning it."

So, they both proceeded: until, when they were in the boat, he scuttled it. Said Moses:

- "Hast thou scuttled it in order to drown those in it? Truly a strange thing hast thou done!"

He answered:

- "Did I not tell thee that thou canst have no patience with me?"

Moses said:

- "Rebuke me not for forgetting, nor grieve me by raising difficulties in my case."

Then they proceeded: until, when they met a young man, he slew him. Moses said:

- "Hast thou slain an innocent person who had slain none? Truly a foul (unheard of) thing hast thou done!"

He answered:

- "Did I not tell thee that thou canst have no patience with me?"

(Moses) said:

- "If ever I ask thee about anything after this, keep me not in thy company: then wouldst thou have received (full) excuse from my side."

Then they proceeded: until, when they came to the inhabitants of a town, they asked them for food, but they refused them hospitality. They found there a wall on the point of falling down, but he set it up straight. (Moses) said:

- "If thou hadst wished, surely thou couldst have exacted some recompense for it!"

He answered:

- "This is the parting between me and thee: now will I tell thee the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience. "As for the boat, it belonged to certain men in dire want: they plied on the water: I but wished to render it unserviceable, for there was after them a certain king who seized on every boat by force. "As for the youth, his parents were people of Faith, and we feared that he would grieve them by obstinate rebellion and ingratitude (to Allah and man). "So, we desired that their Lord would give them in exchange (a son) better in purity (of conduct) and closer in affection. "As for the wall, it belonged to two youths, orphans, in the Town; there was, beneath it, a buried treasure, to which they were entitled: their father had been a righteous man: So, thy Lord desired that they should attain their age of full strength and get out their treasure - a mercy (and favour) from thy Lord. I did it not of my own accord. Such is the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience."

(Quran 18:60-82)

This story includes three examples of the implicit good in what we think is evil. Try to read these three stories, not from perspective of the servant of God, but from the perspective of the owners of the ship, the parents and the two orphan boys. Of course, they could not see the mercy of God. They just saw their suffering of the hardships and disasters. The mercy of God is behind each disaster, but we cannot see it because of our limited vision. For example, the mercy of God protected the ship of poor sailors by tearing it open. However, because of our limited vision, we saw tearing the ship open, but we could not see its protection from the king who seized every good ship by force. As Muslims, we believe that everything that God has decreed is good, even though if we saw it as an evil. It is still good, but we do not know it yet or we may never know it.

So, how can we grieve? What can we do when disasters strike us? Should we be happy? No, but we should remember that there are better days coming; because God said:

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. (Quran 94:6)

It is natural to cry and show emotion. However, remember you are not the only one who is tried, and God alternates the days among the people. He gives varying fortunes of good and bad to people by turns.

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ . هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ . وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ . إِنْ يَمْسَسْكُمْ قَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ قَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهُ ۚ وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَيَتَّخِذَ مِنْكُمْ شُهَدَاءَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ . وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَيَمْحَقَ الْكَافِرِينَ . أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ

Similar situations [as yours] have passed on before you, so proceed throughout the earth and observe how the end of those who denied was. This [Qur'an] is a clear statement to [all] the people and a guidance and instruction for those conscious of Allah. So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers. If a wound should touch you - there has already touched the [opposing] people a wound similar to it. And these days [of varying conditions] We alternate among the people so that God may make evident those who believe and [may] take to Himself from among you martyrs - and God does not like the wrongdoers - And that God may purify the believers [through trials] and destroy the disbelievers. Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while Allah has not yet made evident those of you who fight in His cause and made evident those who are steadfast? (Quran 3:137-142)

It is God's way and we have to accept that we might not always know why He does certain things. If you believe that, your disaster is God's decision that you cannot change, so you would adapt the reality and try to deal with. However, you would neither commit suicide when the disaster strikes you, nor be arrogant when you have God's grace and blessing.

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا ۚ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ . لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register before We bring it into being - indeed that, for God, is easy. In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you. And God does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful.

(Quran 57:22-23)

It is our divine Predestination that God has planned for us even before we were born, and His decision is merciful even if it did not please us. He will never try you with something you cannot deal with, and when He removes something from our life, He will replace it with something better.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا

God does not charge a soul except [according to] what He has given it. Allah will bring about, after hardship, ease. (Quran 65: 7)

So how did Prophet Muhammad grieve when he faced such disasters? When his sixteen-month-old son Ibraheem passed away he held him, tears flowed from his eyes, and said this hadith:

حَدَّثَنَا الْحَسَنُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْعَزِيزِ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ حَسَّانَ، حَدَّثَنَا قُرَيْشٌ - هُوَ ابْنُ حَيَّانَ - عَنْ ثَابِتٍ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ دَخَلْنَا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى أَبِي سَيْفٍ الْقَيْنِ - وَكَانَ ظَنُرًا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ - فَأَخَذَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فَقَبَّلَهُ وَشَمَّهُ، ثُمَّ دَخَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ، وَإِبْرَاهِيمُ يَجُودُ بِنَفْسِهِ، فَجَعَلَتْ عَيْنَا رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ تَدْرِفَانِ. فَقَالَ لَهُ عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ عَوْفٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - وَأَنْتَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَقَالَ " يَا ابْنَ عَوْفٍ إِنَّهَا رَحْمَةٌ ". ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَهَا بِأُخْرَى فَقَالَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " إِنَّ الْعَيْنَ تَدْمَعُ، وَالْقَلْبَ يَحْزَنُ، وَلَا نَقُولُ إِلَّا مَا يَرْضَى رَبُّنَا، وَإِنَّا بِفِرَاقِكَ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَمَحْزُونُونَ ". رَوَاهُ مُوسَى عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ الْمُغِيرَةِ عَنْ ثَابِتٍ عَنْ أَنَسٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

Narrated Anas bin Malik:

We went with God's Messenger (ﷺ) (p.b.u.h) to the blacksmith Abu Saif, and he was the husband of the wet-nurse of Ibrahim (the son of the Prophet). God's Messenger (ﷺ) took Ibrahim and kissed him and smelled him and later we entered Abu Saif's house and at that time Ibrahim was in his last breaths, and the eyes of God's Messenger (ﷺ) (p.b.u.h) started shedding tears. `Abdur Rahman bin `Auf said, "O God's Apostle, even you are weeping!" He said, "O Ibn `Auf, this is mercy." Then he wept more and said, "The eyes are shedding tears and the heart is grieved, and we will not say except what pleases our Lord, O Ibrahim! Indeed, we are grieved by your separation."

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 1303

Types of Formative Divine Test

عَجَبًا لِأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَلَيْسَ ذَاكَ لِأَحَدٍ إِلَّا لِلْمُؤْمِنِ إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَاءٌ شَكَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَاءٌ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ "

Strange are the ways of a believer for there is good in every affair of his and this is not the case with anyone else except in the case of a believer for if he has an occasion to feel delight, he thanks (God), thus there is a good for him in it, and if he gets into trouble and shows resignation (and endures it patiently), there is a good for him in it. (Sahih Muslim 2999)

Pleasant (Good, ease and prosperity)		Unpleasant (Bad, hardship, tribulation, straitness and adversity)		
<p>إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا . إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا</p> <p>Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing. Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful. (7:2-3)</p>		<p>وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ . الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ . أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ</p> <p>And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient. Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to God, and indeed to Him we will return. Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided. (2:155-157)</p>		
Praise and thank	Deny	Patience		impatience
<p>لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ</p> <p>If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]. (14:7)</p>	<p>يَعْرِفُونَ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُونَهَا</p> <p>They recognize the favor of God; then they deny it. (16:83)</p>	Atonement of sins	Elevate their rank, raise their degrees, raise their memory and multiply their benefits.	<p>Anxiety, anger, depression, dissatisfaction, craziness, despondent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will not change reality. - You will gain God's wrath.

(Figure 10. Pleasant and unpleasant tests.)

Chapter Ten

Patience as an Instruction

Before the teacher tests his students, he should give them an instruction that explain how they can pass the test. That is why when God said in the Qur'an that he will test us, he ended this verse by giving good tidings to those who are patient.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ .

And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient. (Quran 2:155-157)

Therefore, patience is the instruction to pass our lives' test, and if you are patient, you will not fail.

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ . إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

Indeed, mankind is in loss, Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience. (Quran 103:2-3)

If you are impatient and cannot control your desires, you will be a loser, not only in the hereafter, but also in this worldly life. From my experiences working with inmates, I see most of them are incarcerated because they locked themselves in their moment, so they did not look forward to their future, as if they had no future. Looking forward to the future needs hope and belief in something better that will come and can be achieved. Without this belief, you will seek to satisfy your desires now as quickly as possible. However, looking forward to the future makes you plan for it, and strive patiently and hopefully to carry out your plan until you reap the fruits that you have planned for.

Laziness and impatience led most inmates to prison. They wanted everything fast and easy. If they wanted money, they wanted it right now. They could not wait until they find a job, be committed to it, and then they are paid. It is easier and faster to rob or sell drugs. If they wanted sex, they wanted it right now. They could not wait until they get married. It is easier and faster to go to a bar and find an easy woman.

Modern academic research also proves that patience is a reason behind success. In the late 1960s, the psychologist Walter Mischel performed a series of studies on delayed gratification. In these studies, which are known as The Stanford marshmallow experiment, Mischel offered a group of children a choice between one small reward (a marshmallow) provided immediately or two small rewards if they waited for a short period, approximately fifteen minutes, during which the tester left the room and then returned. In follow-up studies, Mischel found that children who were able to wait longer for the preferred rewards tended to have better health, social and educational outcomes.

People are two types. The first type is the trivial who does not care if life has a purpose or not. The other type of people searches for the purpose of life. However, knowing the purpose is not enough. Some people knew the purpose and then they got bored with the commitment to it. Boredom is the most dangerous disease that could distract you from fulfilling your purpose. Therefore, God advised us to keep our soul content with the believers.

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا

And keep yourself patient [by being] with those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, seeking His countenance. And let not your eyes pass beyond them, desiring adornments of the worldly life, and do not obey one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his desire and whose affair is ever [in] neglect. (Quran 18:28)

What is patience? Patience is to accept what you cannot control, because you are not in charge of the world. It is the ability to wait, manage your emotions, control your desire, bear and tolerate what you do not like. It is the belief that the disaster you suffer from is manageable; it is not the end of the world and tomorrow the sun will rise again for a different day and a different status. If you believe that you are not the only one who is tried, you will neither complain to other than God nor despair of His mercy. Rather you will trust that He will not let you down, or blackball you, so you will search for His grace and blessings that can help you manage this disaster.

Patience is all these qualities which can be summarized in one ability. It the ability to resist what you love and tolerate what you hate. This ability makes you fit to do the job that you were created for.

God tests people to sort them, in a divine selection, until he gets the people of this ability. These people are God’s chosen people to be His representative, vicegerent, successive authority on this earth. They are the only people who can achive the purpose of life, carry His message and rule the earth in His name for its construction and the establishment of His law.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَلَا تَكُن فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّن لِّقَائِهِ^ط وَجَعَلْنَاهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ . وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا^ط وَكَانُوا
بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ

And We certainly gave Moses the Scripture, so do not be in doubt over his meeting. And we made the Torah guidance for the Children of Israel. And We appointed, from among them, leaders, giving guidance under Our command, so long as they persevered with patience and continued to have faith in Our Signs. (Quran 32:23-24)

There are two interesting points in the last verses. The first point is that God considers patience a condition for leadership. The second one is that God’s chosen people are not a race. If they were that would make God a racist against his own creation. God created all of us and chooses His people based on the content of their character and ability to resist what they love and tolerate what they hate; because we are only human beings when we practice this ability. If our only concern is to feed our desires, then we are no more than animals encouraged by a carrot and deterred by a stick. However, God did not create us for that.

There are two different types of patience: inner patience and outer patience. Inner patience is how to deal with yourself with fighting selfishness and managing your desires and emotions. Outer patience is how to deal with others with empathy, altruism and selflessness. Figure 11 explains these types of patience

Patience	
Inner	Outer
Dealing with yourself with fighting selfishness and managing your desires and emotions.	Dealing with others with embathy, altruism and selflessness.

(Figure 11. Inner patience and outer patience.)

Inner Patience

All humans enjoy worldly pleasures and desire a nice and comfortable life. Everyone imprisons himself inside himself. Everyone builds a wall around himself, so he cannot go beyond his ego, and wishes to appropriate all the good to himself exclusively.

إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ

Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, (Quran 12:53)

Selfishness is the root of all evils. A selfish person will be arrogant and believe that he is better than others. That is why God warned us of arrogance.

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

"And do not turn cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth; for God loveth not any arrogant boaster. (Quran 31:18)

Also, Prophet Muhammad taught us that none will enter Paradise who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of arrogance.

حَدَّثَنَا مُنْجَابُ بْنُ الْحَارِثِ التَّمِيمِيُّ، وَسُوَيْدُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، كِلَاهُمَا عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ مُسْهَرٍ، - قَالَ مُنْجَابٌ أَخْبَرَنَا ابْنُ مُسْهَرٍ، - عَنِ الْأَعْمَشِ، عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ عَلْقَمَةَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " لَا يَدْخُلُ النَّارَ أَحَدٌ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ خَرْدَلٍ مِنْ إِيْمَانٍ وَلَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ أَحَدٌ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ خَرْدَلٍ مِنْ كِبْرِيَاءٍ " .

It is narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah b. Mas'ud that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) observed:

None shall enter the Fire (of Hell) who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of faith and none shall enter Paradise who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride.

Reference : Sahih Muslim 91 b

In-book reference : Book 1, Hadith 172

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Book 1, Hadith 165

However, the selfish person will not stop at arrogance. He would object to God's judgment and decree especially when God bestows more blessings on others than him. Unconsciously, he will take God's position to decide who deserve God's blessings and who does not. The opposite of that is acceptance, to accept God's decision, whatever it pleases you or not.

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

The vanguard (of Islam)- the first of those who forsook (their homes) and of those who gave them aid, and (also) those who follow them in (all) good deeds,- well-pleased is Allah with them, as are they with Him: for them hath He prepared gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever: that is the supreme success. (Quran 9:100)

When he sees others are blessed more than he is, he would be jealous and envy them, for he believes that he deserves everything good, but others do not.

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ ۚ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَتَبْنَا لِلنِّسَاءِ ۚ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَتَبْنَا ۚ وَإِنَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَسَاةِلُونَ

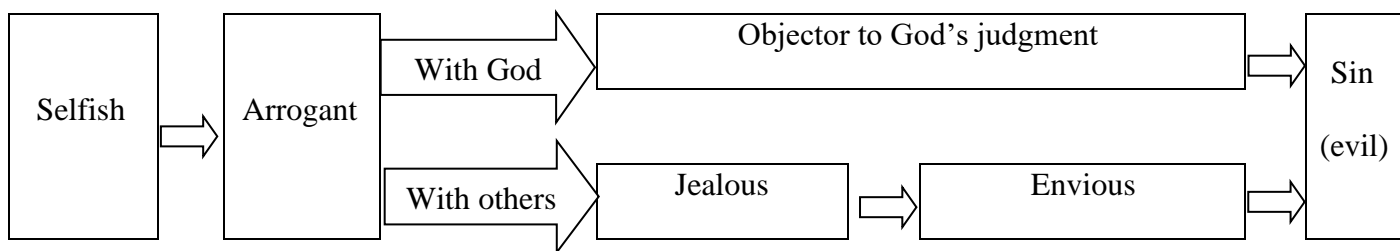
And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others. (Quran 4:32)

God asked us not to envy each other, because He is just, but our limited vision cannot see His justice. Don't overburden yourself with comparing yourself to others; because the wider your eyes get, the narrower your heart will be.

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ ۚ وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ

Nor strain thine eyes in longing for the things We have given for enjoyment to parties of them, the splendour of the life of this world, through which We test them: but the provision of thy Lord is better and more enduring. (Quran 20:131)

Figure 12. Explains why selfishness is the root of all evils, and how it pushes towards the evil sins.



(Figure 12. Selfishness pushes towards the evil)

Actually, that is how the first sin happened in the heaven. It happened after God had shown Adam's intellectual virtue to Satan and the angels. Satan refused to see what God showed, so he refused to prostrate himself to Adam, and said to God:

أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ

"I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay." (7:12)

Satan envied Adam and was too arrogant to prostrate to him, so he disobeyed God stubbornly, which means that he did not disobey God because of ignorance. Rather he disobeyed God in spite of his knowledge.

Also, that is how the first sin on the earth happened. It happened when Cain could not see the virtue of his brother Abel. This virtue is why God accepted Abel's sacrifice. Instead of recognizing his brother's virtue, Cain objected to God's choice and envied his brother.

وَائْتِلْ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ ۖ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۚ لَئِنْ بَسَطْتَ إِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِي مَا أَنَا بِبَاسِطٍ يَدِيَ إِلَيْكَ لِأَقْتُلَكَ ۚ إِنَّي خَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۚ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبْوَءَ بِإِيمِي وَإِنَّكَ فَتَكُونُ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ ۚ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ ۚ فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ۚ فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ غُرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُورِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِيهِ ۚ قَالَ يَا وَيْلَتَا أَعَجَزْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَذَا الْغُرَابِ فَأُورِيَ سَوْءَةَ أَخِي ۚ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ النَّادِمِينَ

And recite to them the story of Adam's two sons, in truth, when they both offered a sacrifice [to God], and it was accepted from one of them but was not accepted from the other. Said [the latter], "I will surely kill you." Said [the former], "Indeed, Allah only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him]. If you should raise your hand against me to kill me - I shall not raise my hand against you to kill you. Indeed, I fear

God, Lord of the worlds. Indeed, I want you to obtain [thereby] my sin and your sin so you will be among the companions of the Fire. And that is the recompense of wrongdoers." And his soul permitted to him the murder of his brother, so he killed him and became among the losers. Then Allah sent a crow searching in the ground to show him how to hide the disgrace of his brother. He said, "O woe to me! Have I failed to be like this crow and hide the body of my brother?" And he became of the regretful. (Quran 5:27-31)

Why did God send a crow to show Cain how to hide his brother's body? Why did not He send an angel or his father Adam? God might want to break the fence that Cain built around his ego, so he could not listen to his brother. The selfish will not regret his mistakes until he would realize that he is not better than others. Allah might want to tell Cain that "you are not better even than a crow. You refused to learn from your brother's advice, but now, you will learn from a crow".

All religions have agreed together to fight selfishness as a dangerous human disease, by inviting man to go out of his ego circle and teaching him that the desires are normal. The problem is only when you follow the desire unquestioningly as if it is a god. That is the trial... the test of our life. With patience, we can pass this trial and test.

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا . فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا . قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا . وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّاهَا

And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it. And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness, He has succeeded who purifies it, And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]. (Quran 91:7-10)

Inner Patience is patience in dealing with yourself. It is to fight your desires and teach yourself to wait. In this meaning, patience is not easy. It is striving, struggle with yourself, and resisting your desires. It is Jihad.

Imâm Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah believed Muslims must be patient to face adversity, avoid sin and carry out God's commands.

- 1- To face adversity that is beyond your control, such as illness, death, poverty... etc.

وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ . الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ . أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ

الْمُهْتَدُونَ

Give good tidings to the patient people. Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to God, and indeed to Him we will return." Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided. (Quran 2:155-157)

They were able to face the disaster with patience because they trust God's decision. They tolerate our limitations and ignorance. We neither see the future nor know the wisdom behind everything that happens. As their reward, God gives them good tidings, blessings and mercy.

2- To avoid and abstain what God forbade, such as homicide, theft, alcohol and fornication... etc.

Sometimes the sin is enjoyable and easier than lawful ways. However, being patient is much better than feeding desires in a sinful way.

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا . وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ . وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ . إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ . قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ

قَدْرًا

And whoever fears God - He will make for him a way out. And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon God - then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, God will accomplish His purpose. God has already set for everything a [decreed] extent. (Quran 65:2-3)

3- And to carry out what He commands us to do, such as worshipping Him. God linked patience with the prayer, because prayer is not easy and it requires patience.

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ . وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah] (Quran 2:45)

Outer Patience

Outer patience is patience in dealing with others. Dealing with different types of people is part of the divine test, because every one has a different view, plan, way, style and agenda. When our views and plans

clash, we hurt each other verbally and physically sometimes. We are impatient with others because we cannot see their view, plan and agenda. We just see our perspective, and sometimes we get upset when others cannot see it also.

وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً أَتَصْبِرُونَ ۖ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيرًا

And We have made some of you [people] as trial for others - will you have patience? And ever is your Lord, Seeing. (Quran 25:20)

As we saw in the creation story, the angels predicted that humans would use violence to solve their problems. God asked Adam to name the things to prove to the angels that they did not know the power of humans' minds, which they can use to solve their problems peacefully.

We can use our minds to have empathy. It is the ability to walk in others' shoes, to see others as they are, not as you think, to be able to give others a space in your soul, to consider them as human beings like you, not objects to be classified, to realize their feelings and needs, and to see life from their perspective.

Empathy is the quality of the righteous believers. Look at these verses.

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ . الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

“And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous. Who spend [in the cause of God] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and God loves the doers of good; (Quran 3:133-134)

Who are the righteous people who deserve God's forgiveness and the garden was prepared for them? Last verse mentioned three qualities of them. These three qualities are: Spending in the cause of God, restraining anger and pardoning the people. All these qualities require empathy.

Charity and alms-giving are strong examples of religious calls for empathy. But how can I give the money that I got tired making to someone else, unless I feel that his need for this money is greater than mine?

Also, God's forgiveness and paradise are the reward for those who restrain their anger in order to pardon the people when they wrong them. Actually, most religions call for managing emotions and pardoning others. However, how can you control your anger to pardon a person who upsets you, unless you were able to walk in his shoes to see the problem from his point of view?

Of course, restraining anger and pardoning people require empathy. If you are empathetic enough to restrain anger and pardon people, God will forgive you your sins, and then you will enter the Garden. Remember! We will not enter the garden because of our deeds. Our deeds are not good enough to enter the garden. We will enter the garden only because of God's forgiveness; therefore, God mentioned "forgiveness" before the "garden" in last verse. Also, God considers forgiving people one condition to get his forgiveness.

وَالْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

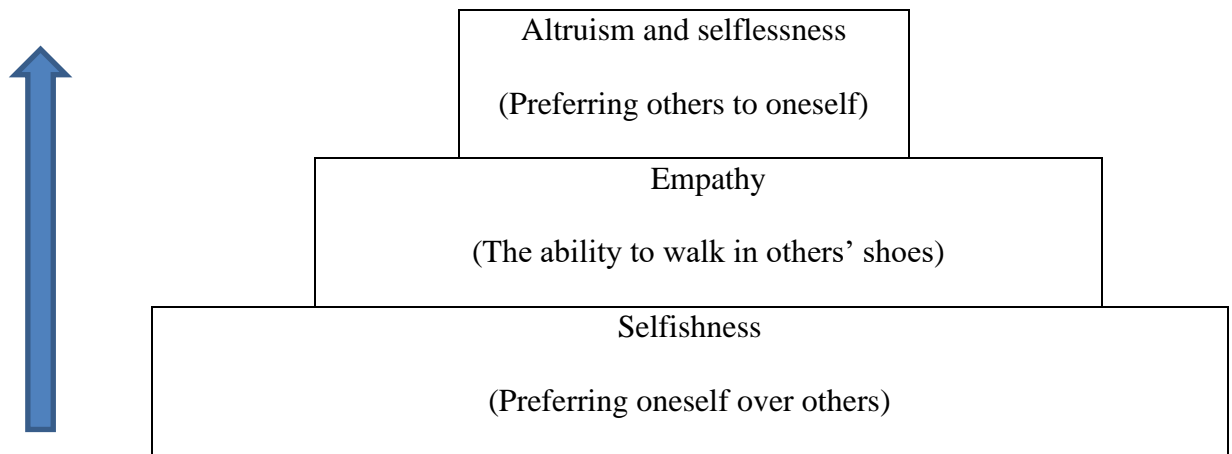
and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that God should forgive you? And God is Forgiving and Merciful. (Quran 24:22)

However, when Quran describes the good believers, encourages us to a level that is higher than empathy. It is altruism which is concern for happiness of others, and selflessness which is preferring others to oneself.

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۚ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شَحْنَ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

And [also for] those who were settled in al-Madinah and [adopted] the faith before them. They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what the emigrants were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful. (Quran 59:9)

Figure 13 explains the three levels of dealing with others.



(Figure 13. The three levels of dealing with others.)

Of course, it is easy to be good to those who are good to you, but it is not easy to be good to those who hurt you. It takes a lot of patience, especially if you would deal with them better than how they dealt with you, as the Quran advises. Quran does not advise us to repel evil by evil, but by that deed which is better. Quran is very realistic and knows that is not easy for human beings, so it instructs us how to use patience and seek help from God, because impatience, as Quran describes, comes from the Satan.

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ . وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حُظٍّ عَظِيمٍ . وَإِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

“And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one having a great portion [of good]. And if there comes to you from Satan an evil suggestion, then seek refuge in God. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Knowing.” (Quran 41:34-36)

But isolating yourself and avoiding people do not make you closer to God. It means you chose the easy road to escape your test.

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ مَيْمُونٍ الرَّقِّيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَاحِدِ بْنُ صَالِحٍ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ يُونُسَ، عَنِ الْأَعْمَشِ، عَنْ يَحْيَى بْنِ وَثَّابٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صلى الله عليه وسلم - " الْمُؤْمِنُ الَّذِي يُخَالِطُ النَّاسَ وَيَصْبِرُ عَلَى أَذَاهُمْ أَعْظَمُ أَجْرًا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِ الَّذِي لَا يُخَالِطُ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَصْبِرُ عَلَى أَذَاهُمْ " .

It was narrated from Ibn ‘Umar that the Messenger of God (ﷺ) said:

“The believer who mixes with people and bears their annoyance with patience will have a greater reward than the believer who does not mix with people and does not put up with their annoyance.”

Grade : **Sahih** (Darussalam)

Reference : Sunan Ibn Majah 4032

In-book reference : Book 36, Hadith 107

English translation : Vol. 5, Book 36, Hadith 4032

God allowed those who were abused to punish the abuser, but He encourages them to be patient and forgive the abuser, and that is better for them.

وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ

And if you punish [an enemy, O believers], punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed. But if you are patient - it is better for those who are patient. (Quran 16-126)

So, patience and forgiveness are better and higher than justice. Does that mean we should trust our abuser and give him another chance to abuse us again? No, we have to protect ourselves. The believer should be smart enough so he would not get hurt twice from the same source. Forgiveness does not mean to forget. It means you waive your right to punish the abuser.

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ عُقَيْلٍ، عَنْ الزُّهْرِيِّ، عَنْ ابْنِ الْمُسَيَّبِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ " لَا يُلْدَغُ الْمُؤْمِنُ مِنْ جُحْرٍ وَاحِدٍ مَرَّتَيْنِ " .

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A believer is not stung twice (by something) out of one and the same hole."

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 6133

In-book reference : Book 78, Hadith 160

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 8, Book 73, Hadith 154

Why it is better for us to be patient and forgive our abuser? Although revenge is driven by the intention of justice, it is still bad action. It harms all and does not benefit the avenger.

وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً ۖ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

And fear a trial (tumult) which will not strike those who have wronged among you exclusively, and know that God is strict in punishment. (Quran 8:25)

So, let God punish your oppressors, if you really trust in God and depend on Him, He is in charge, not you. He is the just and the avenger, not you. It is better for you to forgive because revenge is a trial that does not affect the oppressors only, but everyone including you. That is why God encourages us to pardon and forgive.

وَإِنْ تَعْفُوا وَتَصْفَحُوا وَتَغْفِرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

If you pardon and overlook and forgive - then indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful. (Quran 64:14)

Also, forgiveness is nearer to righteousness. Revenge is not justice because justice is to give each one his rights, while revenge is to punish the oppressor even without giving the victims their rights. Graciousness, kindness and grace are higher and better than justice because justice alone could be hard and tough, and could keep hatred in the hearts, but graciousness, kindness and grace can end the quarrels and hatred, when you give up some of your rights to keep the peace.

وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَنْسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ

And to forgive is nearer to righteousness. And do not forget graciousness (kindness and grace) between you. (Quran 2:237)

The stories of turning to the opposite is frightening, especially if this antithesis is savage and far from humanity. In the Biblical Mythology, the desire for revenge turned Samson from a lover to a hater of himself and others. So, he destroyed the temple and killed himself and his enemies, not only his enemies.

You can see the same theme in many different stories, such the famous classical novel “The Count of Monte Cristo” and Steven Spielberg’s 2005 movie “Munich” where revenge made the main character

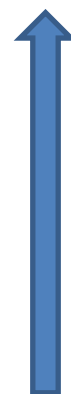
disconnected even from his wife in the most intimate moments. This theme is injustice that drives the victim to injustice and cruelty, violence that justifies more violence, or oppression that makes the man a monster who does not see any difference between death and life.

That is why you should try to avoid falling in backlash. You should try hard not to become a monster, an echo or just a reaction to the insanity and madness that are destroying the spirit of the world. Do not keep up with the evil incidents that pollute the face of humanity. Do not become a party to the equation of executioner and victim. Do not respond to insults by violence, or to violence by violence. Find your soul, and fill the black hole that swallows all the noble and beautiful meanings in our lives.

Inner and Outer Patience

Inner patience and outer patience are connected, and we can look at them as gradual stages (as figure 14 explains) because you cannot be patient with others if you are impatient when you deal with your desires. You cannot realize others' emotions if you cannot manage yours. You cannot trust others if you do not have enough self confidence. You cannot love or respect others if you neither love nor respect yourself.

Outer patience Dealing with others with:	Altruism and selflessness (Preferring others to oneself)
	Empathy (The ability to walk in others' shoes)
Inner patience Dealing with yourself with:	Fighting selfishness and managing your desires and emotions.



(Figure 14. The gradual stages of patience.)

To build your tranquility, you need to move from loneliness to solitude. First, you have to believe that there is no perfect man, so do not be shameful because of your defects, flaws, shortages, lack, insufficiencies, inabilities, disabilities, failures, limitations, problems, mistakes and needs. These are normal gaps inside each one of us. So, do not deny or escape from them. You need to look inside yourself, focus on

your defects and face your problems. When the philosopher Socrates explained the Ancient Greek aphorism "know yourself", he said: "The unexamined life is not worth living." Second, you have to learn how to fix your mistakes and fill your needs and gaps by yourself. You are the only one who can do that. The world outside will not do it for you. So, do not look outside for someone to fill your gaps.

However, the problem is that we see others' problems, mistakes, gaps and needs, but we do not see ours. We want others to tolerate our limitations but we do not tolerate their limitations, as the biblical quote that is attributed to Jesus:

"Why do you see the speck in your friend's eye but you do not notice the log that in your eye? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye." (Matthew 7:3-5)

However, everyone wants to fix the world, but no one want to start by fixing himself. The following Biblical quote reminds us that you will not gain anything if you would focus on the world more than yourself. Actually, you will lose your soul, if you desire to fix the world, not yourself.

"What do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?" Matthew 16:26

There are always two sides to the story. However, selfish people cannot see any side, except their own side. Also, we, as it was said in the Talmud, "see the world, not as it is, but as we are." That explains why the cheaters are more jealous, the liars do not believe anyone, the thieves have the best lockers, and the untrust worthy person complains that he cannot trust others. That is why Quran warned us of suspicions.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ

O you who believe! Avoid many suspicions, indeed some suspicions are sins. (Quran 49:12)

It is easy for us to see the evil outside us, but it is very difficult and requires much strength to admit the evil inside us. All of our actions, even the evil actions, are driven by good intentions. That is why the ends do not justify the means, because evil can be a perspective or point of view.

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا . الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

Say: "Shall we tell you of those who lose most in respect of their deeds? - "Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, while they thought that they were acquiring good by their works?" (Quran 18:103-104)

When the German philosopher Hannah Arendt had attended the trial of the former Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann in Israel in 1961, she was struck by his very ordinariness and the demeanor he exhibited of a bland bureaucrat, in contrast to the horrific crimes he stood accused of. Eichmann was not a monster, contrasting the immensity of his actions with the very ordinariness of the man himself. But his actions were not driven by malice, but rather blind dedication to the regime and his need to belong, to be a joiner. So, Arendt coined the phrase "the banality of evil" to describe the phenomenon of the tendency of ordinary people to obey orders and conform to mass opinion without a critical evaluation of the consequences of their actions. In her 1963 book "Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil", Arendt examined questions such as whether evil is radical or simply a function of thoughtlessness, and how ordinary people can commit heinous, truly evil acts, or to psychological experiments where participants are ordered to increase the intensity of electrical shocks and do so willingly in apparent disregard of any injury caused to the person shocked.

So, if everyone believes that his action is good, how can we realize if our deed is evil, not good as we believe?

أَفَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَاتٍ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا

يَصْنَعُونَ

Then is one to whom the evil of his deed has been made attractive so he considers it good [like one rightly guided]? For indeed, God sends astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. So do not let yourself perish over them in regret. Indeed, God is Knowing of what they do. (Quran 35:8)

We need to have empathy, not only to understand people, but also to be able to see our action from their views, and see how our action affects them. But if you cannot see yourself, you will see everyone as an

enemy. You would consider the life as a war. You would fight all the time, but you would never be victorious; because you did not fight yourself first.

Therefore, the Prophet Muhammad considered controlling oneself, not controlling others, as the real measure of the strength.

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ يَحْيَى، وَعَبْدُ الْأَعْلَى بْنُ حَمَّادٍ، قَالَا كِلَاهُمَا قَرَأْتُ عَلَى مَالِكٍ عَنْ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ الْمُسَيَّبِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرْعَةِ إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ " .

Abu Huraira reported God's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

The strong-man is not one who wrestles well but the strong man is one who controls himself when he is angry.

Reference : Sahih Muslim 2609 a

In-book reference : Book 45, Hadith 140

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Book 32, Hadith 6313

After the prophet Moses, the Children of Israel were oppressed. They were turned out of their homes and their families. They wanted to fight to defend themselves, but they were not ready, so God tested them to strengthen them, made them fight themselves first, sort them, and then choose who was ready among them to get His support and victory when they fight others.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَأِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّ لَهُمْ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَانَا فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ . وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ . وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ وَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُم إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ . فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ ۖ فَمَن شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي ۖ وَمَن لَّمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ ۖ فَشَرَبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ ۖ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ ۚ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُّلَاقُوا اللَّهِ كَمْ مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ . وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ . فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ ۚ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَّفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ . تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ تَنْتَلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ۖ وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

Have you not considered the assembly of the Children of Israel after [the time of] Moses when they said to their prophet,

- "Send to us a king, and we will fight in the way of God"?

He said,

- "Would you perhaps refrain from fighting if fighting was prescribed for you?"

They said,

- "And why should we not fight in the cause of God when we have been driven out from our homes and from our children?"

But when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned away, except for a few of them. And God is Knowing of the wrongdoers.

And their prophet said to them,

- "Indeed, God has sent to you Saul as a king."

They said,

- "How can he have kingship over us while we are more worthy of kingship than him and he has not been given any measure of wealth?"

He said,

- "Indeed, God has chosen him over you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature.

And God gives His sovereignty to whom He wills. And God is all-Encompassing [in favor] and Knowing."

And their prophet said to them,

- "Indeed, a sign of his kingship is that the chest will come to you in which is assurance from your Lord and a remnant of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron had left, carried by the angels. Indeed, in that is a sign for you, if you are believers."

And when Saul went forth with the soldiers, he said,

- "Indeed, God will be testing you with a river. So, whoever drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not taste it is indeed of me, excepting one who takes [from it] in the hollow of his hand."

But they drank from it, except a [very] few of them. Then when he had crossed it along with those who believed with him, they said,

- "There is no power for us today against Goliath and his soldiers."

But those who were certain that they would meet God said,

- "How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of God. And God is with the patient."

And when they went forth to [face] Goliath and his soldiers, they said,

- "Our Lord, pour upon us patience and plant firmly our feet and give us victory over the disbelieving people."

So, they defeated them by permission of God, and David killed Goliath, and God gave him the kingship and prophethood and taught him from that which He willed. And if it were not for God checking [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted, but God is full of bounty to the worlds.

These are the verses of God which We recite to you, [O Muhammad], in truth. And indeed, you are from among the messengers. (Quran 2:246-252)

God in this story teaches us that you need to fight against yourself first before you think to fight others. Before they met their enemy, God had tested the Children of Israel with three tests (Figure 15 explains these tests):

- 1- Are you too attached to the worldly life, even without any quality, or right? Would you accept oppression, or you would try to defend yourself and fight for your rights?
- 2- Can you control your desires and physical needs or do they control you?
- 3- Do you fear God more than others or do you fear them more than Him?

After each test, God excluded and ruled out the failures. That is how God sorted the children of Israel, until there were very little few of them left. But these few were ready for the battle; because they resisted their attachment to the worldly life, and they tolerate their thirst and fear. That is why God blessed them with His support and victory.

The test	Children of Israel			
When fighting was prescribed for them,	they turned away	except for a few of them		
When Saul went forth with the soldiers, he said, "Indeed, God will be testing you with a river. So, whoever drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not taste it is indeed of me, excepting one who takes [from it] in the hollow of his hand."		But they drank from it,	except a [very] few of them	
When he had crossed it along with those who believed with him,			they said, "There is no power for us today against Goliath and his soldiers."	But those who were certain that they would meet God said, "How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of God. And God is with the patient"

(Figure 15. The tests of the children of Israel.)

Chapter Eleven

Worship in Islam

Worship is a relationship natural to the human being. How a person establishes his (or her) link to whom or to what he chooses (or allows himself) to worship will define how well he can successfully fulfill his purpose in life. The quality of his choices is linked to both his personal freedom and his personal slavery. Must a person live as a "slave" in order to be truly "free"? How does Islam define these concepts?

Worship and Freedom

The two English words, “worship” and “slavery,” are equally valid translations from the same Arabic root, < د - ب - ع > or < ' - B - D >. The Arabic concept is that when you 'worship' someone you become committed to his ways so much so that, in effect, you behave as his 'slave,' his 'devoted servant.' This means you willingly submit yourself —through an act of considered and free will, not through compulsion— to his requirements, with the intent to please him (or her). 'Slavery' is a strong word and so is the Muslim's commitment to love and imitate Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in his worship of God. This commitment extends to all of life in conformity to God's Guidance, which was given through the Prophet (ﷺ) for mankind.

The human being must make everyday, ongoing choices. He can choose to be a slave to any of the following types of masters:

- 1) His desires: He is self-seeking.
- 2) People: He tries to please people and seeks their love.
- 3) God: Each person has his own details of worship based on the gifts, talents, skills and abilities with which God has blessed him—in addition to the formal rituals that Prophet Muhammad modeled for all Muslims.

Freedom in Islam is designed to liberate people from being slaves to other people or to their own harmful impulses. Instead, Islam makes people committed 'slaves,' or dutiful servants,' to the one and only true Lord, who is God, their Creator. Without this freedom from false 'deities,' people would be slaves to, and

worshippers of other slaves! That is the meaning of the Islamic testimony of faith: "There is no deity except God." We only harm ourselves if we 'deify' —that means, if we substitute for God— anyone or anything other than God. The emissary of the Islamic Army meant exactly this when he said to the Persian leader Rostam:

"We have been sent by God to rid His men from the slavish bonds to their fellow men and to make them the slaves/worshippers devoted to none but God."

The Meaning of Worship

Worship in Islam is not limited strictly to the rituals. Worship includes all our deeds, even the proper fulfillment of our worldly daily deeds, such as working to make a living, eating, drinking or even having sex, as long as we intend it to comply with the ways of God — because our Prophet taught that our deeds will be judged by God based on our intentions.

سَمِعْتُ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - عَلَى الْمِنْبَرِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِمَّا نَوَى، فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ "

The Messenger of God said: "Actions are but by intentions and every man shall have but that which he intended. Whosoever has emigrated for the sake of Allah and His messenger, then his emigration was for Allah and His messenger. Whosoever emigrated for the sake of worldly gain, or a woman [whom he desires] to marry, then his emigration is for the sake of that which [moved him] to emigrate."

(Bukhari: Book 1: Volume 1: Hadith 1)

It is worship, for example, when you choose to eat beef or lamb to avoid pork. It is worship when you choose to drink water, juice or milk to avoid alcohol.

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَاحِدِ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا لَيْثٌ، عَنْ طَاوُسٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، أَظْنُّهُ رَفَعَهُ، شَكَ لَيْثٌ، قَالَ: فِي ابْنِ آدَمَ سِتُّونَ وَثَلَاثُمِئَةً سُلَامَى، أَوْ عَظْمٍ، أَوْ مَفْصِلٍ، عَلَى كُلِّ وَاحِدٍ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ صَدَقَةٌ، كُلُّ كَلِمَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ صَدَقَةٌ، وَعَوْنُ الرَّجُلِ أَخَاهُ صَدَقَةٌ، وَالشَّرْبَةُ مِنَ الْمَاءِ يَسْتَوِيهَا صَدَقَةٌ، وَإِمَاطَةُ الْأَدَى عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ صَدَقَةٌ.

Ibn 'Abbas said, "There are 360 joints and each of them owes charity every single day. Every good word is charity. A man's helping his brother is charity. A drink of water which he gives is charity. Removing something harmful from the road is charity."

Grade : Sahih (Al-Albani) **حكم**: صحيح (الألباني)

Reference : Al-Adab Al-Mufrad 422

In-book reference : Book 24, Hadith 4

English translation : Book 24, Hadith 422

It is worship when you choose to have sex with your wife to avoid adultery. It is worship whenever you choose to do something religiously allowed or preferred, in order for you to avoid sin.

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : إِنَّ بِكُلِّ تَسْبِيحَةٍ صَدَقَةٌ وَكُلِّ تَكْبِيرَةٍ صَدَقَةٌ وَكُلِّ تَحْمِيدَةٍ صَدَقَةٌ وَكُلِّ تَهْلِيلَةٍ صَدَقَةٌ وَأَمْرٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ صَدَقَةٌ وَنَهْيٌ عَنِ مُنْكَرٍ صَدَقَةٌ وَفِي بُضْعٍ أَحَدِكُمْ صَدَقَةٌ . قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيَأْتِي أَحَدُنَا شَهْوَتُهُ وَيَكُونُ لَهُ فِيهَا أَجْرٌ قَالَ " أَرَأَيْتُمْ لَوْ وَضَعَهَا فِي حَرَامٍ أَكَانَ عَلَيْهِ فِيهَا وَزْرٌ فَكَذَلِكَ إِذَا وَضَعَهَا فِي الْحَلَالِ كَانَ لَهُ أَجْرٌ " .

Abu Dharr reported:

The Messenger of God (ﷺ) said: "Every declaration of the glorification of God there is a charity, every praise of His is a charity, every declaration that He is One is a charity, enjoining of good is a charity, forbidding of that which is evil is a charity, and sexual Intercourse (with his wife) is a charity".

They (the Companions) said: Messenger of God, is there reward for him who satisfies his sexual passion among us? He said: Tell me, if he were to devote it to something forbidden, would it not be a sin on his part? Similarly, if he were to devote it to something lawful, he should have a reward.

Reference : Sahih Muslim 1006

In-book reference : Book 12, Hadith 66

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Book 5, Hadith 2198

Conditions of Acceptable Worship

There are two conditions in order for worship to be valid, accepted by God, and rewarded:

1. Sincerity: The act of worship should be devoted to pleasing God. God says:

And they were not commanded except to worship God, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, (Quran 98:5)

2. Prescription: The acts of worship should be in accordance with the way which Allah has explicitly prescribed for worship, which is accomplished by following Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in the laws and exemplary practices he has brought:

وَحَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، وَعَبْدُ بْنُ حُمَيْدٍ، جَمِيعًا عَنْ أَبِي عَامِرٍ، قَالَ عَبْدُ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْمَلِكِ بْنُ عَمْرِو، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ الزُّهْرِيُّ، عَنْ سَعْدِ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، قَالَ سَأَلْتُ الْقَاسِمَ بْنَ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ رَجُلٍ، لَهُ ثَلَاثَةُ مَسَاكِينَ فَأَوْصَى بِثَلَاثِ كُلِّ مَسْكَنِ مِنْهَا قَالَ يُجْمَعُ ذَلِكَ كُلُّهُ فِي مَسْكَنِ وَاحِدٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي عَائِشَةُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " مَنْ عَمِلَ عَمَلًا لَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرُنَا فَهُوَ رَدٌّ " .

Sa'd b. Ibrahim reported:

I asked Qasim b. Muhammad about a person who had three dwelling houses and he willed away the third part of every one of these houses; he (Qasim b. Muhammad) said: All of them [the willed away parts] could be combined in one house [and been beneficial];" and then said: 'A'isha informed me that God's Messenger (ﷺ) said: He who did any act for which there is no sanction from our behalf, that is to be rejected.

Reference : Sahih Muslim 1718 b

In-book reference : Book 30, Hadith 24

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Book 18, Hadith 4267

For example, making a living is considered as rewardable worship if your work is something allowed in Islam, accompanied by a good intention, performed with excellence, and it does not keep you away from practicing your religious obligations, such as prayer and fasting.

Types of Worship

So, worship in Islam is of two different types: ritualistic (legislated) and practical. Ritualistic worship is how to respond to your Creator through prayer, charity, fasting and pilgrimage. (While these practices are prescribed in the Quran and spelled out for us by the example and instructions of the Prophet, it is not our purpose to elaborate on these here.) Practical worship is how to respond to yourself and all creation in general—in honesty, justice, mercy, integrity, tranquility, chastity, virtue ... etc.

Figure 16 compares these two complementary and mutually dependent modes of worship.

Worship in Islam	
Ritualistic (legislated)	Practical
How to respond to your creator.	How to respond to yourself and to other creations, including animals and all life forms.
Prayer, charity, fasting and pilgrimage.	Honesty, justice, mercy, integrity, tranquility, chastity, virtue ... etc.
Needs the practical worship to be valid and accepted.	Needs correct and sincere intention in order to be valid and acceptable.

(Figure 16. Ritualistic and practical worships.)

Ritualistic and Practical worship

God is worthy of worship and humans are the benefactors when they worship their Creator. In fact, as we accumulate its promised rewards, like compounding credit to our account, we come closer to our Lord. How to ensure that we receive the maximum benefits of our worship? Practical worship is not valid and will not be accepted without proper intention, and ritualistic worship is not valid and will not be accepted unless the practical worship is valid and accepted. This is because your rituals have no meaning if they are not translated into your daily life. Practical worship is about how to handle yourself and your fellow creations. Practical worship is very dear to God; the lack of it is just as repulsive to Him.

حَدَّثَنَا نَصْرُ بْنُ عَلِيٍّ، أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ الْأَعْلَى، حَدَّثَنَا عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عُمَرَ، عَنْ نَافِعٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا - عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " دَخَلَتْ امْرَأَةٌ النَّارَ فِي هِرَّةٍ رَبَطَتْهَا، فَلَمْ تُطْعَمْهَا، وَلَمْ تَدَعْهَا تَأْكُلْ مِنْ خَشَاشِ الْأَرْضِ ". قَالَ وَحَدَّثَنَا عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ عَنْ سَعِيدِ الْمُقْبَرِيِّ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِثْلَهُ.

Narrated Ibn `Umar:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A woman entered the (Hell) Fire because of a cat which she had tied, neither giving it food nor setting it free to eat from the vermin of the earth. "

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 3318

In-book reference : Book 59, Hadith 124

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 4, Book 54, Hadith 535

Actually, bad character, the Prophet said (below), spoils a deed just like vinegar spoils honey. As with the example of Abel's treatment of Cain in the Quran— God does not accept the deeds of the non-righteous.

إِنَّمَا يَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

""Indeed, God only accepts from the righteous." (Quran 5:27)

As the prophet taught us, God is good and does not accept other than what is good. So, he will not accept your worship if you continue to make a living from sinful means, or if you do refuse to develop a wholesome source of earning a living.

وَحَدَّثَنِي أَبُو كُرَيْبٍ، مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْعَلَاءِ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو أُسَامَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا فَضِيلُ بْنُ مَرْزُوقٍ، حَدَّثَنِي عَدِيُّ بْنُ ثَابِتٍ، عَنْ أَبِي حَازِمٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ طَيِّبٌ لَا يَقْبَلُ إِلَّا طَيِّبًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِمَا أَمَرَ بِهِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ فَقَالَ { يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ } وَقَالَ { يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ } " . ثُمَّ ذَكَرَ الرَّجُلَ يُطِيلُ السَّفَرَ أَشْعَثَ أَغْبَرَ يَمُدُّ يَدَيْهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ يَا رَبِّ يَا رَبِّ وَمَطْعَمُهُ حَرَامٌ وَمَشْرَبُهُ حَرَامٌ وَمَلْبَسُهُ حَرَامٌ وَغُذِيَ بِالْحَرَامِ فَأَنَّى يُسْتَجَابُ لِذَلِكَ " .

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying:

O people, God is good and He therefore, accepts only that which is good. And God commanded the believers as He commanded the Messengers by saying: "O Messengers, eat of the good things, and do good

deeds; verily I am aware of what you do" (23:51). And He said: "O those who believe, eat of the good things that We gave you" (2:172). He then made a mention of a person who travels widely, his hair disheveled and covered with dust. He lifts his hand towards the sky (and thus makes the supplication): "O Lord, O Lord," whereas his diet is unlawful, his drink is unlawful, and his clothes are unlawful and his nourishment is unlawful. How can then his supplication be accepted?

Reference : Sahih Muslim 1015

In-book reference : Book 12, Hadith 83

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Book 5, Hadith 2214

Nor will your prayer be valid or accepted if you curse, steal, shed blood, or harm others.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " أَتَدْرُونَ مَا الْمُفْلِسُ " . قَالُوا الْمُفْلِسُ فِينَا مَنْ لَا دِرْهَمَ لَهُ وَلَا مَتَاعَ . فَقَالَ " إِنَّ الْمُفْلِسَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يَأْتِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِصَلَاةٍ وَصِيَامٍ وَزَكَاةٍ وَيَأْتِي قَدْ شَتَمَ هَذَا وَكَذَبَ هَذَا وَأَكَلَ مَالَ هَذَا وَسَفَكَ دَمَ هَذَا وَضَرَبَ هَذَا فَيُعْطَى هَذَا مِنْ حَسَنَاتِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ حَسَنَاتِهِ فَإِنْ فَنِيَتْ حَسَنَاتُهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُقْضَى مَا عَلَيْهِ أُخِذَ مِنْ خَطَايَاهُمْ فَطُرِحَتْ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ طُرِحَ فِي النَّارِ " .

Abu Hurairah (May God bepleased with him) reported:

Messenger of God (ﷺ) said, "Do you know who the bankrupt is?" They said: "The bankrupt among us is one who has neither money with him nor any property". He said, "The real bankrupt of my Ummah would be he who would come on the Day of Resurrection with Salat, Saum and Sadaqah (charity), (but he will find himself bankrupt on that day as he will have exhausted the good deeds) because he reviled others, brought calumny against others, unlawfully devoured the wealth of others, shed the blood of others and beat others; so his good deeds would be credited to the account of those (who suffered at his hand). If his good deeds fall short to clear the account, their sins would be entered in his account and he would be thrown in the (Hell) Fire".

Reference : Sahih Muslim 2581

In-book reference : Book 45, Hadith 77

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Book 32, Hadith 6251

Your charity will not be valid or accepted if you humiliate the poor.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا ۖ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

O you who have believed, do not invalidate your charities with reminders of your generosity or by injury as does one who spends his wealth [only] to be seen by the people and does not believe in God and the Last Day. His example is like that of a [large] smooth stone upon which is dust and is hit by a downpour that leaves it bare. They are unable [to keep] anything of what they have earned. And God does not guide the disbelieving people. (Quran 2:264)

And your fasting will not be valid or accepted if you lie.

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صلى الله عليه وسلم - { مَنْ لَمْ يَدَعْ قَوْلَ الزُّورِ وَالْعَمَلَ بِهِ، وَالْجَهْلَ، فَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ حَاجَةٌ فِي أَنْ يَدَعَ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "If one does not stop lying and false conduct, Allah has no need that he should abstain from his food and his drink."

[Al-Bukhari].

English reference : Book 5, Hadith 684

Arabic reference : Book 5, Hadith 663

But on the other hand, your practical worship could be the reason why God would forgive your sins.

حَدَّثَنَا الْحَسَنُ بْنُ الصَّبَّاحِ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ الْأَزْرَقِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا عَوْفٌ، عَنِ الْحَسَنِ، وَابْنِ سِيرِينَ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " غُفِرَ لِمَرْأَةٍ مُؤْمِسَةٍ مَرَّتْ بِكَلْبٍ عَلَى رَأْسِ رَكِيٍّ يَلْهَثُ، قَالَ كَادَ يَقْتُلُهُ الْعَطَشُ، فَتَرَكَتْ حُفَّهَا، فَأَوْثَقَتْهُ بِخِمَارِهَا، فَتَرَكَتْ لَهُ مِنَ الْمَاءِ، فَعَفَرَ لَهَا بِذَلِكَ " .

Narrated Abu Huraira:

God's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "A prostitute was forgiven by God, because, passing by a panting dog near a well and seeing that the dog was about to die of thirst, she took off her shoe, and tying it with her head-cover she drew out some water for it. So, God forgave her because of that."

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 3321

In-book reference : Book 59, Hadith 127

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 4, Book 54, Hadith 538

God forgives people in response to their praiseworthy practical worship because good manners are the goal and the purpose of the Islamic message.

وَحَدَّثَنِي عَنْ مَالِكٍ، أَنَّهُ قَدْ بَلَغَهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ حُسْنَ الْأَخْلَاقِ " .

Yahya related to me from Malik that he had heard that the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, said, "I was sent to perfect good character."

Reference: Muwatta Malik

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Book 47, Hadith 8

Arabic reference : Book 47, Hadith 1643

Prophet Muhammad gave us examples of these good character traits in the following statement:

وعن عبد الله بن عمرو بن العاص رضي الله عنهما أن رجلا سأل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: أي الإسلام خير؟ قال: "تطعم الطعام، وتقرأ السلام على من عرفت ومن لم تعرف". ((متفق عليه)).

'Abdullah bin 'Amr bin Al-'as (May God be pleased with them) reported:

A man asked the Messenger of God (ﷺ): "Which act in Islam is the best?" He (ﷺ) replied, "To feed (the poor and the needy), and to greet everyone, whether you know or you do not."

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Sunnah.com reference: Book 6, Hadith 1

Arabic/English book reference : Book 6, Hadith 845

Also, being characterized by practical worship is the definition of the believing Muslim. The Prophet did not define the believing Muslim as the one who prays, gives charity, fasts, or performs pilgrimage. Rather, he defined the believing Muslim as the one from whose tongue and hand, the people and their lives and wealth are safe from.

أَخْبَرَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ ابْنِ عَجَلَانَ، عَنِ الْقَعْقَاعِ بْنِ حَكِيمٍ، عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ النَّاسُ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُ مَنْ أَمِنَهُ النَّاسُ عَلَى دِمَائِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ " .

It was narrated from Abu Hurairah that:

The Messenger of God [SAW] said: "The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the people are safe, and the believer is the one from whom the people's lives and wealth are safe."

Grade : **Sahih** (Darussalam)

Reference : Sunan an-Nasa'i 4995

In-book reference : Book 47, Hadith 11

English translation : Vol. 6, Book 47, Hadith 4998

Over all, practical worship is the best way to invite people to Islam, because a Muslim can be an advocate of Islam without speaking a word. People are much more affected by seeing deeds than by hearing words. That is why Prophet Muhammad considers the best person to be the one most beneficial to others, and the best deed to be the deed that causes happiness to others, such as helping and supporting the sad, the debtor, and the hungry. These practical forms of worship are better even than the worship for one month in the second holiest mosque... the mosque of Medina, where Muslims pay thousands of dollars to travel and pray there just for a few days!

عن ابن عمر رضي الله عنهما، أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: أحب الناس إلى الله أنفعهم، وأحب الأعمال إلى الله عز وجل سرور تدخله على مسلم، أو تكشف عنه كربة، أو تقضي عنه ديناً، أو تطرد عنه جوعاً، ولأن أمشي مع أخي المسلم في حاجة أحب إلي من أن أعتكف في المسجد شهراً، ومن كف غضبه ستر الله عورته، ومن كظم غيظاً، ولو شاء أن يمضيه أمضاه، ملأ الله قلبه رضى يوم القيامة، ومن مشى مع أخيه المسلم في حاجته حتى يثبتها له، أثبت الله تعالى قدمه يوم تزل الأقدام، وإن سوء الخلق ليفسد العمل، كما يفسد الخل العسل.

On the authority of Ibn Umar who said: 'A man came to the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him - said: '

O Messenger of God! Which of the people are the most beloved to God and which of the actions are most beloved to God?'

The Messenger of God - peace and blessings be upon him - said:

The most beloved people to God are those that bring most benefit to other people, and the most beloved of deeds to God be He Exalted and Glorified, is bringing happiness upon a Muslim or removing a worry from him, or to pay his debt, or to remove his hunger. For me, to walk with a brother in order to assist him is more beloved to me than to stay in this mosque (Masjid al-Madeenah) for worship for a month. Whoever holds back his anger, God will cover his faults. Whoever suppresses his rage, even though he could fulfill his anger if he wished, then God will secure his heart on the Day of Resurrection. And whoever walks with his brother to fulfill his need until he secures it for him, God will secure his feet for him on the day when feet are unsteady, and bad character will spoil a deed just like vinegar spoils honey”.

Taken from Silsilah Ahadeeth As-Saheehah of Shaykh Al-Albaani. No. 906

[Collected by Abu Ya’lah]

Source: al-Mu‘jam al-Awsat 6192

Grade: Sahih (authentic) according to Al-Albani

Faith and Practical worship

Your faith is not an empty word. It has its own 'right' to be applied in your life. It has conditions that must be fulfilled in order for it to be valid before your Creator.

((من قال : إله إلا الله بحقها دخل الجنة، قيل : وما حقها ؟ قال : أن تحجزه عن محارم الله))

Prophet Muhammad said: “Whoever says ‘I believe that there is no deity except the God’ with its right will enter paradise”. The companions asked him: “what is its right?” He said: “To keep him away from what God forbids.”

Practical worship is the condition for faith to be accepted as valid; this means that your faith is not valid unless your practical worship is valid. That is why the prophet told his Companions that they should do good deeds if they really believe.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: "مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكَلِّمْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ، وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ جَارَهُ، وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ ضَيْفَهُ." [رواه البخاري ومسلم]

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

“Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should speak a good word or remain silent.

Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should honor his neighbor.

Whoever believes in God and the Last Day should be hospitable to his guest.

[Al-Bukhari] [Muslim]

Reference : 40 Hadith Nawawi 15

On the other hand, practical worship is not rewarded by God, if you did not intend it specifically to please God, to be in conformity with His ways. Thus, without faith an act of worship is not valid and is not acceptable to Him.

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ أَشْأَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادٍ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ لَّا يَقْدِرُونَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا عَلَى شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ

The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they are unable [to keep] from what they earned a [single] thing. That is what extreme error is. (Quran 14:18)

Purpose of worship

God tells us in the Quran that He created us to worship Him.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me. (Quran 51:56)

So, worship is the aim of our existence, the goal of our creation and the purpose of our life. But why? Does God need our worship? Of course, not. He is self-sufficient, so it is we who need Him, not H who needs us.

مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعَمُوا . إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ

I do not want from them any provision, nor do I want them to feed Me. Indeed, it is God who is the [continual] Provider, the firm possessor of strength. (Quran 51:57-58)

So, why did God create us and tell us to intend all our deeds for Him and to do everything intentionally for Him? Why does He want us to do that? And, by the way, which is it? Did God create us to worship Him? Or to be His representatives?

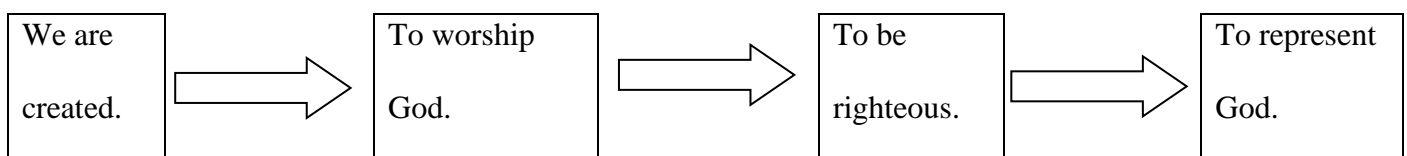
Actually, there is no conflict between the two purposes: God wants us to intend all our deeds for Him so as for us to be good representatives of Him, good stewards for Him on this earth. In the following verse, God explained His purpose in requiring our ritualistic and practical worshipping directed to Him as being our resulting righteousness:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous. (Quran 2:21)

If you are a representative you should intend everything you do for the one you represent, not for your own interests. The representative should submit himself to the one who is being represented. That is the meaning of Islam. Islam is an Arabic word, which mean “Submission”. Islam is a religion whose followers submit themselves to their creator... God. (Figure 15 explains the purposes of our existence).

Figure 17 shows graphically the purposes of our existence as a sequence of stages.



(Figure 17. The purposes of our creating)

The representative should be closely connected with the one he represents. Worship is that connection between the representative and his Creator. The Arabic word for prayer is “*ṣalat*” which means 'connection.' So then, “*ṣalat*” is your direct, authentic, daily re-connection with your Creator.

When Prophet Muhammad defined what excellence (*iḥṣān*) is in Islam, he said:

أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ .

"It is to worship God as if you see Him, and although you cannot see Him, He is constantly watching over you."

(Reference: 40 Hadith Nawawi)

Staying Mindful of God

So, to sum up the meaning of worship (*'ibādah*) as prescribed in Islam: Islamic worship —both ritualistic and practical— is designed to make us mindful of God. Our devotion (willful 'slavery') to pleasing God results in our pure intention to meet His standards of ritualistic acts of worship AND His standards of practical acts of worship, which benefit ourselves and others. By the two forms of worship (intentional self-"slavery") working together, we are purified and made righteous before God, qualified to truly represent our Lord in this earthly life. Both are defined for us through the Quran and the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

Does our continual attention to worship mean we cannot have any interest in the worldly life? No. Of course, we can enjoy our worldly life, which topic we will discuss in chapter sixteen.

Chapter Twelve

Righteousness

Translations of “Taqwa”

“Taqwa” is an essential Islamic term. Linguistically, this term is from the Arabic root, < و - ق - ي > or < w - q - y >, which means “to protect”. In Islamic terminology, “Taqwa” means to protect yourself from God’s displeasure and ultimately from His punishment. How to succeed in this? By obeying God and avoiding what He forbids. There is no one English word which fully carries this meaning, so Taqwa has been translated variously as piety, devotion, piousness, abstinence, fear of God, love for God, self-restraint, forbearance, righteousness, God cognizance, God consciousness.

One day, I was teaching an American Muslim child the Quran, and I translated the word “Taqwa” as “Fear God”. The child asked me:

- Why should we fear God?

I did not understand the question, so I asked her:

- What do you mean?

She said:

- I mean God loves us, so we should love him, not fear him.

I thought for a while, and I asked myself, “Why do Muslims talk about fearing God, while Christians talk about loving God?”, and then I answered:

- It is exactly like that. Your father loves you, and you love him, so you try to respect him by avoiding anything that makes him upset at you.

That is the meaning of “Taqwa”. So, I no longer translate *Taqwa* as “Fear of God.” It is a known tactic to use fear in order to control others. Some people ask you to fear God in order for you to fear them; this is because they imagine themselves in God’s place of authority. I prefer to translate *Taqwa* as “righteousness” as this term speaks to the Western heart and mind.

Centrality of “Taqwa”

“Taqwa” is the main goal of the whole religion. God asked us to worship Him as a step toward becoming righteous.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous. (Quran 2:21)

For example, the goal of our fasting is to become righteous.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous. (Quran 2:183)

Who is closest to God? The most honorable among us, in His assessment, He tells us, is the most righteous of us—not the most knowledgeable, not the smartest, not one or another race or gender.

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

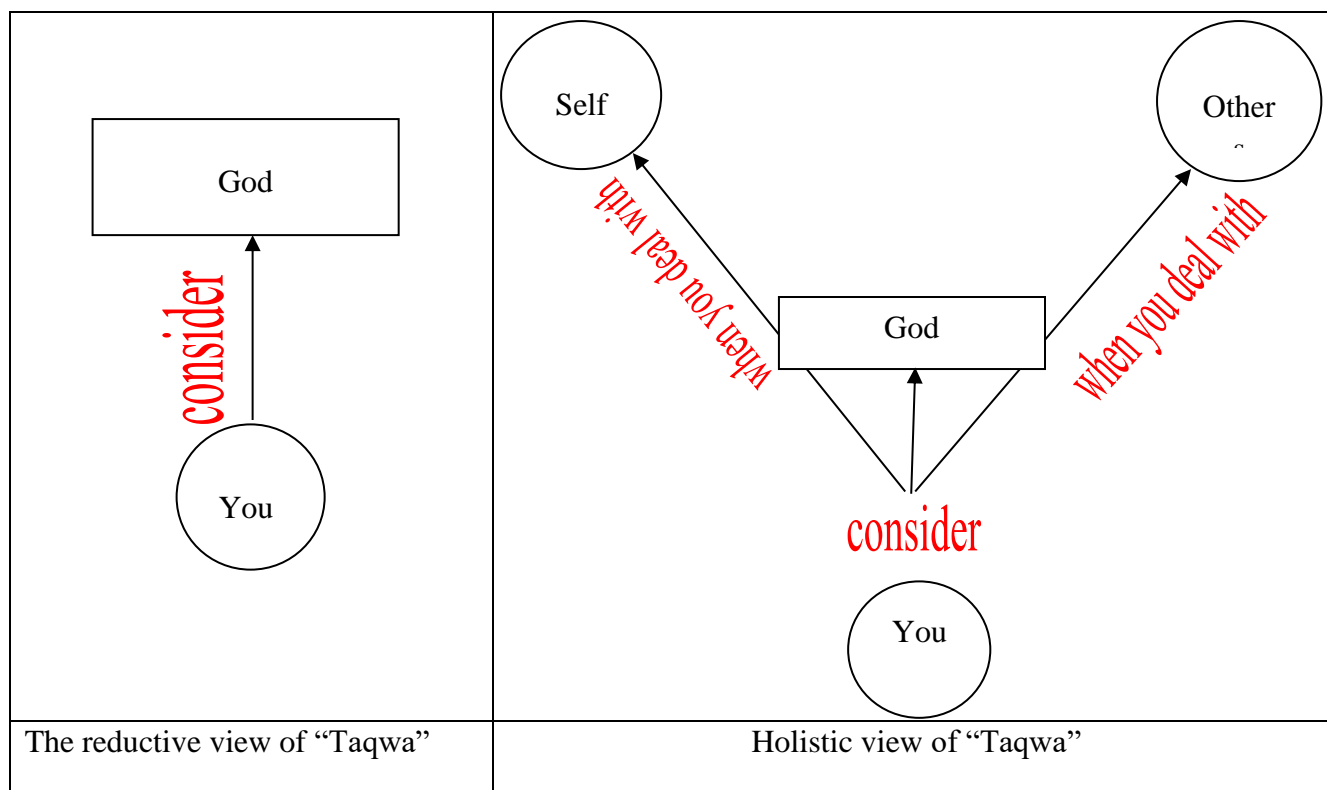
Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. (Quran 49:13)

Views of “Taqwa”

As we see, “Taqwa” is a very complicated term, yet many believers wrongly reduce it to a relationship between you and God only. This reductive view of “Taqwa” ignores that your relationship with God should be reflected on your relationships with yourself and with others. “Taqwa” is not limited to dealing with God by obeying His commands and avoiding what He forbids. It is also to consider God when you deal with yourself and with others.

In this holistic view, “Taqwa” is to have the sense of responsibility toward of God for our words, actions and all the blessings and advantages that He provides for us on this earth. This sense of responsibility should keep us from hurting others by our action or words. In addition, it helps us use His blessings and boons to satisfy our desires in a way that does not take us away from representing God and

performing the mission that we were created for. (Figure 18 compares the reductive and holistic views of “Taqwa”).



(Figure 18. The reductive and holistic views of “Taqwa”)

Considering God when you deal with yourself

“Taqwa” is to have a sense of responsibility for all the blessings and favors that God offers us on this earth. You consider God when you deal with yourself if you are grateful for His blessings and gifts. For example, if you use your vision to watch porn, you deny God’s blessings, but if you use it for reading His instructions, observing His creation and contemplation, you are grateful to His blessings. Chapter five distinguished these two ways of using God’s blessings to feed our desires.

Considering God when you deal with others

Being conscious of God and Considering Him when you deal with others is called "Karma" in the Asian religions, which believe that your intent and actions directly cause your future condition, and your

destiny is an effect of your intent and actions. It is the same meaning when a Muslim fears God's punishment in the case when he treats others badly. The word “others” here is not limited to Muslims, or even to all humans; it includes animals, too.

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مَسْلَمَةَ، عَنْ مَالِكٍ، عَنْ سُمَيٍّ، مَوْلَى أَبِي بَكْرٍ عَنْ أَبِي صَالِحٍ السَّمَّانِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " بَيْنَا رَجُلٌ بِطَرِيقٍ، اشْتَدَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَطَشُ فَوَجَدَ بِئْرًا فَنَزَلَ فِيهَا فَشَرِبَ، ثُمَّ خَرَجَ، فَإِذَا كَلْبٌ يُلْهَثُ يَأْكُلُ التُّرَى مِنَ الْعَطَشِ، فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ لَقَدْ بَلَغَ هَذَا الْكَلْبُ مِنَ الْعَطَشِ مِثْلُ الَّذِي كَانَ بَلَغَ مِنِّي، فَنَزَلَ الْبُئْرَ، فَمَلَأَ خُفَّهُ مَاءً، فَسَقَى الْكَلْبَ، فَشَكَرَ اللَّهُ لَهُ، فَعَفَرَ لَهُ ". قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّا لَنَا فِي الْبَهَائِمِ لِأَجْرًا فَقَالَ " فِي كُلِّ ذَاتٍ كَبِدٍ رَطْبَةٍ أَجْرٌ " .

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "A man felt very thirsty while he was on the way, there he came across a well.

He went down the well, quenched his thirst and came out. Meanwhile he saw a dog panting and licking mud because of excessive thirst. He said to himself, "This dog is suffering from thirst as I did." So, he went down the well again and filled his shoe with water and watered it. Allah thanked him for that deed and forgave him. The people said, "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! Is there a reward for us in serving the animals?" He replied: "Yes, there is a reward for serving any animate (living being)." (See Hadith No. 551)

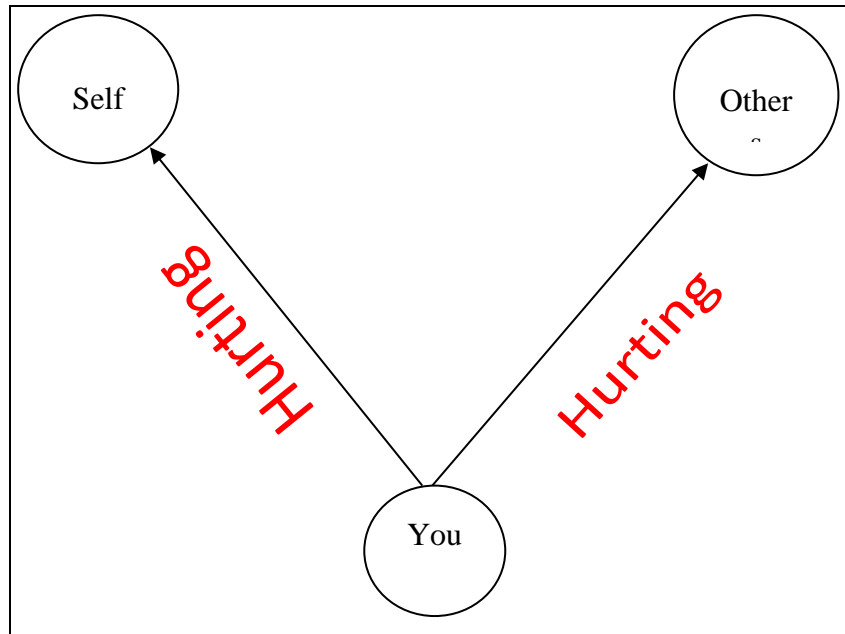
Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 2466

In-book reference : Book 46, Hadith 27

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 3, Book 43, Hadith 646

Not Considering God

I co-teach with an atheist a seminar about right and wrong. I define “sin” in the Abrahamic religions as disobedience to, or violating of, the revealed holy books; because these books are our instructional manuals. The atheist defines wrong as hurting self or others, as figure 19 explains.



(Figure 19. The atheist definition of the wrong)

When I had thought about the difference between us, I found that my definition makes some believers focus on their relationship with their creator but ignore their relationship with others. Therefore, they would be selfish, and think only about their rights and interests as long as they do not commit a sin. They cannot have empathy with others. While the atheist's definition makes the atheists focus on their relationship with others but ignore their relationship with their creator. Maybe, that is why atheists are more peaceful than some believers now, since they care only about worldly life as the only life we have, but believers care more about the hereafter, so if worldly life is messed up, we can have a better life in the hereafter.

I believe that my definition of sin includes the atheist's definition because the revealed holy books never encourage you to hurt yourself or others. However, the problem is that many believers now think about adultery and homosexuality only when they hear the word "Sin". They forgot that selfishness and gossip are also sins.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرْ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بُئْسَ الْإِسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَن لَّمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ . يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ

O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers.

O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful. (Quran 49:12)

On the other hand, it is not good enough to teach people that it is wrong to hurt self or others because our mind can find a reason for every evil and justify every wrong. The drug dealer says he does not force any one to buy drugs from me, and never sells drugs to a child or pregnant woman. The prostitute says she makes people happy and never hurts anyone. Therefore, we need God' guidance.

IV. Fulfill Your Purpose

Chapter Thirteen

How to Represent God?

Qualities of Representatives

Our life is a journey where we grow into this purpose. But what is the destination of our developmental process and growth journey? You cannot be a representative of a state in the capital if you were not from that state. You cannot be an ambassador of a country if you are not from that country. In the same way, you cannot be a representative of God on the earth if you are not close to God. Our development process and growth journey should bring us closer to God.

We know that God created Adam in his image.

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّزَّاقِ، عَنْ مَعْمَرٍ، عَنْ هَمَّامٍ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " خَلَقَ اللَّهُ آدَمَ عَلَى صُورَتِهِ".

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "God created Adam in His image."

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 6227

In-book reference : Book 79, Hadith 1

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 8, Book 74, Hadith 246

However, that does not mean that Adam is like God because there is nothing like unto God.

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing. (Quran 42:11)

Both God and human beings might share some attributes, such as seeing and hearing. These types of names evoke both the limited characteristics of Man and limitless attributes of God. For example, human vision is limited by health, time and place, so we cannot see farther than the horizon and skyline. But God's vision is limitless, so He can see everything, everywhere.

Prostrate and draw near [to Allah]. (Quran 96:19)

Prostrating is worship, but bringing yourself closer to your creator is spirituality. Worship is the means, but being close to your creator is the purpose. How can you bring yourself closer to God? It is not nearness in space, or time, but rather in relationship, by having qualities that are close to His qualities. It is not spatial or temporal proximity, but rather in relationship, by developing characteristics that are close to His. So, it is not quantitative nearness, rather it is qualitative nearness. We have to grow ourselves to be closer to God by developing the qualities that make us better individuals.

Dr. Lang noticed that all the qualities that human beings develop to be better individuals have their essential source and perfection in God. These qualities are defined by some of His attributes and virtues in His 99 names. The source of all these good qualities is God Himself. Thus, we grow ourselves to be closer to God by allowing ourselves to grow in these qualities, which means allowing ourselves to receive such qualities that originate from Him. For example, the Quran advises us to be patient and reminds us that patience is from God.

وَأَصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

And be patient, and your patience is but from God. (Quran 16:127)

That is why God always asks us to demonstrate His qualities. For example, God is the Honest, the Truth, and the Real.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا

But the ones who believe and do righteous deeds - We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. [It is] the promise of Allah, [which is] truth, and who is more truthful than God in statement. (Quran 4:122)

So, He asked us to be honest.

O you who have believed, fear God and be with those who are true. (Quran 9:119)

God is The Ever-Forgiving, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful, The Ever-Pardoning, Ever Relenting, The Clement, The Compassionate, and The All-Pitying, so He encourages us to pardon and forgive people.

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، وَمُسَدَّدٌ، - الْمَعْنَى - قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، عَنْ عَمْرِو، عَنْ أَبِي قَابُوسَ، مَوْلَى لِعَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، يَبْلُغُ بِهِ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " الرَّاحِمُونَ يَرْحَمُهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ ارْحَمُوا أَهْلَ الْأَرْضِ يَرْحَمَكُم مِّنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ " .

Narrated Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-'As:

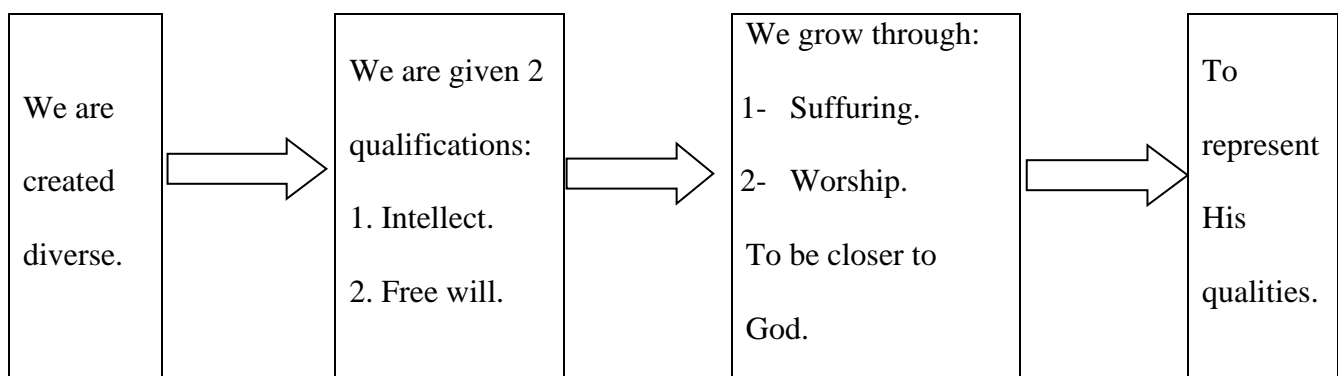
The Prophet (ﷺ) said: The Compassionate One has mercy on those who are merciful. If you show mercy to those who are on the earth, He Who is in the heaven will show mercy to you.

Grade : Sahih (Al-Albani) **صحيح** (الألباني) **حكم:**

Reference : Sunan Abi Dawud 4941

In-book reference : Book 43, Hadith 169 - English translation : Book 42, Hadith 4923

How would we represent God? We represent God when we rule the earth in His name to carry out His message, establish His law, reclaim the earth and represent His qualities that we develop when we grow ourselves to be closer to Him, such as grace, mercy, forgiveness, clemency, compassion, care, peace, love, justice, truth, wisdom, patience and pity. (Figure 20 explains how we represent God).



(Figure 20. How we represent God)

Your purpose is to establish God's law, not by violence, but by representing God's qualities. Which one of God's qualities should we represent? That is your decision. You are free to choose the quality that you want to present based on your skills. That is why you can find different people represent different aspects of God. One represents His wisdom, while another represents His mercy and compassion, and a third represents His strength and power, while a fourth represents His knowledge, sixth represents His justice and so on.

This idea is different from the concept of Monistic Pantheism/Immanence (Unity of Existence or Annihilation in God) in the Sufi school of thought because it is impossible for the infinite and finite to be merged. The infinite does not exist in the finite, and the finite cannot embody the infinite, but can represent Him. God and humans are neither one nor separated. Rather, they are in a relationship.

In addition, it is different from the concept of Hakamiyya (No one has the right to rule except God) in Jihadist-Salafism. Actually, most Salafi Jihadists try to take the position of God. They believe that they hold the absolute truth, so they think they have the right to decide who deserves to live or die. In their mind, they protect the right of God to rule His creatures, but if it is true, so God should worship them, not they worship God. They fight rulers to rule by themselves. They allow themselves to betray others because they were betrayed and oppress others because they were oppressed. They forget the prophet's advice about treating others, as you want to be treated, not as they treat you.

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : "من أحب أن يزحزح عن النار، ويدخل الجنة، فلتأته منيته وهو يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر، وليأت إلى الناس الذي يحب أن يؤتى إليه" ((رواه مسلم)).

'Abdullah bin 'Amr bin Al-'As (May Allah be pleased with them) said:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "He who desires to be rescued from the fire of Hell and to enter Jannah, should die in a state of complete belief in God and the Last Day, and should do unto others what he wishes to be done unto him."

[Muslim].

Sunnah.com reference : Book 18, Hadith 56

God wants us to represent Him in good deeds, and He does not want your representation if you try to represent Him by betrayal, oppression or murder. If that is what your belief enjoins you to do, it is the worst belief.

قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

Say, "How wretched is that which your faith enjoins upon you, if you should be believers." (Quran 2:93)

God does not want this type of belief. Your belief would not benefit God, but it should make you a better person and encourage you to do good deeds.

يَمُنُونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَا تَمُنُوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُمْ بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

They consider it a favor to you that they have accepted Islam. Say, "Do not consider your Islam a favor to me. Rather, God has conferred favor upon you that He has guided you to the faith, if you should be truthful." (Quran 49:17)

The purpose of humans is to reclaim the earth by accumulation, generation and application of knowledge. This type of knowledge is not limited only to scientists or scholars, but it also includes the parents when they transmit their knowledge to their kids. Every person adds something different to humanity. It is does not matter if your addition is small or big, but it matters if it is good or evil.

What is the Role?

Every picture represents its artist by revealing his creativity, skills, emotions and thoughts. Likewise, all creatures represent the creator.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلُوكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَخْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason. (Quran 2:164)

Intellect and free choice give the human a unique way to represent God. This unique way is the responsibility, as we explained in chapter five and chapter twelve.

In the 1994 movie "The Lion King", "Mufasa" explained this responsibility to his son "Simba" when he told him: "There's more to being king than- getting your way all the time.... Everything you see exists together, in a delicate balance. As king, you need to understand that balance, and respect all the creatures-- from the crawling ant to the leaping antelope... (We eat the antelope) ...Yes..., but...When we die, our bodies become the grass. And the antelope eat the grass. And so, we are all connected in the great Circle of Life."

"Mufasa" was a symbol of the man who lives for a purpose and tries to fill his role in life. On the contrary, "Scar" was a symbol of the selfish man who does not care about anything except feeding his desires, and "Timon" and "Pumbaa" were a symbol of the nihilists who believe that our life is meaningless and absurd.

This conflict between Mufasa and Scar is the conflict between good and evil, responsibility and selfishness, and purpose and triviality. This conflict is the history of the human race and it will continue as long as humans still reside on the earth.

When Philosophers, thinkers, and theorists use the term "End of History", they mean that human history develops in an ascending uni-linear through connected conflicts between the contradictions, until it reaches a point where it becomes completely static and free from any conflict or contradiction.

So, "End of history" does not mean end of humans. Rather, it means the end of the conflicts and the beginning of a simple and monocular history, such as Utopia for idealists, communism for communists or Messianic Age for conservative religious people.

Although all of their differences, the common value among communists, idealists and conservative religious people is progression. It is the most important value in their thoughts. It is more important even than equality and justice for communists, more than liberty for idealists and more than the spirituality for conservative religious people. Progression is to push human history to reach this point of end, and to remove all obstacles that resist this progress. For example, liberals try to fight national thoughts and to restrict religious values to only the worship places. Communists encourage the working class to overthrow the bourgeoisie to seize the means of production. Conservative religious people believe that followers of Abrahamic religions will go to a very bloody war before the return of Jesus.

At the end of history, a Savior should come to create an earthly paradise and fill the earth with justice after it was filled with oppression and persecution. This Savior is Jesus for conservative religious people, science for liberals and the labour revolt for communists.

End of history is end of man as we know now, and the beginning of new man. The new man will not be the same complex and social being who is able to have a free moral choice. Instead, he will be a man without a sin, as conservative religious people believe. He will live according to equality and justice, as communists think. He would live according to the scientific laws of physical nature, so he can be scientific controlled, as liberals think.

The problem with all these thoughts, even the religious ones, is that they see everything as merely a pure, useful, relativistic and unsanctified substance (matter). So, they try to subordinate everything to the rule of reason and the law of numbers. Therefore, they excluded all non-material considerations, such as metaphysics and idiosyncrasies because they cannot be measured, controlled, or used. When they do that, they isolate our world from its center, as if the center of the universe lies in it, not outside. They marginalize God, so they can play His role, but without succession from Him. As a result of all that, they **use** people as **material** to make themselves more useful. For example, they transfer millions of Jews from Europe to settle Palestine. They had to remove anything could obstruct this process, even if these obstacles were another people. This is what happens to the Palestinians now, and what happened to the German Jews and the American Indians before.

There is a deep difference between the concept of "End of History" and "Judgement Day" because "Judgement Day" is outside of worldly history. It is in the Hereafter, but worldly history is heading towards it to be held accountable. This means that worldly history will never be free from conflict and stampede. The duality between good and evil is will never disappear, as long as the humans live on the earth. Despite its chaos, worldly history has an aim and purpose, but it does not develop in an ascending uni-linear. Rather, it develops through continuing attempts and failures... victories and defeats... mistakes and forgiveness... some steps ahead and few steps back. So, there will never be an earthly paradise.

1 in 4 of lions' hunts is successful. Although 75% of attempts failed, lions keep chasing their prey and never give up, because there is no such thing as wasted effort. Every time they fail, they learn a new strategy and acquire a new skill. It is nature's law, but it seems like humans struggle to understand it.

وَلَا تَيْأَسُوا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَيْأَسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

O my sons, go and find out about Joseph and his brother and despair not of relief from Allah. Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people." (12:87)

For its development, history needs belief, passion and cognitive accumulation. That is why we have to be patient. We have to use our reason to understand the world that we did not create, but it was created in our absence. When we understand this world in this way, we can plan how to deal with it.

Chapter Fourteen

Does Jihad Fulfill our Purpose?

Yes, Jihad fulfills our purpose. How? And what is Jihad? Jihad is an Arabic word that means struggle, resisting, or striving, and it does not mean “fight” or “war.” The Arabic word for fight is “Qital” and for war is “Harb.” Of course, you need to struggle, strive and resist your desires in order to live your life for a purpose. However, it is very easy to waste your life in games and staying up late at night in bars drinking beer, watching sports, not working and depend on others to provide for you.

Which life is better? The quiet life of animals who eat, drink, sleep, and reproduce without anxiety, confusion, fluctuation, change or surprise? Or the rough life of humans that is full of confusion, fear and anxiety, ongoing thinking in every situation and constant search for God and the purpose of the universe? Which one do you prefer? The adventure or a safe life that you know its end? Shocking reality or comfortable illusion? Humans' life is exciting and enjoyable because of the search to choose our ways and because of our journey to reach a great goal, even if others preceded us.

Spiritual Jihad

There are two different types of jihad. The first type of jihad is the greater jihad, which is an inner spiritual struggle. Prophet Muhammad explained this type of jihad when he told his companions after a war:

"رجعنا من الجهاد الأصغر إلى الجهاد الأكبر." قالوا: وما الجهاد الأكبر؟ قال: جهاد النفس

On the authority of Jabir:

“We came from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad”. They asked him: “What is the greater jihad?”

He said: “The struggle against oneself”.

(*Kitab Al-Zuhd* of Al-Bayhâqî – graded *Da’îf* / Weak in chain of transmission; mentioned also by Al-^CIrâqî, Al-Ghazâlî, and by Al-Suyûtî on the authority of Ibn Hajar)

The greater jihad is to learn patience and self-control, and is to manage your desires, emotions, and conflicts, instead of letting your desires lead you as an animal. By this type of jihad, you can clean your inner soul and transfer it from the soul that is prone to evil to be a reassured soul.

First time you smoked a cigarette, your body was clean and pure, so it did not like smoking and resisted it by coughing. However, you forced it to accept it to prove that you were not a child. Step by step, your body accepted smoking and later became addicted, so even if you change your mind later and want to quit, your body would refuse. It requires smoking because you spoiled it and you made it a persistent enjoiner of evil. That is how the sin affects your spirit, soul and body. It is normal to commit a sin, but it is not normal to continue. You need to clean yourself by repentance after every time you commit a sin. It is exactly like washing a pan after every time you cook in, to remove the black layer. Try to imagine if you never wash this pan and continue cook in. Do not wait until the impacts of the sins accumulate on your heart as heavy layers and block it.

If you take a wrong train, try to exit at the first station because the longer the distance the more expensive the return. It is the same thing if you take the train of sin. Although God is Forgiving and Merciful, it will be more difficult for you to quit sin that you are addicted to.

It is a spiritual journey when you try to purify and cleanse your mind, heart, and soul from the effect of the sin, by repentance, seeking to return to God's original design. This journey is a goal, not the destination because you will never reach it. You will never be perfect. You will never be god. However, you should try to reach the destination, even though you will never reach it. It is better to die on this path.

Actually, all Islamic worship rituals are patience exercises to achieve your purpose, empower you and prepare you to play your role as a successive authority of God. For example, we resist our laziness when we pray, and we fight our selfishness and greed when we give charity. In addition, fasting is a very good tool that can help you in your inner spiritual struggle. We resist our desire for food and drink, we tolerate hunger and thirst and wait patiently until the time God makes it for you to eat. Prophet Muhammad considered worship as Jihad because all forms of worship require a struggle to be performed.

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا خَالِدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا حَبِيبُ بْنُ أَبِي عَمْرَةَ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ بِنْتِ طَلْحَةَ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا - أَنَّهَا قَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ

تُرَى الْجِهَادَ أَفْضَلَ الْعَمَلِ، أَفَلَا نُجَاهِدُ قَالَ " لَكِنَّ أَفْضَلَ الْجِهَادِ حَجٌّ مَبْرُورٌ " .

Narrated `Aisha:

(That she said), "O God's Messenger (ﷺ)! We consider Jihad as the best deed. Should we not fight in Allah's Cause?" He said, "The best Jihad is accepted Hajj.

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 2784

In-book reference : Book 56, Hadith 3

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 4, Book 52, Hadith 43

Verbal Jihad

The second type of jihad is the lesser jihad, which is an outer struggle against the enemies of Muslims, which may take a physical and violent form (war) or verbal and non-violent form (advice). Therefore, Islam considers your struggle against your soul is greater than your struggle against your enemies! (Figure 21 explains the differences among the three types of Jihad).

	Jihad		
	Greater jihad	Lesser jihad	
Action	The struggle against oneself.	Non-violent	Violent
		The word of justice in front of the oppressive ruler.	To defend, not to attack.
Realm	Spiritual	Verbal	Physical (military)
Opponent	Against yourself.	Against the oppressive ruler.	Against who fight you.

(Figure 21. Three types of Jihad.)

Non-violent jihad, in our modern terms, is the diplomatic way to solve problems. Prophet Muhammad explained it when he said:

عَنْ طَارِقِ بْنِ شِهَابٍ، أَنَّ رَجُلًا، سَأَلَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَقَدْ وَضَعَ رِجْلَهُ فِي الْعِزْرِ أَيْ الْجِهَادِ أَفْضَلُ قَالَ "كَلِمَةٌ حَقٌّ عِنْدَ سُلْطَانٍ جَائِرٍ".

A man asked the Prophet, when he had put his leg in the stirrup: "which kind of Jihad is best?" He said: "a word of truth spoken before an unjust ruler."

Grade: Hasan (Darussalam) - Reference: Sunan an-Nasa'i 4209

Islam does not accept oppression, aggression or persecution. It does not support dictatorship, and it requires Muslims to have a duty of holding the ruler accountable. It is a sin when you wrong yourself and accept the oppression and living without any quality or right life like animals, so if you have weakness and you cannot fight for your life, Quran encourages you to move to another land where you can have a better life as the human that God honors.

Military Jihad

When we study the Prophet Muhammad's life, we learn how to deal with aggression as Muslims. The Meccans denied Prophet Muhammad, mocked him and called him a sorcerer, a poet and insane. They hit him until he was bleeding. They killed his companions and tried to kill him. They forced him to leave his homeland, and they fought against him through psychological and physical wars, just to prevent him from practicing his religion. So, what was his reaction? Actually, his reactions were gradual:

His first reaction was spiritual Jihad. He practiced the strategies of non-resistance, which is non-violent, passive or civil resistance. He responded to their violence by patience and forgiveness. He even refused to ask God to take revenge for him. Instead, he supplicated to God to forgive and guide them. In addition, he asked his companions to do the same.

His second reaction was verbal Jihad. He tried to explain his beliefs and emphasized the freedom of religion.

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

For you is your religion, and for me is my religion." (Quran 109:6)

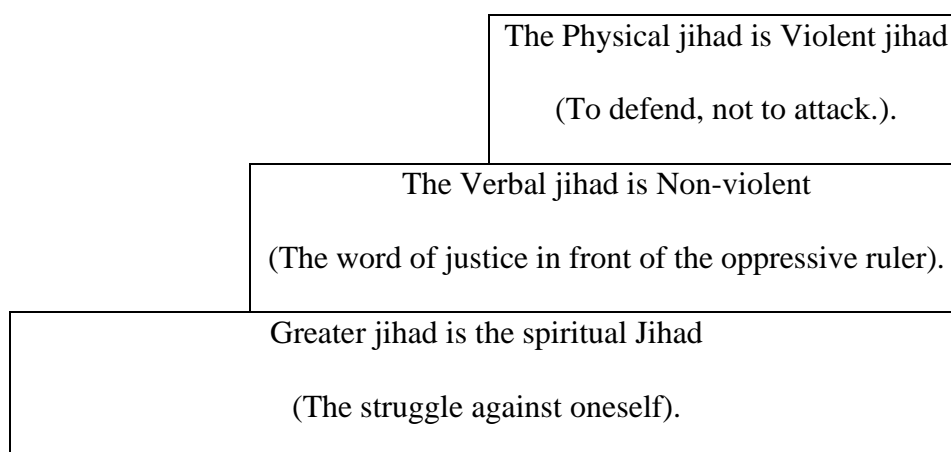
Third reaction was moving to Medina to be free and safe to practice his faith, and then he built the first Islamic state.

Fourth reaction was military Jihad, so when they attacked the state that he built in Medina, he fought back.

Fifth reaction was Spiritual Jihad again. When he won the war, he forgave his enemies and did not take revenge.

Violent jihad is the military fight in the war that is conducted by a government, not individuals. That is why Prophet Muhammad did not fight Meccans back, until he moved to Medina and built the first Islamic state.

We can look at these three different types of Jihad as three gradual stages, as figure 22 explains. Only gradually jihad can become possible, because you need to fight against yourself first before you think to fight others, and you cannot beat your enemy before beating yourself first, as we mentioned in chapter ten when talked about the Children of Israel's story after the prophet Moses.



(Figure 22. Three gradual stages of Jihad.)

Non-Muslims

One of the biggest western stereotypes about Jihad is that Jihad is the Holy war for Muslims to kill non-Muslims, or to terrify them to convert them to Islam.

Actually, unbelief is one of the greatest sins, but it is between the individual and his God, and its punishment is postponed to the Hereafter. Therefore, unbelief in itself is not the justification for war. Quran

states freedom of religion very clearly, so Muslims cannot wage war for propagation or implementation of Islam.

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ

There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. (Quran 2:256)

Moreover, Quran distinguished between non-Muslims who fights Muslims because of their religious belief and the non-Muslims who do not fight Muslims. Muslims have to fight the first one back to defend themselves. On the other hand, nothing forbade Muslims to have good relationships with, be righteous and acting justly toward non-Muslims who do not fight Muslims.

عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ عَادَيْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَوَدَّةً ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ . لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَىٰ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَنْ تَوَلَّوهُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

“Perhaps God will put, between you and those to whom you have been enemies among them, affection. And God is competent, and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful .God does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, God loves those who act justly. God only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion - [forbids] that you make allies of them. And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers.” (Quran 60:7-9)

Therefore, Muslim should be a good neighbor to non-Muslims, since they do not fight him because of his religion, expel him from his home, or aid in his expulsion. Also, Quran commands Muslims to maintain the family relations, uphold the ties of kinship and keep up the bonds of womb connections and kin relationships, not just for non-Muslim relatives, **even** if they strive to make you worship someone or something other than God.

وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا ۚ وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا

But if they endeavor to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness (Quran 31:15)

In addition, Quran warns Muslims not to insult the disbelievers' gods and idols.

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ زَيْنًا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلُهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

And do not insult those they invoke other than God, lest they insult God in enmity without knowledge. Thus, We have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do. (Quran 6:108)

The Quran gave Jews and Christians a special position among non-Muslims; because they worship the same God Muslims worship. The Quran called them "People of the book" because they received the heavenly revealed scriptures before the Quran, such as Torah, the Psalms, and the gospel. Therefore, the Quran asked Muslims to treat them well and not argue with them except in the best way.

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him." (Quran 29:46)

In addition, Prophet Muhammad warned Muslims not to hurt non-Muslim living under Muslim rule.

حَدَّثَنَا قَيْسُ بْنُ حَفْصٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَاحِدِ، حَدَّثَنَا الْحَسَنُ، حَدَّثَنَا مُجَاهِدٌ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا مُعَاهِدًا لَمْ يَرَحْ رَائِحَةَ الْجَنَّةِ، وَإِنَّ رِيحَهَا يُوجَدُ مِنْ مَسِيرَةِ أَرْبَعِينَ عَامًا " .

Narrated `Abdullah bin `Amr:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

"Whoever killed a person who is granted the pledge of protection by the Muslims shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years (of traveling)."

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 6914

In-book reference : Book 87, Hadith 52

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 9, Book 83, Hadith 49

By the Islamic law (Shariah), the state is obligated to protect non-Muslims living under Muslim rule... to protect the individual's life, property, and freedom of religion. Therefore, he is equal with Muslims under the laws of property, contract, and obligation. In addition, non-Muslim communities were usually governed by their own law instead of the law applicable to the Muslim community. For example, the Jewish community in Medina was allowed to have their own Jewish law (Halakha) courts.

After the Mongols had occupied Damascus in 1303, the Muslim scholar (Ibn Taymiyyah) negotiated the Mongol to release the Syrian war prisoners. When they tried to release the Muslims only, he insisted to release the non-Muslims before the Muslims.

Legitimacy of war

We explained before that we are given free will because we have reason, and we cannot have free will without reason. God legislated the military Jihad to protect this freedom. Military Jihad protects Muslims' freedom of religion, while the Islamic law (Shariah) protects non-Muslims' freedom of religion in the Islamic states.

The Qur'an stipulates one condition for this type of Jihad. It is to defend yourself, not to attack or assault anyone.

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ .

Fight in the way of God those who fight you but do not assault. Indeed. God does not like the transgressors. (Quran 2:190)

Therefore, the Islamic casus belli is restricted to self-defense to fight back those who break their pledges, to end oppression, aggression and persecution of Muslims because of their religious belief, when all other measures have failed.

أَذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلِمُوا ۖ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ . الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ

Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, God is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say, "Our Lord is God." (Qur'an 22:39-40)

This military Jihad is a defensive war, so if the enemy ceases his hostile behavior, the reason for the war lapses, and then we cannot call this war Jihad, because it is not justified.

فَإِنْ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ

But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the oppressors. (Qur'an 2:190-193)

Yes, there were some offensive wars, not defensive, in Islamic history. However, Muslims' history is not the source of Islam. The Qur'an and the prophet's traditions are the source of Islam. These types of offensive wars were political conflicts, not religious. In this time, the Islamic state became an empire, and history shows us that the world cannot handle more than one empire in each era, so the empires must fight against each other.

Preparing for Jihad

Why did not God allow Muslims to even defend themselves in Mecca or fight the disbelievers who persecuted them for their religion, but He allowed them to do it when they were in Medina? Actually, because they were too weak in Mecca to defend themselves, but they gained more power in Medina, so they could defend themselves. Therefore, some scholars argue that war may only be legitimate if Muslims have at least half the power of the enemy and thus capable of winning it.

Therefore, Muslims need to prepare themselves before they call for jihad. Without this preparation, they just commit suicide.

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ

And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of God and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of God will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged. (Qur'an 8:60)

As you read the last verse, the goal of this preparation is not to attack or even fight. It is to deter the enemy from attacking us. Therefore, it is to avoid the war.

Ethics of war

However, even in the war, Muslims have to be committed to Islamic moral rules, such as the rule:

"Do not fight whom did not fight"; because Qur'an said

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

"No bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another." (Qur'an 35:18)

Qur'an advices Muslims to complete their treaties

الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا فَأَتَيْتُمَا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مُدَّتِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Those with whom you made a treaty among the polytheists and then they have not been deficient toward you in anything or supported anyone against you; so complete for them their treaty until their term [has ended]. Indeed, God loves the righteous [who fear Him]. (Qur'an 9:4)

In addition, it warns them if they break oaths or commit treachery.

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

And fulfill the covenant of God when you have taken it, [O believers], and do not break oaths after their confirmation while you have made God, over you, a witness. Indeed, God knows what you do. (Quran 16:91)

Quran considers it is one of the great qualities of the believers to treat prisoners of war well and feed them.

وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, (Quran 76:8)

Quran does not permit Muslims to reject peace and continue bloodshed.

وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon God. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing. (Quran 8:61)

Also, Prophet Muhammad gave various injunctions to his forces and adopted practices toward the conduct of war, such as this injunction.

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو صَالِحٍ الْأَنْطَاكِيُّ، مَحْبُوبُ بْنُ مُوسَى أَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو إِسْحَاقَ الْفَرَارِيُّ، عَنْ سُفْيَانَ، عَنْ عُلْقَمَةَ بْنِ مَرْثَدٍ، عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ بُرَيْدَةَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ "اغْزُوا وَلَا تَغْدِرُوا وَلَا تَغْلُوا وَلَا تُمَثِّلُوا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا وَلِيدًا " .

Sulaiman bin Buraidah reported on his father's authority The Prophet (ﷺ) said "fight and do not be treacherous and do not be dishonest about boot yand do not deface (in killing) and do not kill a child."

حكم:

صحيح (الألباني) : Sahih (Al-Albani)

Grade

Reference : Sunan Abi Dawud 2613

In-book reference : Book 15, Hadith 137

In the last injunction, the prophet considered treachery, mutilation of dead bodies, and killing children as not permissible in wars. In the following injunction he forbade killing any civilian who does not fight, such as women and laborers.

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا وَكِيعٌ، عَنْ سُفْيَانَ، عَنْ أَبِي الزِّنَادِ، عَنِ الْمُرْقَعِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ صَيْفِيٍّ، عَنْ حَنْظَلَةَ الْكَاتِبِ، قَالَ غَزَوْنَا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَمَرَرْنَا عَلَى امْرَأَةٍ مَقْتُولَةٍ فَاجْتَمَعَ عَلَيْهَا النَّاسُ فَأَفْرَجُوا لَهُ فَقَالَ (مَا كَانَتْ هَذِهِ تُقَاتِلُ فِيمَنْ يُقَاتِلُ) . ثُمَّ قَالَ لِرَجُلٍ (انْطَلِقْ إِلَى خَالِدِ بْنِ الْوَلِيدِ فَقُلْ لَهُ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَأْمُرُكَ يَقُولُ لَا تَقْتُلَنَّ ذَرْيَةً وَلَا عَسِيفًا) .

It was narrated that Hanzalah Al-Katib said:

“We went out to fight alongside the Messenger of God (ﷺ), and we passed by a slain woman whom the people had gathered around. They parted (to let the Prophet (ﷺ) through) and he said: ‘This (woman) was not one of those who were fighting.’ Then he said to a man: ‘Go to Khalid bin Walid and tell him that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) commands you: “Do not kill any women or any (farm) laborer.”’

Grade : Sahih (Darussalam)

English reference : Vol. 4, Book 24, Hadith 2842

Arabic reference : Book 24, Hadith 2949

The prophet did not forbid only killing civilians, but also unarmed solders.

مَنْ أَلْقَى السِّلَاحَ فَهُوَ آمِنٌ وَمَنْ أَغْلَقَ بَابَهُ فَهُوَ آمِنٌ " .

It has been narrated on the authority of Abdullah b. Rabah who said:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: who lays down arms will be safe, who locks his door will be safe.

Reference : Sahih Muslim 1780 c

In-book reference : Book 32, Hadith 106

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Book 19, Hadith 4396

In addition, he advised us to release the prisoners of war.

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، عَنْ مَنْصُورٍ، عَنْ أَبِي وَائِلٍ، عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " فَكُّوا الْعَانِي - يَعْنِي الْأَسِيرَ - وَأَطْعِمُوا الْجَائِعَ وَعُودُوا الْمَرِيضَ " .

Narrated Abu Musa:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Free the captives, feed the hungry and pay a visit to the sick."

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 3046

In-book reference : Book 56, Hadith 252

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 4, Book 52, Hadith 282

The first Caliph, Abu Bakr, had summarized these injunctions in his advice to his warriors before departing the Arabian Peninsula.

- Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path.
- You must not mutilate dead bodies.
- Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man.
- Neither cut down the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful.
- Slay not any of the enemy's flock, except for your food.
- You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone.

Figure 23 summarizes Jihad in one chart.

Military Jihad					
What	When	Why	Where	Against whom	How
Defensive war that is conducted by a government	When Muslims are persecuted because of their religious belief.	Self-defense .	The Field of war.	Who fight you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do not fight who did not fight.- No treachery.- No mutilation of dead bodies.

(Figure 23. Military Jihad)

Chapter Fifteen

Between Jihad and Terrorism

We were created as human beings before we chose our religions, acquired our cultures, learned our languages, or belonged to our homelands. Therefore, we cannot be good religious people, or good citizens, if we are not good human beings first. Our religions, cultures, languages, and loyalty to our homelands are learned, and they are non-biological parts of our life. So, why do people use these secondary characteristics to justify killing their humanity, which is the natural and innate part of our life? Religion, culture, and language are put to their highest use when they build a community. However, sometimes, our loyalty to them makes us forget our humanity, when this loyalty changes to being prejudiced against others.

Some people did not like the 2014 movie “Noah” because it did not follow the Biblical or Quranic portrayal. However, the movie presented an important issue, which is the conflict between religion and humanity... between what you believe is God’s will and some human principles, such as not killing kids.

Does God command us to do something against our natural human principles? How can a believer kill his humanity? How can a believer use his religion to justify the evil that he commits? Is God unable to carry out his will, putting it into effect on earth, so He created us to carry it out? How can a good believer transform into an evil human?

I believe not because his religion commands him, rather because he is an evil human by his nature. That is why Prophet Muhammad said:

"خَيْرُكُمْ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ خَيْرُكُمْ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ".

"Those who were the best amongst you in the Pre-Islamic Period are the best amongst you in Islam).

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 6, Book 60, Hadith 211

Arabic reference : Book 65, Hadith 4689

This statement means that if you are a good person you can be a good Muslim, because you would interpret Islam in a good way. On the other hand, if you were a violent person, you would interpret everything to mean violence. Islam is the same religion, but we have different eyes.

How does a believer know God's will for sure, so that he can carry it out without waiting for God to carry it out by Himself? Is that not an issue in all religions?

Did God not say in the Quran that disbelievers will end up in the hell fire; so then, some Muslims decided to kill them to hurry them to hell fire? These Muslims transform into terrorists who believe that killing innocents is Jihad, and they can achieve their lives' purpose and please God by murdering people.

Did God not promise the Jews the Holy land, so Zionists did not wait until God would give it to them? Instead, they waited for Great Britain to implement the Balfour Declaration, to occupy Palestine, to supply them with guns and to train them to kill and exile the Palestinians in one of the worse ethnic cleansings in history, so as to create a racist state.

Do some fundamentalist Christians not believe that Jesus will not come back to the earth until Jews would go back to the holy land and create the state of Israel? Therefore, they have supported Israel and supplied it by money and guns to exile the Palestinians from their land and houses, kill them, and destroy their homes, as if God commanded them to use their strengths and powers to support the killer and blame the victims when they try to defend themselves.

That is why the Scottish philosopher and historian David Hume (1711-1776), in his book *The Natural History of Religion*, found that the greatest crimes are compatible with a superstitious piety and devotion in many instances. Hence, he considered it is unsafe to draw any inference in favor of people's morals, from the fervor or strictness of their religious exercises, even though they themselves believe their intentions sincere.

Religion is supposed to discipline human behavior, but no matter how much a person tries to discipline his behavior to fit his beliefs, there is a gap remains between his beliefs and his behavior. This gap may be large or small, but it always remains. The absence of this gap means that the person has reached the point of perfection, and it is an impossible point for humans. Your belief explains the ideals that you try to

approach. It does not explain the point you reached now. On the other hand, some people do not discipline their behaviors to fit their beliefs. On the contrary, they interpret their religion to justify their behaviors.

Terrorism

Terrorism is a tactic or technique that uses intentional violence and indiscriminate killing of innocent people during peacetime, or in war, against non-combatants (mostly civilians and neutral military personnel), as a means to create terror and generate fear in society, in order to force the hand of its political leaders, for political purposes.

We can divide terrorism into two different types: official and non-official terrorism. OFFICIAL TERRORISM is the violence which is used by a state against another state or against its own citizens to terrorize them to accept a dictator-based regime (such as in China and Syria) or a race-based regime (such as the apartheid regime in South Africa and Israel), so they will not have a revolution or any attempt to change it.

NON-OFFICIAL TERRORISM differs based on the terrorists' motives. These motives can be one of the following:

1. *Criminal*: Even though criminals have different purposes than terrorists, some criminals use the same method of terrorism, such as taking hostages when they try to escape.
2. *Anarchism*: Some anarchists believe that violence is a necessary evil as a reaction to state violence.
3. *Liberation*: Most liberation movements use guerrilla asymmetric warfare to resist colonialism and gain independence.
4. *Nationalism*: It is called also Right-wing terrorism, such as neo-fascism, neo-Nazism, Zionism and white nationalism or white supremacy. Most of them aim to overthrow governments and replace them with nationalist or fascist regimes.
5. *Revolutionary (Left-wing)*: It is called also Marxist–Leninist terrorism, and it aims to overthrow capitalist systems and replace them with socialist societies.

6. *Religious*: Although no religion justifies terrorism, terrorists use religion to mobilize people so as to serve their political aims. Therefore, we can find in every religion at least one terrorist movement or group which tries to hijack this religion to commit terrorist acts in its name, such as the Zionist organizations and groups (Haganah, Lehi and Irgun) in the name of Judaism, the Ku Klux Klan in the name of Christianity, Al-Qaeda and ISIS in the name of Islam, and the Myanmar 969 movement in the name of Buddhism. However, the fact is that Zionism is a secular ideology that considers Judaism as a race, not a religion; the Ku Klux Klan is a white supremacist group more than a Christian group, and the 969 movement is a Burman nationalist movement, not Buddhist. So, what about Al-Qaeda and ISIS? And why was there no Muslim terrorist before the last century?

(Figure 24 categorizes the various types of terrorism)

Global terrorism						
Official or state terrorism	Non-Official terrorism					
	Criminal terrorism	Anarchist terrorism	Liberation terrorism	National terrorism	Revolutionary /Left wing terrorism	Religious terrorism

(Figure 24. Types of terrorism)

Jihadist-Salafism

The French political scientist Gilles Kepel coined the term “Jihadist-Salafism” to describe the beliefs of the conservative Muslims who became interested in violent/offensive jihad.

Salafism is an old Islamic school of thought that believes in scholarly authority, and focuses on the Islamic creed, worship, and law more than on Islamic spirituality. It takes its name from the term *salaf* (“predecessors”, “ancestors”), because Salafi scholars oppose the use of dialectics or speculative philosophy in theology, and they think Muslims must follow the example of the first three generations in Islam, known collectively as the “pious Predecessors.”

Ijtihad (reason, independent legal judgment, or personal effort of thinking) is a source of Islamic law. However, Salafi scholars believe that only the “pious Predecessors” could use it, but not all Muslims. Salafi scholars from Saudi Arabia are generally bound by Hanbali jurisprudence (the strictest Islamic jurisprudence) and advocate following a scholar rather than understanding scripture oneself. Oil money made these Saudi scholars stars. It opened the door of the media widely for them, published their books, and translated them into many foreign languages.

The Ottoman Empire was the last Islamic caliphate which was a polity-based in Islam and multi-ethnic trans-national empire. The *sultan* of the Ottoman Empire was the *caliph*. ‘Caliph’ means an Islamic steward who is considered to be a political-religious successor to the Islamic prophet Muhammad and a leader of the entire Muslims nation. After the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I, the Allies dictated the terms of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and of partitioning it into different states that became occupied or were put under the protectorate of the Allies. As a result of this dissolution, the caliphate institution was canceled in Turkey with the consequence that Muslims lost their united leadership.

In seeking Indian independence from Britain, the Indian thinker Abu al-A’la Mawdudi (1903-1979), changed jihad by associating it with anti-colonialism and “national liberation movements.” This view opened the door to a secular and nationalist interpretation of *jihad*. Therefore, the Jihadist movements emerged, along with secular movements, to defend the Arabic countries during the European colonization early in nineteenth century.

Some Jihadist movements remained active even after the disposal of European colonization, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. When the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan, many Egyptians, Jordanians, Iraqis, Syrians, and Yemenis went to Afghanistan to defend it as an Islamic country. Saudi Arabia supplied them with financial resources, and the United States supplied them with weapons. In Afghanistan, the jihadist and Salafism intermarried, and gave birth to the “Jihadist-Salafism”, which did not die when the Soviets left Afghanistan. Some of these Arabs left Afghanistan victorious, and returned to their countries; some of them immigrated to Europe, carrying with them the “Jihadist-Salafism” thought.

Most of them adopted an old advisory legal opinion (*Fatwa*) of the scholar Ibn Taymiya (1263-1328) which had made a declaration of apostasy (*Takfeer*, resulting in ‘excommunication’) against Muslim rulers who do not implement Islamic law (*shari’a*), and it obliged believing Muslims to fight against them. Actually, Ibn Taymiya was referring to the Muslim rulers who were supporting the Mongol rulers against the Muslims.

However, the Salafi Jihadists took this *Fatwa* as a precedent to consider their rulers, such as Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar Al-Sadat, not to be true Muslims and fought them before directing their *jihād* against external enemies.

Jihadist-Salafism’s Motivations

Of course, there is no excuse for terrorism. The killing of civilians is a crime that is unrelated to any other crime committed by others, even if the killer himself was a victim of these other crimes. Murder is a crime in both cases. However, we still need to understand the reasons that led a person to become terrorists, who try to control people, and trample their destiny, their plans, and their relationships with other nations.

Salafist jihadists have carried out domestic terrorist acts in Islamic countries and international terrorist acts in western countries. Most domestic terrorism is a reaction to violent dictatorship, closing the doors to participation in political action and non-circulation of power. Accordingly, we can note the directly proportional relationship between the number of terrorist acts and the violence of the dictatorial states. For example, the rate of terrorist acts in Egypt have increased since the Military coup in 1952, while most international terrorism is because of disruption in the balance of powers (as it is in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict) and power vacuums (as in what happened in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria).

DOMESTIC TERRORISM is motivated by the following:

- 1- Applying the Islamic law (*Shariah*) by unqualified individuals, which is taking punishment unlawfully into their own hands (i.e., an extra-judicial punishment by an informal group). This equates to “lynching” as it arose in the late 19th century, post-Civil War America. Analogously, Salafist jihadists attacked some liquor stores in Egypt, in disregard of the principle that Islamic law

must be applied by a state, not by individuals. That is why the prophet Muhammad did not apply it until he had established the first Islamic state in Medina.

- 2- Replacing the Muslim rulers who do not apply the Islamic law. The example of that is the assassination of the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat.
- 3- Defending specific Islamist groups, such as the Muslim brotherhood and Al-Qaeda. The example of that is the assassination of the Egyptian prime minister Mahmoud Fahmy Elnokrashy Pasha by the Muslim Brotherhood less than three weeks after he formally had outlawed the Brotherhood and imprisoned its members. Such acts are personal revenge and exaggeration of their group as if it constitutes Islam itself.
- 4- The conflict between two Islamic sects (Sunni and Shia), which is used politically by different states.

The following motivate INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM:

- 1- Forcing the western countries to withdraw their troops from Islamic states. The example of that is when Al-Qaeda bombed Madrid's commuter trains in 2004. Spain withdrew its troops out of Iraq after these bombings.
- 2- Punish anyone who mock Islamic symbols and the western countries that occupied Islamic lands in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq. However, punishment is not jihad, and even if Muslims are under western attacks, if Muslims must go to a war they have to commit to Islamic moral rules, such as the rule: *“Do not fight anyone who did not fight [you]”* because the Qur'an has stated:

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

"No bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another". (Quran 35:18)

This means that if you are weaker than your enemies, and you cannot defend your land or defeat them in a war, still you cannot attack their buildings and kill civilians. However, terrorists do not fight back. They just choose to attack unarmed innocents. That is a betrayal of those who give them trust, and Islam does not allow that.

When the Muslims were defeated in the battle of Uhud the prophet Muhammad accepted the defeat as a lesson to teach Muslims for the next battle, but he did not send them to Mecca to sneak-attack its people or burn their houses.

As we see, politics is the biggest source of terrorism. Some people believe that terrorism is the reaction to two centuries of European colonization, and the western absolute support for Israel against Arab interests.

Between Jihad and terrorism

So, what are the differences between Jihad and terrorism?

First, terrorists are not committed to the ethics of military Jihad, such as “Do not fight those who did not fight you”; and “Fulfill your treaties.” Most terrorists break oaths, commit treachery and do not distinguish between civilians and soldiers, between armed and unarmed people, between the field of peace and the field of war, between non-Muslims who fight Muslims because of their religious belief and the non-Muslims who do not do so, or between combatants and children, women or the elderly. In addition, they mix up Islam within themselves, and consider all their opponents (even Muslims) to be enemies of Islam.

Second, military Jihad is a war that is declared and conducted by a government, while terrorism is conducted by individuals and groups. Of course, terrorists do not declare their acts until after they have committed them because they depend on treachery. Most of these terrorist groups have two problems. The first problem is that they don’t have any specified or clear strategy. This is because of the conflict between their religious motivations (the Hereafter) and worldly motivations (politics). The second problem is that they could not predict the reactions of others. Why? Because they are not aware of the balance of power in international relations. These two problems have made it is easy for world intelligence agencies to hold the remote control to these Islamist groups and thus to use them for their partisan purposes. Just as the CIA (American Intelligence) used Al-Qaeda to fight the Soviet Union, Mossad (Israeli Intelligence) uses Hamas to justify attacking the Gaza strip, Egypt uses the Muslim Brotherhood to justify the military dictatorship, Pakistan uses the Taliban to extort America financially, and Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey

use some of these groups to gain powerful influence in other countries, such as Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. The first State to use these Islamist groups was Britain — for splitting up their colonies, as what happened in India.

Third, terrorists are NOT committed to the true justification of the military Jihad, which is self-defense. God legislated Jihad for Muslims to defend themselves, not to defend Him or to defend Islam and its symbols. However, terrorists declare apostasy against fellow Muslims and kill them. On the other hand, they take revenge for the Islamic symbols. For example, such terrorists killed the journalists of the French magazine “Charlie Hebdo” in Paris in 2015 because they had cursed the prophet—whereas the Quran teaches us simply to stop sitting with people when they insult Islamic symbols until they turn to a different theme. The correct response is simply to get up and go away from them; that is not the same as killing them!

إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ آيَاتَ اللَّهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا مَعَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۚ

When you hear the verses of God [recited], they are denied [by them] and ridiculed; so, do not sit with them until they enter into another conversation. (Quran 4:140)

This type of terrorist actions is revenge, not defense, and Muslims’ enemies use it to justify every attack and repression against Muslims in the whole world.

Fourth, terrorists limit and restrict their Jihad to one type of Islamic Jihad, which is the military type; they omit the spiritual and verbal Jihad. From my experiences working with terrorists and reading their stories, I have found that most of them were sinners and did not live for a cause, so they hated their lives, and decided to die for a cause, but they mis-choose their option. They could not forgive themselves because they do not trust God’s mercy. Instead of living a spiritual journey, they choose to have one big spiritual step that they believe can jump them to the Paradise. They fight their imaginary enemy without fighting themselves. They just have despaired of the worldly life so much that they want to skip it and move on to the Hereafter. They do not care about representing God, good deeds, helping others or improving life and making it easier. It is suicide they choose, not Jihad, so their choice is a sin, not a good deed.

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا . وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصْلِيهِ نَارًا ۖ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا

And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, God is to you ever Merciful.

And whoever does that in aggression and injustice - then We will drive him into a Fire. And that, for God, is [always] easy. (Quran 4:29-30)

Intentions makes a difference here. In true military Jihad, Muslims are not scared to die for a cause, but terrorists have decided to intentionally kill themselves in performing their terrorist act.

وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And spend in the way of God and do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction.

And do good; indeed, God loves the doers of good. (Quran 2:195)

You did not bring yourself to life, and you do not have the right to bring yourself intentionally to death.

حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدٌ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي حَجَّاجٌ، حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، عَنِ الْحَسَنِ، حَدَّثَنَا جُنْدُبُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، فِي هَذَا الْمَسْجِدِ، وَمَا نَسِينَا مِنْهُ حَدَّثَنَا، وَمَا نَخْشَى أَنْ يَكُونَ جُنْدُبٌ كَذَبَ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ “كَانَ فِيمَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ رَجُلٌ بِهِ جُرْحٌ، فَجَزَعَ فَأَخَذَ سِكِّينًا فَحَرَ بِهَا يَدَهُ، فَمَا رَقَا الدَّمُ حَتَّى مَاتَ، قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِأَدْرَنِي عَبْدِي بِنَفْسِهِ، حَرَمْتُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ.”

Narrated Jundub:

God's Messenger (ﷺ) said, “Amongst the nations before you there was a man who got a wound, and growing impatient (with its pain), he took a knife and cut his hand with it and the blood did not stop till he died. God said, ‘My Slave hurried to bring death upon himself so I have forbidden him (to enter) Paradise.’ “

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 3463

In-book reference : Book 60, Hadith 130

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 4, Book 55, Hadith 669

It is a sin when you hurry to bring death upon yourself, even though it were to be in Jihad.

حَدَّثَنَا قُتَيْبَةُ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا يَعْقُوبُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ الْقَارِي - حَيْ مِنْ الْعَرَبِ - عَنْ أَبِي حَازِمٍ، عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ السَّاعِدِيِّ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ التَّقَى هُوَ وَالْمُشْرِكُونَ فَاقْتَتَلُوا . فَلَمَّا مَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِلَى عَسْكَرِهِ وَمَالَ الْآخَرُونَ إِلَى عَسْكَرِهِمْ وَفِي أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَجُلٌ لَا يَدْعُ لَهُمْ شَاذَةً إِلَّا اتَّبَعَهَا يَضْرِبُهَا بِسَيْفِهِ فَقَالُوا مَا أَجْزَأَنَا مِنَ الْيَوْمِ أَحَدٌ كَمَا أَجْزَأَ فَلَانٌ . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " أَمَا إِنَّهُ مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ " . فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ أَنَا صَاحِبُهُ أَبَدًا . قَالَ فَخَرَجَ مَعَهُ كُلَّمَا وَقَفَ وَقَفَ مَعَهُ وَإِذَا أَسْرَعَ أَسْرَعَ مَعَهُ - قَالَ - فَجَرَحَ الرَّجُلُ جُرْحًا شَدِيدًا فَاسْتَعْجَلَ الْمَوْتُ فَوَضَعَ نَصْلَ سَيْفِهِ بِالْأَرْضِ وَدُبَابَهُ بَيْنَ تَدْبِيهِ ثُمَّ تَحَامَلَ عَلَى سَيْفِهِ فَقَتَلَ نَفْسَهُ فَخَرَجَ الرَّجُلُ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ أَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ . قَالَ " وَمَا ذَاكَ " . قَالَ الرَّجُلُ الَّذِي ذَكَرْتَ أَنَا أَنَّهُ مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ فَأَعْظَمَ النَّاسُ ذَلِكَ فَقُلْتُ أَنَا لَكُمْ بِهِ فَخَرَجْتُ فِي طَلَبِهِ حَتَّى جَرَحَ جُرْحًا شَدِيدًا فَاسْتَعْجَلَ الْمَوْتُ فَوَضَعَ نَصْلَ سَيْفِهِ بِالْأَرْضِ وَدُبَابَهُ بَيْنَ تَدْبِيهِ ثُمَّ تَحَامَلَ عَلَيْهِ فَقَتَلَ نَفْسَهُ . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ " إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَعْمَلُ عَمَلَ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فِيمَا يَبْذُو لِلنَّاسِ وَهُوَ مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَعْمَلُ عَمَلَ أَهْلِ النَّارِ فِيمَا يَبْذُو لِلنَّاسِ وَهُوَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ " .

It is reported on the authority of Sahl b. Sa'd al-Sa'idi that there was an encounter between the Messenger of God (ﷺ) and the polytheists, and they fought (against one another). At the conclusion of the battle the Messenger of God (ﷺ) bent his steps towards his army and they (the enemies) bent their steps towards their army. And there was a person (his name was Quzman and he was one of the hypocrites) among the Companions of the Messenger of God (ﷺ) who did not spare a detached (fighter of the enemy) but pursued and killed him with the sword.

They (the Companions of the Holy Prophet) said: "None served us better today than this man." Upon this the Messenger of God (ﷺ) remarked: "Verily he is one of the denizens of Fire". One of the people (Muslims) said: I will constantly shadow him. Then this man went out along with him. He halted whenever he halted, and ran along with him whenever he ran. He (the narrator) said: The man was seriously injured. He (could not stand the pain) and hastened his own death. He placed the blade of the sword on the ground with the tip between his chest and then pressed himself against the sword and killed himself. Then the man (following him) went to the Messenger of God (ﷺ) and said: I bear testimony that verily thou art the Messenger of God, He (the Holy Prophet) said: What is the matter? He replied: The person about whom you just mentioned that he was one among the denizens of Fire and the people were surprised (at this) and I said to them that I would bring (the news about him) and consequently I went out in search of him till I (found him) to be very seriously injured. He hastened his death. He placed the blade of the sword upon the ground and its tip between his chest and then pressed himself against that and killed himself. Thereupon the

Messenger of God (ﷺ) remarked: A person performs the deeds which to the people appear to be the deeds befitting the dweller of Paradise, but he is in fact one of the denizens of Hell. And verily a person does an act which in the eyes of public is one which is done by the denizens of Hell, but the person is one among the dwellers of Paradise.

Reference : Sahih Muslim 112

In-book reference : Book 1, Hadith 213

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Book 1, Hadith 206

However, why do some people do terrorist acts in the name of a religion by which they do not live, or for a race whose value they do not share? Social psychology showed us that every society has standards and criteria with which it evaluates its members and gives them opportunities for advancement and other rewards. On the other hand, a society isolates those who fail to live up to these standards and criteria, instead of being involved in their communities and being encouraged to play roles in their societies. For example, a Muslim society would call its members “sinners” when they fail to live their religion and a white community would call its individuals “White trash” when they fail to be independent, materially well off and physically comfortable in a competitive life style. These people suffer emotional neglect and seek their community approval. They are motivated by love or defense of their communities to do terrorist acts against those who are perceived as infringing on their community’s sovereignty. Of course, those who seek power take advantage of these people.

Fifth, Jihad is the Islamic society’s way to fix a worldly problem of religious persecution if all other ways have failed, whereas terrorism creates many problems and causes “Fitnah,” which is disorder resulting from affliction, social unrest, sedition, civil strife, heretical uprising, temptation by misguidance, or trial by confusing truth with falsehood.

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْوَهَّابِ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ، عَنْ نَافِعٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا - أَنَّ رَجُلَانِ فِي فِتْنَةٍ ابْنِ الزُّبَيْرِ فَقَالَ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ ضَلُّوا، وَأَنْتَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ وَصَاحِبُ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَمَا يَمْنَعُكَ أَنْ تَخْرُجَ فَقَالَ يَمْنَعُنِي أَنْ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ دَمَ أَحِي. فَقَالَ أَلَمْ يَقُلِ اللَّهُ "وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ" فَقَالَ قَاتِلْنَا حَتَّى لَمْ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةً، وَكَانَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ، وَأَنْتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تُقَاتِلُوا حَتَّى تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ، وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِعَبْرِ اللَّهِ. وَزَادَ عُثْمَانُ بْنُ صَالِحٍ عَنْ ابْنِ وَهْبٍ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي فَلَانٌ، وَحَبِوَةُ بْنُ شَرِيحٍ، عَنْ بَكْرِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو الْمُعَافِرِيِّ، أَنَّ بُكَيْرَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَهُ عَنْ

نَافِعٍ، أَنَّ رَجُلًا، أَتَى ابْنَ عُمَرَ فَقَالَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ مَا حَمَلَكَ عَلَى أَنْ تَحْجَّ عَامًا وَتَعْتَمِرَ عَامًا، وَتَتْرُكَ الْجِهَادَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، وَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا رَغِبَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ قَالَ يَا ابْنَ أَخِي بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ إِيْمَانٍ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ، وَالصَّلَاةِ الْخَمْسِ، وَصِيَامِ رَمَضَانَ، وَأَدَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ، وَحَجِّ الْبَيْتِ. قَالَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، أَلَا تَسْمَعُ مَا ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ فِي كِتَابِهِ "وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا" إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ "فَاتْلَوْهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةً؟" قَالَ فَعَلْنَا عَلَى عَهْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَكَانَ الْإِسْلَامُ قَلِيلًا، فَكَانَ الرَّجُلُ يُفْتَنُ فِي دِينِهِ إِمَّا قَتْلَوْهُ، وَإِمَّا يُعَذِّبُوهُ، حَتَّى كَثُرَ الْإِسْلَامُ فَلَمْ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةً. قَالَ فَمَا قَوْلُكَ فِي عَلِيٍّ وَعُثْمَانَ قَالَ أَمَّا عُثْمَانُ فَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَفَا عَنْهُ، وَأَمَّا أَنْتُمْ فَكِرْهُنَّ أَنْ تَغْفُوا عَنْهُ، وَأَمَّا عَلِيٌّ فَابْنُ عَمِّ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَحَنْتُهُ. وَأَشَارَ بِيَدِهِ فَقَالَ هَذَا بَيْنُهُ حَيْثُ تَرَوْنَ.

Narrated Nafi`:

During the affliction of Ibn Az-Zubair, two men came to Ibn `Umar and said, "The people are lost, and you are the son of `Umar, and the companion of the Prophet, so what forbids you from coming out?" He said, "What forbids me is that God has prohibited the shedding of my brother's blood." They both said, "Didn't God say, 'And fight then until there is no more affliction?'" He said "We fought until there was no more affliction and the worship is for God (Alone while you want to fight until there is affliction and until the worship become for other than God." Narrated Nafi` (through another group of sub-narrators): A man came to Ibn `Umar and said, "O Abu `Abdur Rahman! What made you perform Hajj in one year and Umra in another year and leave the Jihad for Allah's Cause though you know how much God recommends it?" Ibn `Umar replied, "O son of my brother! Islam is founded on five principles, i.e. believe in God and His Apostle, the five compulsory prayers, the fasting of the month of Ramadan, the payment of Zakat, and the Hajj to the House (of God)." The man said, "O Abu `Abdur Rahman! Won't you listen to why God has mentioned in His Book: 'If two groups of believers fight each other, then make peace between them, but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then you all fight against the one that transgresses. (49.9) and: --"And fight them till there is no more affliction." Ibn `Umar said, "We did it, during the lifetime of God's Messenger (ﷺ) when Islam had only a few followers. A man would be put to trial because of his religion; he would either be killed or tortured. But when the Muslims increased, there was no more afflictions or oppressions." The man said, "What is your opinion about `Uthman and `Ali?" Ibn `Umar said, "As for `Uthman, it seems that God has forgiven him, but you people dislike that he should be forgiven. And

as for `Ali, he is the cousin of God's Messenger (ﷺ) and his son-in-law." Then he pointed with his hand and said, "That is his house which you see."

Sahih al-Bukhari

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 6, Book 60, Hadith 40

Arabic reference : Book 65, Hadith 4513

Prophet Muhammad advised us to avoid public interactions in the time of commotion (*fitnah*).

حَدَّثَنَا هَارُونُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنَا الْفَضْلُ بْنُ دُكَيْنٍ، حَدَّثَنَا يُونُسُ بْنُ أَبِي إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ هِلَالِ بْنِ خَبَّابٍ أَبِي الْعَلَاءِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي عِكْرَمَةُ، حَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ، قَالَ بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ حَوْلَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذْ ذَكَرَ الْفِتْنَةَ فَقَالَ " إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُ النَّاسَ قَدْ مَرَجَتْ عُهْدُهُمْ وَخَفَّتْ أَمَانَتُهُمْ وَكَانُوا هَكَذَا " . وَشَبَّكَ بَيْنَ أَصَابِعِهِ قَالَ فَقُمْتُ إِلَيْهِ فَقُلْتُ كَيْفَ أَفْعَلُ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ جَعَلَنِي اللَّهُ فِدَاكَ قَالَ " الزَّمْ بَيْتَكَ وَامْلِكْ عَلَيْكَ لِسَانَكَ وَخُذْ بِمَا تَعْرِفُ وَدَعْ مَا تُنْكِرُ وَعَلَيْكَ بِأَمْرِ خَاصَّةٍ نَفْسِكَ وَدَعْ عَنْكَ أَمْرَ الْعَامَّةِ " .

Narrated Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-'As:

When we were around the Messenger of God (ﷺ), he mentioned the period of commotion saying:

When you see the people that their covenants have been impaired, (the fulfilling of) the guarantees becomes rare, and they become thus (interwining his fingers). I then got up and said: What should I do at that time, may Allah make me ransom for you? He replied: Keep to your house, control your tongue, accept what you approve, abandon what you disapprove, attend to your own affairs, and leave alone the affairs of the generality.

Grade : **Hasan Sahih** (Al-Albani) **حسن صحيح** (الألباني) **حكم:**

Reference : Sunan Abi Dawud 4343

In-book reference : Book 39, Hadith 53

English translation : Book 38, Hadith 4329

Terrorists are not representative of God's qualities. Instead, they take it upon themselves to carry out what they guess is God's will, presuming to be His soldiers or police officers. They have forgotten that God is not unable to carry out His own will.

Indeed, God will accomplish His purpose. (Quran 65:3)

God is patient and forbearing even with the sinners and those who disbelieve in Him, until their worldly test is over.

وَحَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو أُسَامَةَ، عَنِ الْأَعْمَشِ، حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ جُبَيْرٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ السُّلَمِيِّ، قَالَ قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ قَيْسٍ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " مَا أَحَدٌ أَصْبَرَ عَلَى أَدَى يَسْمَعُهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى إِنَّهُمْ يَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ نِدًّا وَيَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ وَلَدًا وَهُوَ مَعَ ذَلِكَ يَرْزُقُهُمْ وَيُعَافِيهِمْ وَيُعْطِيهِمْ " .

Abdullah b. Qais reported from God's Messenger:

"None is more patient than God against the harmful and annoying words He hears (from the people).

Even though they associate others with him, ascribe children to Him, He still bestows upon them health, sustenance, safety and provision."

Reference : Sahih Muslim 2804 c

In-book reference : Book 52, Hadith 36

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Book 39, Hadith 6732

God extends the time and enjoyment of the disbelievers, and He postpones their punishment that they may increase in sin, so they will deserve no share in the Hereafter except a severe punishment.

وَلَا يَحْزُنُكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَنَبْضَرُوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ . إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اسْتَنَرُوا الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ لَنَبْضَرُوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ . وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّنا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرًا لِّأَنفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ

And do not be grieved, [O Muhammad], by those who hasten into disbelief. Indeed, they will never harm God at all. God intends that He should give them no share in the Hereafter, and for them is a great punishment.

And let not those who disbelieve ever think that [because] We extend their time [of enjoyment] it is better for them. We only extend it for them so that they may increase in sin, and for them is a humiliating punishment. (Quran 3:176-178)

Did God not tell his prophet that he could not control people?

لَسْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ

You are not over them a controller. (Quran 88:22)

If God is the best judge and his messenger could not control people or judge them, then who do terrorists think they are to judge or control people's lives?

أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمَ الْحَاكِمِينَ


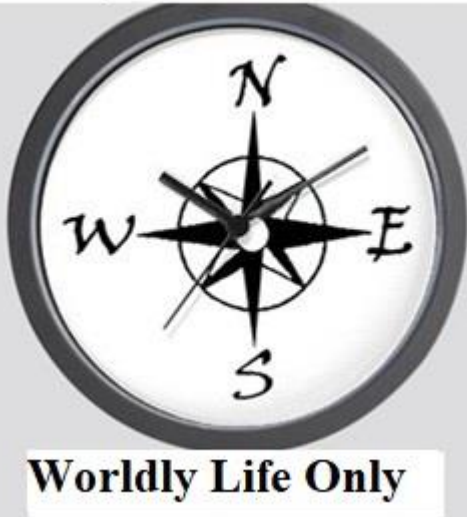
Is not God the most just of judges? (Quran 95:7-8)

Chapter Sixteen

Worldly Life and the Hereafter

Moral Compass

I teach a spiritual curriculum that includes the concept of a moral compass. On this compass, God is the "north" and the world is "south," which demonstrates that good decisions are made for God while bad decisions are made for the worldly life. I think this moral compass does not fit Islam because Islam neither distinguishes between the worldly life and the Hereafter, nor does it consider working for the worldly life as wrong. I changed this compass to fit Islam by putting the worldly life and the Hereafter together as "north" and the worldly life only as "south", as Figure 25 depicts. This chapter will explain why I changed the compass.

	
Non-Islamic Moral compass	Islamic Moral compass

(Figure 25. The Islamic and non-Islamic Moral Compass)

Asceticism

Atheists believe that there is no life after death. On the contrary, all Abrahamic religions believe in doomsday, which is the end of worldly life, and Judgment Day when the dead will be resurrected from their graves to be held accountable for their deeds in the worldly life. Because they believe in God, and because He is fair and just, accordingly He will not let the bad people be equal to the good people. Rather, the Abrahamic religions believe that humans have two different phases to their lives: the first one is worldly life on earth, and the other phase is the Hereafter in Heaven or in Hell fire, based on their deeds in the first.

That is why
Abrahamic religions
avoid the pleasures of
be closer to God and
in the hereafter. That
were spread.



some followers of the
think that we need to
this worldly life in order to
get the pleasures of paradise
is why calls for asceticism

This idea could fit Christianity,
especially in some Catholic and Orthodox dimensions, where the monks and nuns renounce worldly pursuits
to devote themselves fully to spiritual work, living in monasteries to stay away from the secular world, in
accord with what Jesus said:

"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the
Jewish leaders." (Gospel of John 18:33-38)

Therefore, they claim, Jesus separated worldly life from heavenly life. In addition, he said:

"Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Matthew 22:22

The Christian European societies accepted secularism as a solution to the Church's control over the
state because the idea of secularism (the separation between the state and the church) fits Christianity
in separating worldly life from the hereafter.

Some Islamic schools of thoughts, such as Sufism and asceticism, developed a similar idea to divide
people into three levels. The first level is atheists who deny the Hereafter. The second level is the regular
believers who seek both lives. The third level is the best believers who seek the Hereafter only, and do not
care about the worldly life. (Figure 26 explains the three levels of people in Sufism)

(Figure 26. Three levels of people in Sufi View.)

In the modern era, this idea became very dangerous, because the terrorist's groups used it to recruit and mobilize young Muslims to serve their goals and plans. In the beginning, they isolate themselves from their families and societies, and then turn against them.

Worldly Life in Islam

This idea is strange in Islam. Yes, belief in Judgment Day is one of the six Pillars of Faith in Islam, but there is no monasticism or monkhood in Islam. Islam values the worldly life and preparing for its future until the end of the last minute, as the Prophet Muhammad said:

إِنْ قَامَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَفِي يَدِ أَحَدِكُمْ فَسِيلَةٌ، فَإِنْ اسْتَطَاعَ أَنْ لَا تَقُومَ حَتَّى يَغْرُسَهَا فَلْيَغْرُسْهَا.

“If the Day of Judgment comes while you are planting a new tree, carry on and plant it”

Source: Musnad Ahmad 12491 - Grade: *Sahih* (authentic) according to Al-Haythami –

(Authenticated by Al-Albani)

Protecting life is one of the five objectives of Islamic law (Shari'ah), and the Quran considers saving one's life as saving humankind entirely.

مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ

ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ

Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. (Quran 5:32)

Enjoying Worldly Life is not a Sin

After Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, God introduced worldly life on earth to them as an enjoyment.

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

But Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been. And We said, "Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth a place of settlement and an enjoyment for a time." (Quran 2:36)

So, enjoying worldly life is not a sin. It does not necessarily take you away from God. Actually, it is in keeping with the tradition of Prophet Muhammad, and whoever does not follow his tradition is not from his followers.

حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ أَبِي مَرْيَمَ، أَخْبَرَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ، أَخْبَرَنَا حُمَيْدُ بْنُ أَبِي حُمَيْدٍ الطَّوِيلُ، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ أَنَسَ بْنَ مَالِكٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - يَقُولُ جَاءَ ثَلَاثَةٌ رَهْطٍ إِلَى بُيُوتِ أَزْوَاجِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَسْأَلُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَةِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَلَمَّا أُخْبِرُوا كَانَهُمْ تَقَالُوهَا فَقَالُوا وَإِنْ نَحْنُ مِنَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَدْ غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ. قَالَ أَحَدُهُمْ أَمَا أَنَا فَإِنِّي أَصَلِّي اللَّيْلَ أَبَدًا. وَقَالَ آخَرُ أَنَا أَصُومُ الدَّهْرَ وَلَا أَفْطِرُ. وَقَالَ آخَرُ أَنَا أَعْتَزِلُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَا أَتَزَوَّجُ أَبَدًا. فَجَاءَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ " أَنْتُمْ الَّذِينَ قُلْتُمْ كَذَا وَكَذَا أَمَا وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَخْشَاكُمْ لِلَّهِ وَأَتَقَاكُمْ لَهُ، لِكَيْبِي أَصُومُ وَأَفْطِرُ، وَأُصَلِّي وَأَرْقُدُ وَأَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ، فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي ".

Narrated Anas bin Malik: A group of three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet asking how the Prophet worshipped (God), and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient and said, "Where we are from the Prophet as his past and future sins have been forgiven." Then one of them said, "I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever." The other said, "I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast." The third said, "I will keep away from the women and will not marry forever." God's Messenger came to them and said, "Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By God, I am more submissive to God and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. So, he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me (not one of my followers).

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 5063

In-book reference : Book 67, Hadith 1

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 7, Book 62, Hadith 1

In fact, God has forbidden us to forget enjoying the worldly life.

وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا

Do not forget your share of the world. (Quran 28:77)

He has produced the pleasures of a worldly life for us. He encourages us to enjoy them, and He has forbidden us to prevent others from enjoying these pleasures.

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ . قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ . قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّي الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنٌ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

O children of Adam, take your adornment at every mosque, and eat and drink, but be not excessive.

Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.

Say, "Who has forbidden the adornment of God which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?" Say, "They are for those who believe during the worldly life [but] exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection." Thus, do We detail the verses for a people who know.

Say, "My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed - and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with God that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allah that which you do not know." (Quran 7:31-33)

Conditions of Enjoying Worldly Life

As we see in last verse, the Quran encourages Muslims to enjoy the pleasures of their worldly life, but on the other hand, it warns us of squandering or prodigality. So, there is a limit to enjoying the pleasures of our worldly life. This limit is reached when we forget the Hereafter, because if we have done that, we wasted the time of our worldly life without achieving its purpose.

فَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

So whatever thing you have been given - it is but [for] enjoyment of the worldly life. But what is with God is better and more lasting for those who have believed and upon their Lord rely. (Quran 42:36)

So, the problem is not with enjoying the worldly life, but with preferring it over the Hereafter, or with focusing on it and ignoring the Hereafter.

بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا . وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

But you prefer the worldly life, While the Hereafter is better and more enduring. (Quran 87:16-17)

That is exactly what the atheists do. That is why God advised his prophet Muhammad not to waste his time with atheists, whether he warned them or did not, they would not accept his message, because they have already denied the Hereafter.

فَاعْرِضْ عَنْ مَن تَوَلَّىٰ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا

So, turn away from whoever turns his back on Our message and desires nothing but the life of this world. (Quran 53:29)

Prophet Muhammad did not advise us not to enjoy the worldly life, but not to be too attached to it.

"كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ أَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيلٍ

On the authority of Abdullah ibn Umar (May Allah be pleased with them both), he relates that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) once held my shoulders and said: "Live in this world as (if you are) a stranger or a wayfarer." [*Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (7/170)]

Actually, we enjoy our travel, but we do not get too attached to stay there and refuse to go back home after the vacation. On the other hand, you will not survive if you find your purpose in anyone or anything outside of you. If you hang your purpose on others' peg, your purpose would fall off when their peg will fall off. If you are so attached to the worldly life, you will try to enjoy it even in a sinful way. If you were so attached to your kids, you might even commit suicide if they were to die. If you are so attached to your wife, you might have no problem sinning to please her. If you were so attached to your parents, you might obey them even if they were to endeavor to make you associate another deity with God.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ . وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَى أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا ۖ وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا

And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination. But if they endeavor to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness. (Quran 31:14-15)

If you are so attached to the worldly life, even without enjoying any quality of life or human rights, you would accept oppression from others, and you would not try to defend yourself, or to fight for your rights.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

Indeed, God has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah. (Quran 9:111)

It is a sin when you wrong yourself and accept this type of life like animals, so if you are in a weak position and you cannot fight for your life, the Quran encourages you to move to another land where you can have a better life as the human whom God honors.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا قَالُوا لَكَ مَاؤَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves - [the angels] will say, "In what [condition] were you?" They will say, "We were oppressed in the land." The angels will say, "Was not the earth of God spacious [enough] for you to emigrate therein?" For those, their refuge is Hell - and evil it is as a destination. (Quran 4:79)

The pleasures of this worldly life, such as wealth, children and wives, are a trial. If you were so attached to them, they would be your enemies. It is like many inmates when they say that they had sold drugs to support their families.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ تَعْفُوا وَتَصْفَحُوا وَتَغْفِرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ . إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ . فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَاسْمَعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَنْفِقُوا خَيْرًا لَأَنْفُسِكُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

O you who have believed, indeed, among your wives and your children are enemies to you, so beware of them. But if you pardon and overlook and forgive - then indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.

Your wealth and your children are but a trial, and God has with Him a great reward.

So, fear God as much as you are able and listen and obey and spend [in the way of God]; it is better for your selves. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful. (Quran 64:14-16)

The Quran reminds us that the enjoyment of worldly life is for only awhile but not forever, like the Hereafter.

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌّ وَلَعِبٌ ۚ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ ۚ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

And this worldly life is not but diversion and amusement. And indeed, the home of the Hereafter - that is the [eternal] life, if only they knew. (Quran 29:64)

The Hereafter is for eternity, so if we have to prefer one life over the other, we should prefer the Hereafter. However, God does not ask us to choose just one.

يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ وَإِنَّ الْآخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ

O my people, this worldly life is only [temporary] enjoyment, and indeed, the Hereafter - that is the home of [permanent] settlement. (Quran 40:39)

The Qur'an warned us of being deluded or deceived by the enjoyments of the worldly life. Yes, enjoy life but do not let it delude or deceive you.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ وَأَحْسِنُوا يَوْمًا لَا يَجْزِي وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَلَدِهِ وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ هُوَ جَازٍ عَنِ وَالِدِهِ شَيْئًا إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ

O mankind, fear your Lord and fear a Day when no father will avail his son, nor will a son avail his father at all. Indeed, the promise of God is truth, so let not the worldly life delude you and be not deceived about Allah by the Deceiver. (Quran 31:33)

In addition, the Quran warned us of the punishment reserved for those who work very hard to gain the benefits of worldly life while they ignore the Hereafter.

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَحِبُّونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا أُولَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ

The ones who prefer the worldly life over the Hereafter and avert [people] from the way of God, seeking to make it (seem) deviant. Those are in extreme error. (Quran 14:3)

The Qur'an describes these people as those who buy this worldly life in exchange for the Hereafter.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

Those are the ones who have bought the life of this world [in exchange] for the Hereafter, so the punishment will not be lightened for them, nor will they be aided. (Quran 2:86)

On the contrary, the Quran does not ask Muslims to buy the Hereafter in exchange for the worldly life. Rather Islam encourages the humans to enjoy both lives.

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ

Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter - We increase for him in his harvest. And whoever desires the harvest of this world - We give him thereof, but there is not for him in the Hereafter any share. (Quran 42:20)

The Qur'an describes believers as the people who seek for the good in both lives: the worldly life and the hereafter, not the Hereafter only.

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمْ مَنَاسِكَكُمْ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا ۚ فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ .
وَمِنْهُمْ مَن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ . أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

And when you have completed your rites, remember Allah like your [previous] remembrance of your fathers or with [much] greater remembrance. And among the people is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world," and he will have in the Hereafter no share.

But among them is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire."

Those will have a share of what they have earned, and Allah is swift in account. (Quran 2: 200-202)

Balance in Life

Islam does not separate worldly life from the Hereafter.

قُلْ إِن صَّلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Say, "Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for The God, Lord of the worlds. (Quran 6:162)

Actually, Islam challenges us to keep attaining balance in life, as in this quote that is attributed to Prophet Muhammad:

اعمل لدنياك كأنك تعيش أبداً واعمل لآخرتك كأنك تموت غدا

“Work for this life as though you are going to live forever, and work for the *hereafter* as though you will die tomorrow.”

So, how can we do that? If I know that I will live forever I will try to get more educational degrees, work more, save as much money as I can, buy a nice house and car, and have more kids. On the other hand, if I know that I will die tomorrow I will donate all my wealth and everything I own as charity and spend all my time in prayer and worship. The Quran gives us a good instruction so as to gain both lives.

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ ۚ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَأَحْسِنَ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ ۚ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ ۚ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ

الْمُفْسِدِينَ

But seek, through that which God has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do good as God has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, God does not like corrupters." (Quran 28:77)

This instruction is to do your worldly deeds, intend them for God, and avoid any sin. As we mentioned before in chapter eleven, the meaning of worship in Islam is to intend your deeds for God.

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْيَمَانِ، أَخْبَرَنَا شُعَيْبٌ، عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي أَبُو عُبَيْدٍ، مَوْلَى عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَوْفٍ أَنَّ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " لَنْ يُدْخَلَ أَحَدًا عَمَلُهُ الْجَنَّةَ ". قَالُوا وَلَا أَنْتَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ " لَا، وَلَا أَنَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَتَغَمَّدَنِي اللَّهُ بِفَضْلٍ وَرَحْمَةٍ فَسَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا وَلَا يَتَمَنَّيَنَّ أَحَدُكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِمَّا مُحْسِنًا فَلَعَلَّهُ أَنْ يَزِدَّادَ خَيْرًا، وَإِمَّا مُسِيئًا فَلَعَلَّهُ أَنْ يَسْتَغْتَبَ ".

Narrated Abu Huraira:

I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying, "The good deeds of any person will not make him enter Paradise." (i.e., None can enter Paradise through his good deeds.) They (the Prophet's companions) said, 'Not even you, O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)?' He said, "Not even myself, unless Allah bestows His Grace and mercy on me." So be moderate in your religious deeds and do the deeds that are within your ability: and none of you should wish for death, for if he is a good doer, he may increase his good deeds, and if he is an evil doer, he may repent to Allah."

Reference : Sahih al-Bukhari 5673

In-book reference : Book 75, Hadith 34

USC-MSA web (English) reference : Vol. 7, Book 70, Hadith 577

So then, will we enter Paradise because of our good deeds or because of God's mercy? In fact, there is not conflict. Although our deeds are not good enough to deserve Paradise, our good intentions might deserve God's mercy and forgiveness. In addition, we will not be able to do any good deeds without God's mercy.

In Christianity, Jesus saves those who believe that Jesus died for their sins. So, acceptance of Jesus as your savior, not your good deeds, would save you as a Christian. In Islam, your belief is not enough to be

saved. You need to do good deeds. God will not save His professed believers if they do not actuate good deeds. He wants them to do good deeds with the right intentions to purify and "save" their own souls.

That does not mean we have any doubt about God's love or mercy. We believe God keeps His promise, but if we take paradise for granted, we are not likely to take responsibility for our actions or be committed to the straight path until the last minute. God did not promise his heavenly garden to all believers. He told Muslims, in the Quran, that entering the gardens is not by their wishes, or the Christians and Jews' wishes, but by two conditions: belief and good deeds.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا .
لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيِّكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِي أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَ بِهِ وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا . وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ
أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا

But the ones who believe and do righteous deeds - We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. [It is] the promise of God, [which is] truth, and who is more truthful than God in statement. Paradise is not [obtained] by your wishful thinking nor by that of the People of the Scripture. Whoever does a wrong will be recompensed for it, and he will not find besides God a protector or a helper. And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed. (Quran 4:122-124)

Why is Paradise only for those who believe and do good deeds?

Good deeds only are not good enough, though because logically, we cannot be in a place we deny. We will not go to a school if we deny there is a school. Likewise, we cannot enter paradise if we deny it exists.

On the other hand, belief alone is not good enough because Paradise in the Hereafter will be for those who try to make the worldly life as a paradise on the earth, by improving it and helping others. That is the essence of good deeds.

Conclusion

Three purposes

Three Quranic verses explain the purpose of our life. Each verse determines a different purpose. The first verse determines our purpose to be God's representative.

إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

"Indeed, I will make upon the earth a vicegerent (successive authority)." (Quran 2:30)

The second verse determines our purpose to worship God.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me. (Quran 51:56)

The third verse determines our purpose to be tested.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

And it is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days - and His Throne had been upon water - that He might test you as to which of you is best in deed. (Quran 11:7)

Actually, there is no conflict among these three verses. The test of our life is how we use what God bestowed favor upon us of blessings, boons, gifts, talents, skills and abilities.

The test is whether we will use them only to feed our desires or **we will** use them in order to feed our desires in the way that please God and perform the mission for which we were created. If we do this, we will pass the test; because the correct meaning of worship in Islam is to use the divine blessings in intention to please God. If we pass this test, we will be the chosen people of God to represent Him on the earth. (Figure 27 explains the purpose of our life.)

We were created							
To worship God.	To be tested.	To be God's representative					
<p>By being mindful of God, intending all our deeds for Him and to do everything intentionally for Him.</p> <p>The purpose of that is to be righteous (considering God when we treat ourselves and others.)</p>	<p>Do we use God's blessings and boons to feed our desires in a responsible or non responsible way?</p> <p>If we pass this test, God will elect us to be His chosen people.</p>	Why	How	What	Who	Where	When
		<p>God is not present on the earth, and we are qualified to represent Him because of our intellect and free will.</p>	<p>Ruling the earth in His name to carry out His message, establish His law, reclaim the earth and represent His qualities that we develop when we grow ourselves to be closer to Him, such as grace, mercy...etc.</p>	<p>Like an ambassador, senator or representative.</p>	<p>God's chosen people who passed His test.</p>	<p>On the earth.</p>	<p>In the worldly life.</p>

(Figure 27. Purposes of our life)

The whole picture

God created us to be His representative, vicegerent, emissary and successive authority on the earth to reclaim it and establish His law. That is the role of humans on the earth, to rule the earth in the name of God.

He gave us two tools to be qualified to represent Him. These tools are

- Reason, intellect or the mind as a divine grace and an intelligent tool for learning.
- Free will and freedom of choices: so, we are free to choose right or wrong, and we need to consider there is accountability, which is a reward for those who chose right, and a punishment for those who chose wrong.

Because of His mercy, God created us diverse to use our intellect to learn from each other, God is absolute and limitless, so He cannot be represented by a limited creation like us, but He can be represented collectively by diversified people who represent various aspects and attributes of God such as knowledge, power, compassion, mercy or establishing laws. If one representative goes astray, the other representatives can correct him.

Our life is a journey to grow ourselves to be able to represent God. We grow ourselves through suffering and worship.

Suffering is one side of the divine test we have when we face our challenges. Both pleasant and unpleasant events are just a test. They have neither meant that God hates you nor that He prefers you over his creations. They have meant that you are neither a bad person nor good person. Based on your reaction to these events, you would be a good or bad person. Through suffering, we develop patience, which is the ability to resist what you love and tolerate what you hate. This ability makes you fit to do the job that you were created for.

Worship is to build a relationship with our Creator, but it is not just limited to the rituals. Worship includes all our deeds, even worldly daily deeds, such as working to make a living, eating, drinking or even having sex, if we intend it for God. God wants us to intend all our deeds for Him to be good representatives of Him. We worship God to be righteous. Righteousness is to protect yourself from God's punishment, by

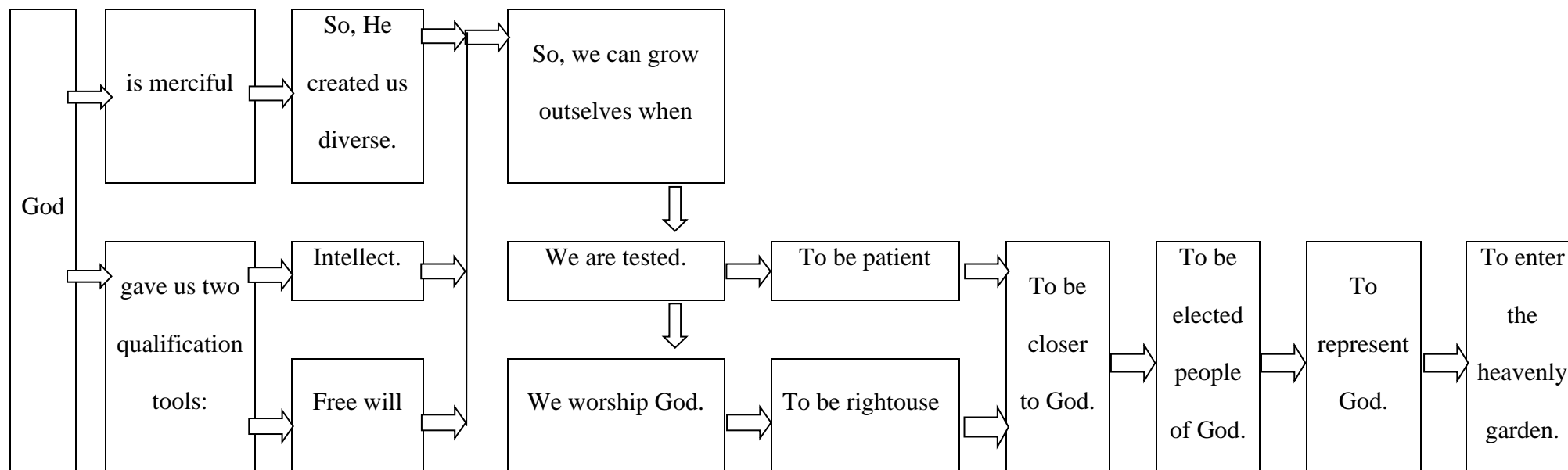
obeying God and avoiding what He forbids, but is also to consider God when you deal with yourself and with others.

Therefore, we would be able to grow ourselves to be patient when God tests us, and be righteous when we worship Him.

In this journey we grow closer to God, not in space, or time, but rather in relationship, by developing the qualities that are close to His qualities, and make us better individuals, such as grace, mercy, pardon, forgiveness, clemency, compassion, care, peace, love, justice, truth, wisdom, patience and pity. If you will develop these qualities, He would select us as His chosen people to represent Him.

God tests us to sort his people. After each test, God excludes and rules out the failures, until he gets righteous people who can carry His message, to be his vicegerent on earth. That is how divine selection works; because most people neither represent God nor follow His instructions or law. They just feed their desires, like animals. To live your life for a purpose, you need to struggle, strive and resist your desires.

Islam values worldly life and its future until its last minute, and it does not consider enjoying worldly life as a sin. The chosen people of God keep attaining balance in life by doing their worldly deeds, intend them for God, and avoid sin. They represent God by good deeds that help others and improve worldly life. In addition, they represent His qualities that they developed when they grow themselves to be closer to Him, such as grace, mercy, pardon, clemency, compassion and pity. If they are able to make the worldly life as a paradise on the earth, they will deserve the Paradise in the hereafter.



(Figure 28. Conclusion)

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