بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

The Beginnings of Islam

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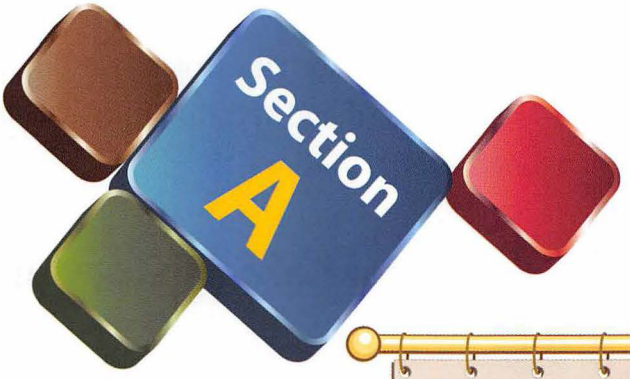
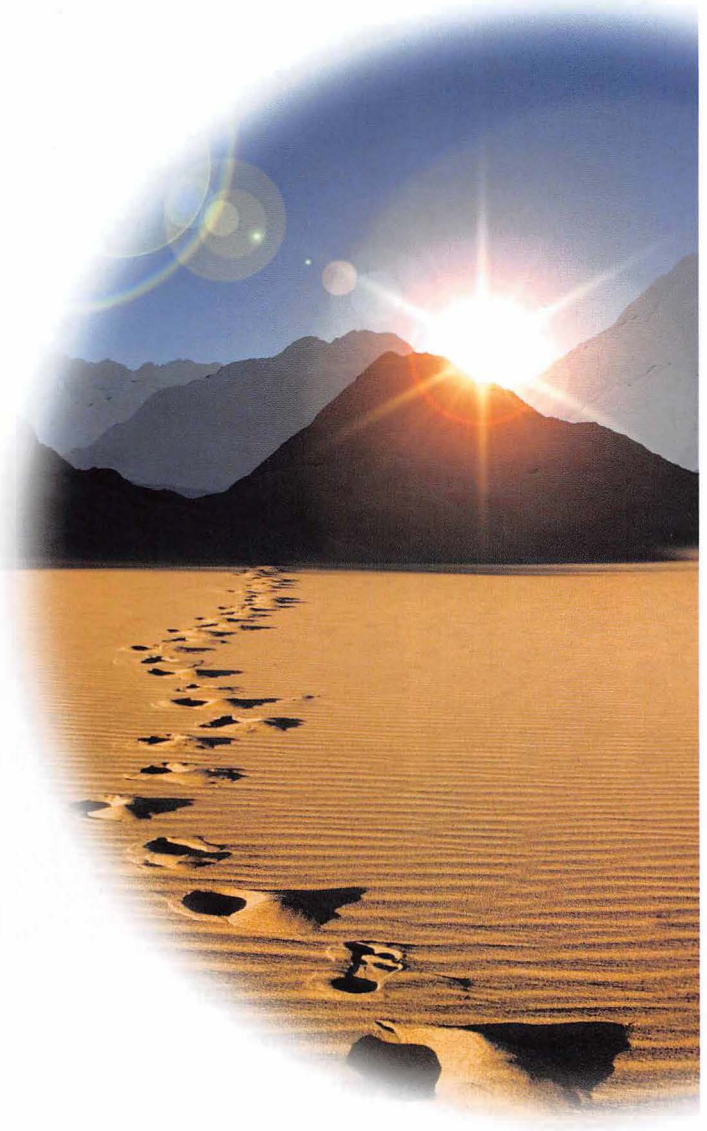


The Beginnings of Islam

1. Pre-Islamic Arabia

1.1. Social and Economic Conditions, Beliefs and Customs



The Term Jaahiliyyah: What is Jaahiliyyah?

The term *Jaahiliyyah*, which occurs in the Qur'an four times (3:154; 5:50; 33:33; and 48:26), comes from the Arabic root *j – h – l*, which means 'ignorance, lack of knowledge, to ignore, foolishness, quick temper and to be rash'. *Jaahiliyyah* is not merely ignorance, but rather, in the extreme sense, a state of mind that reflects the qualities of knowing the truth but stubbornly refusing to acknowledge it. It is to deliberately act against what is right, combined with stubbornness, argumentativeness, disrespect and total disregard for people's criticism.

Thus, the word *jahl* means ignorance, foolishness and stupidity, and its opposite is *'ilm*, or knowledge. The term is also used for having wrong beliefs about something as well as for not doing something as it ought to be performed. *Jaahiliyyah* indicates the state of things, the state of ignorance or the Age of Ignorance and is often used to refer

to paganism of the pre-Islamic period. To be more precise, *Jaahiliyyah* is the time of ignorance before the advent of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in Arabia. The most decisive thing that one should realize here has to do with 'Allah'. Some people presume 'Allah' to be the Muslim God, but this is not true. In fact, Allah is the Arabic word for the same One God: the True One God of all.

Jaahiliyyah is commonly translated as the 'age of ignorance'; that is, ignorance of the Word of God. Therefore, it is relevant to understand the designation of *Jaahiliyyah* as referring to an age of recklessness and disregard for certain moral, spiritual and social values brought by Islam. In the Qur'an, the word *Jaahiliyyah* is used as the opposite of Islamic teachings and reforms.

The Islamic teachings are based on knowledge and guidance from Allah. Allah is the source of all knowledge as He taught Aadam عليه السلام, the first human being, the names of all things. (*Soorat al-Baqarah*, 2:31) In the pre-Islamic period, the way of life and laws were not based on reason or revelation but on whims, guesswork and superstitions. However, the Qur'an does not reject all good values prevalent in Arabia before the advent of Islam. Many practices were reformed and other good values, for example, generosity and hospitality were retained.

As a matter of fact, life in Arabia in the decades preceding Islam was by no means devoid of finer elements. The Arab civilization was no doubt stale and decadent, as it possessed no philosophy and no art wahtsoever, with the sole example of poetry.

In Arabia, there were many towns, but each followed its own political system, which was closer to being a *Shaykhdom*, rather than a kingdom. The major cities of those times were Makkah, Ṭaa'if and Yathrib (to be called Madeenah later).

1.2. Makkah: History in Brief

Prophet Ibraaheem عليه السلام migrated from Iraq to Syria, then from there to Egypt, carrying with him the message of the true One God—Allah ﷻ. Ibraaheem عليه السلام was indeed a model. He was dutiful to Allah. He was a man of pure faith and was not at all an idolater (see *Soorat an-Naḥl*, 16:120). His story of encounter with the idols and pagans of his time is well-known, and the Qur'an speaks of this in several places (See, for instance, *Soorat al-Baqarah*, 2:258-260; *Soorat al-Anʿaam*, 6:74-81; *Soorat Maryam*, 19:46-48; and *Soorat al-Anbiyyaa'*, 21:51-70). As for his story of professing *tawḥeed* (Oneness of Allah) in Makkah, see *Soorat Ibraaheem*, 14:37 and *Soorat aṣ-Ṣaafaat*, 37:99 and 102.

Ibraaheem عليه السلام was accompanied by his second wife Haajar (Hagar), Ismaaʿeel's mother. His first wife was childless for a time.

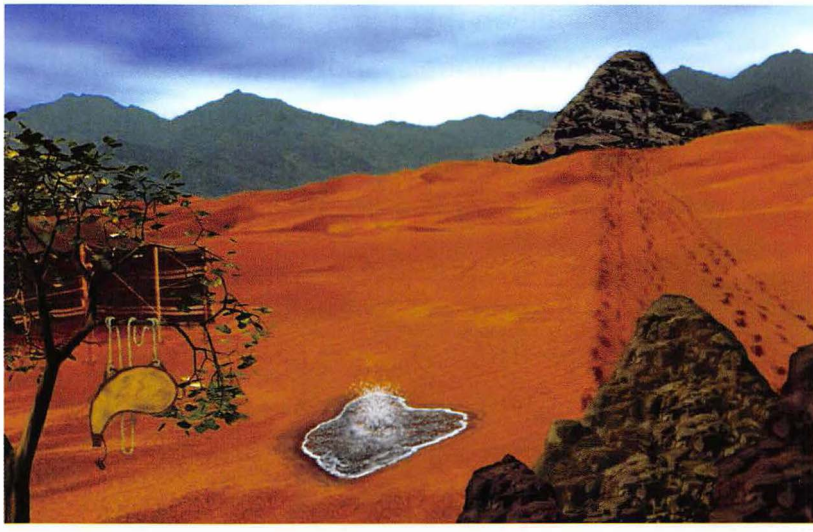
Hagar bore him the first son, and he named him Ismaa'eel. Ibraaheem took her and her child to a place close to where the Sacred House is under a tree above the Zamzam well. There was no Makkah then and no inhabitants. There was no water either. Ibraaheem ﷺ left her with a small bag containing some dates and a waterskin[1] filled with water. As Ibraaheem ﷺ turned to leave, Hagar followed him and she asked him, 'Where are you going, leaving us in this deserted place?' She repeated the question several times but he would not turn to her. Finally, she asked, 'Has Allah commanded you to do this?' He replied, 'Yes'. She said, 'Then, surely, He will not abandon us.' And she returned.

Ibraaheem ﷺ continued until he was at a mountain path, from which he could not be seen. He turned towards the place and prayed:

> Our Lord, I have settled some of my offspring in a valley without cultivation, by Your Sacred House, so that they may establish prayers. So make the hearts of some people incline towards them, and provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks. (*Soorat Ibraaheem*, 14:37)

The place is still barren as it was four thousand years ago. No trees bear any fruit there. All the fruits found in the city are brought to it from outside. This clearly shows that Prophet Ibraaheem's supplication was accepted. Consequently, we see the amazing spectacle that the Makkan markets are always laden with fruits of all varieties.

It was not too long before the water was exhausted. Both Hagar and her child were thirsty. It was especially painful for her



to see the child writhe around in suffering. She climbed the nearest hill, called as-Safaa to see if she could spot someone. Not finding anyone, she lifted her robe a little and ran down across the length of the valley to climb another hill called al-Marwah to see if she could find a living soul. She found no one and she ran between the hills several times. Allah's Messenger ﷺ has told us that this is the origin of the *sa'ee* ritual in *hajj* and *'umrah*. At the end of the seventh round, angel Jibreel ﷺ came down. He used either his heel or wing to track down the source of the Zamzam spring and dug until the water began to gush out. Haajar began to put a hedge around the gushing water with some sand. As the water-level rose, she cupped her hands to collect it in her waterskin. The water kept gushing out steadily. She drank from it and continued to nurse her child. The angel told her, 'Do not be afraid of being abandoned. This is the House of the Lord, which the child and his father will build. Allah does not abandon his servants.'

While she held to the place, one of the families of Jurhum tribe from the Qahtaan of the Yemen happened to pass by. Finding that water was available there, they sought her permission to settle down. She placed

1- A waterskin is a container of skin for holding water.

the condition that the spring of water would remain her property though they could draw from it. They agreed and later sent for the rest of the tribe to come and join them.

The never ceasing flow of Zamzam has never failed right up to this day, when millions of gallons of water are drawn every day with the help of several large power-driven pumps. The Zamzam is both water and food at the same time. It is good for whatever it is drunk for. If you drink it against thirst, Allah will slake your thirst. If you consider it food, Allah will satiate you. If you seek to be cured with it, Allah will certainly cure you.

Haajar's child grew into a handsome young man and learnt Arabic from members of Jurhum tribe. Soon they gave him one of their daughters in marriage. Ibraaheem ﷺ visited them several times. In one of these visits, he asked Ismaa'eel ﷺ to help him in building the House that Allah had ordered him to build. The House was built on a raised spot close to Zamzam, and Ismaa'eel continued to live next to it, by the side of his in-laws, the Jurhum among whom he had married. He was a truthful person as well as a messenger and a prophet (*Soorat Maryam*, 19:54). He had twelve sons. When he died, he was buried in the Hijr area by the side of his mother's grave. It is said that he lived for 137 years. It might also be pointed out that the Ibraaheemic period is considered to be 1900 years before the advent of Prophet 'Eesaa (Jesus) ﷺ.

1.3. Social Conditions in Arabia during the Time of Ignorance

In pre-Islamic Arabia communities took the form of a number of groups or tribes who were held together by loyalty to a leader or by descent from a common successor. The family units that made up the tribes were equal in status to each other. The chief of each family had power to select the tribal chief or *shaykh*, who normally came from certain families. Slavery was commonplace. Before the Prophet's time, slaves were either war captives or children of slaves or taken in raids in hostile territory.

Apart from a few oases and trading centres, the peninsula was desert and the way of life was nomadic or pastoral. Desert life was very harsh and uncompromising. It was often accompanied by grinding poverty. There was a strong temptation to lay hand on the belongings of others who were apparently wealthier. This usually took the form of raids in which there were strict rules laid down by the custom. Where possible, possessions were seized without loss of life. Killing carries severe penalties according to the tradition of the desert. The free Arabs were bound by no written law. No authority existed to enforce

law and order. Therefore, the only protection for any person's life was the fact that it would be bought dearly. Blood must be paid by blood: a life for a life. Retribution or vendetta was one of the pillars of Bedouin society.

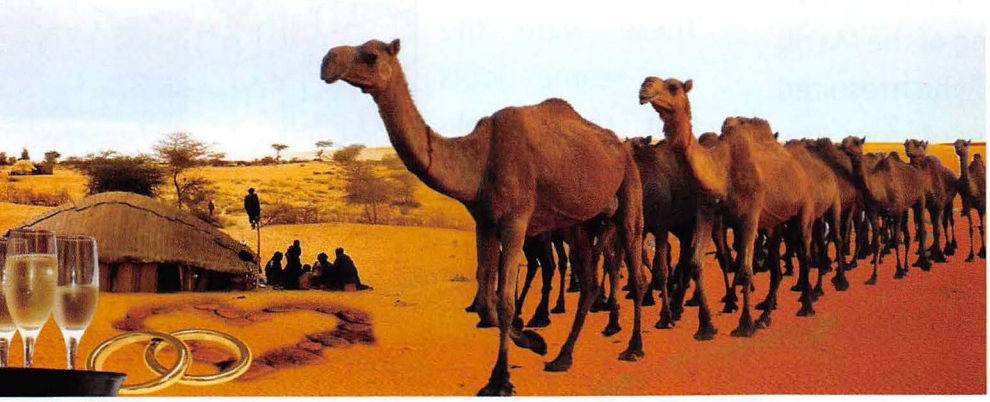
In terms of culture, the Arabs admired people who possessed eloquence and who could argue their point of view in the tribal council. Wise men were highly respected, but poets were valued even more. The poets sang of love, grief, joy and sorrow. Contests were held in which each participant boasted of his own tribe and mocked those of his rivals.

Since the religion of the Arabs was idol-worship, which is against human nature, reason and logic, it was bound to create a social life that was essentially against the demands of nature, reason and logic. Excesses of all sorts were widespread: drinking, gambling, unlimited spouses, infanticide from fear of or as a result of poverty, killing of female children for reasons of a false sense of honour and eruption of wars for petty reasons! All these led to anarchy.

In many ways, the Arabs of the pre-Islamic times were loathsome in their manners and morals. They consumed great quantities of alcohol, gambled frequently and would shed blood for the most trivial reasons. They would devour the wealth of orphans, steal, fornicate and deal in usury. However, it was the female slaves and fallen women who fornicated; free women were rarely guilty of that crime.

Some of the marriage practices prevalent among the common people were not much different from prostitution. Four kinds of marriages were prevalent among the pre-Islamic Arabs. One of them was similar to the one commonly prevalent. Another was lending one's wife. In this system a man had sex with a woman who had had no sex with her husband between two menstrual cycles. Following that, the husband would not go near her until he was sure whether or not she was pregnant from the person with whom she had sex. There was the group marriage in which a group of people, normally less than ten, assembled and had sex with a woman. When she became pregnant and delivered the child, she would send for them and designate one of them as the child's father. A fourth marriage was one in which a woman hoisted a flag on her house. A lot of people went to her and had sex with her. When she delivered a child, they hired a tracker who declared one of them nearest in resemblance to the child as the child's father. When Islam came, it declared all these practices unlawful except the first one.

In those days, people would take into marriage two real sisters at a time. A man would also marry the wives of his father at his death or when he divorced them. Divorce had no limit. Men would divorce any number of times, but Islam abolished this wrong practice. (See *Soorat al-Baqarah*, 2:229)



Admittedly though, as we have pointed out above, life in Arabia preceding Islam was by no means devoid of finer qualities. There were, of course, some good characteristics among the Arabs.

The minds of the Arabs of those times were like clean slates, ready to record and retain the right ideas. The mind's freedom from ideas allowed a powerful memory. Another characteristic was that Arabs greatly valued freedom and independence. They would not bend down to anyone except their leaders who commanded their respect by displaying the qualities that they approved of, such as, chivalry, patience and fortitude. Moreover, despite their worship of idols, they did not deny God's existence.

1.4. Religious Conditions: Beliefs and Customs

The ancestry of the Quraysh goes back to Ismaa'eel, son of Ibraaheem. The name Quraysh is said to have been a nickname for one of the ancestors of the Prophet ﷺ. The Quraysh lived in Makkah around the Ka'bah, which they honoured and maintained. As a result of their custodianship of the Ka'bah, their honour, status and reputation grew.

Then a new tribe migrated to Makkah from Yemen. The reason for the migration seems to have been the bursting of the Ma'rib Dam (also called al-'Arim Dam), which resulted in a major flood and a great loss of crops. The dam was in Yemen. The newcomers were the famous tribe of Khuzaa'ah. The Khuzaa'ah brutally unseated the Quraysh and established themselves as the principal occupants of the valley and the new custodians of the valuable and famous Ancient House. They managed to keep the custodianship of the Ka'bah for three hundred to five hundred years, but they proved to be evil custodians. For it was during their time that idol-worship entered the Arabian Peninsula. One of their chiefs called 'Amr Luhay had travelled to Syria, where he found people worshipping idols. When he inquired about the role of those idols, he was told that when they supplicated to them for rain or sought other help, they would receive the rain and the help they had sought. So he asked them to donate an idol to him. They gave him Hubal which he brought down to Makkah and persuaded people to offer their devotions to it.

From then on whenever Banu Ismaa'eel (the Children of Ismaa'eel) travelled, they took a stone from the Holy Sanctuary with them, pitching it wherever they encamped and went round it in the manner pilgrims now go round the Sacred House to worship Allah. This practice led the masses to choose the best shaped stones around for worship. This is how those who were on the religion of Prophet Ibraaheem عليه السلام ended up turning idol-worshippers. Every major tribe had its own stone god. These were the very same idols that the people of Prophet Nooh عليه السلام had worshipped, as mentioned in the

Qur'an (*Soorat Nooh,* 71:23-24).

Each tribe, city, and locality had its own god, and every household in Makkah had its own idol. When a Makkan set out on a journey, their last act at home was to seek the blessings of the family deity, and the first thing they did on their return was to pay respect to it.

People used to compete with each other in collecting idols and setting up temples. Those who could afford this planted a slab of stone in front of the Ka'bah and performed the ritual of going round it (*tawaaf*). Such stones were called *ansaab*. In the words of Abu Rajaa' al 'Utaaridee, as reported in *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*, 'We worshipped stones. When we found a better stone than the one we had, we took it and threw away the old one. Where no stones were available, we erected a sand-mound, milked a goat over it and worshipped it.' When a traveller halted at the place, he would collect four stones, worship the most beautiful of them and used the other three on which to rest his pot for cooking.

The angels, they believed, were the daughters of Allah, and thus they begged them to intercede with Him on their behalf. The *jinn* were regarded as the co-sharers of Allah in the practical control of the world. The tribe of Banu Maleeh worshipped the *jinn*; the tribe of Himyar worshipped the sun; the tribe of Kinaanah worshipped the moon, the Tay' tribe worshipped Jupiter; while the Banu Asad worshipped Mercury.

The Quraysh had named deities that were special for them, such as Isaaf and Naa'ilah. 'Aa'ishah ﵂ narrated, 'We had always heard that the pair Isaaf and Naa'ilah committed fornication in the Sacred House and were turned to stones.' (Mahdi Rizqullah Ahmad, Tr. by Iqbal Dhaheer, *A Biography of the Prophet of Islam*)

The Prophet ﷺ once said,

> I saw 'Amr ibn 'Aamir of Khuzaa'ah (that is to say, 'Amr bin Luhay) dragging his intestines in the Fire. He was the one who introduced idol-worship. (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

Three hundred and sixty idols had been installed inside the Ka'bah and its courtyard – the House built by Prophet Ibraaheem for the worship of the true God—Allah.

Nothing but the traces of the religion of Prophet Ibraaheem ﵇ had remained, such as respect and the *tawaaf* round the Ka'bah, *hajj*, *'umrah*, stopping at 'Arafah and Muzdalifah and sacrifice. The creed of *tawheed* (Oneness of Allah) taught by Ibraaheem ﵇ had not, however, died completely. A few adhered to it, dissatisfied with idol-worship. They believed in the Oneness of Allah, both in His Divinity as well as His Lordship, and were waiting for the next prophet to come. They were known as *al-Hunafaa'*.

Section

1.5. Characteristics of the Pre-Islamic Arabs

Life in the desert is such that it produces people whose prominent characteristic is that of tough fighters. The outstanding features of their life are:

1. Immoderate scarcity of food,
2. The exceptional effort required to produce it,
3. The need to undertake lengthy travels in the desert and the need of the Bedouins to be their own guide on these travels, and
4. The need to provide for their own protection and security.

Of these prominent conditioning influences on the character of the Bedouin, the scarcity of food is perhaps the uppermost. It resulted in a healthier body and a stronger physique. Although the Bedouin's meal is small in quantity, it is not lacking in proteins—consisting as it does of milk, meat (sometimes) and dates. Cereals are a luxury. Sweets are almost unknown.

It is important to realize that the Arabian *Jaahiliyyah* was a state of moral ignorance, which demonstrated itself in practical behaviour and attitudes. It does not necessarily denote inherent badness of character.

To be fair, the Arabs had many good qualities as well, which made them well-prepared for the duty of carrying the banner of Islam. Here are some of these good qualities:

a. Natural Intelligence

Natural intelligence took on different forms. Firstly, they had a very strong memory. Consider the vastness of their language. In Arabic, there are 80 words for honey, 90 for fox, 500 that mean lion, 1000 that mean camel, and 1000 that denote sword. To be sure to be able to memorize all those words, the Arabs had to have strong memories. They were unlettered, but they loved poetry, as much as, or even more than any other literate and civilized people. But in order to preserve poetry, and in order to pass it down to the next generation, they had to rely on verbal communication and on powerful memories. Therefore, one should not be surprised to learn that many of the Prophet's Companions memorized the Qur'an and that some individuals among them had committed to memory hundreds, and even thousands in some cases, of *hadeeth* narrations, which they conveyed to the next generation of Muslims.

A second quality which the Arabs possessed was innocence that could be described as ignorance of falsehood. The Arabs were thus naturally prepared to receive the truth – the Message of Islam.

b. Generosity

The quality of generosity was deeply rooted among the Arabs who had always been and still are to the present day a good example of this virtue. If an Arab owed nothing except a camel, and if a guest came to visit him, he would, without giving the matter a second thought, slaughter the camel and feed its meat to their guest. It was perhaps Haatim at-Taa'ee who was most widely renowned for his generosity: stories of his generous acts were spoken of and lauded in gatherings all over Arabia.

c. Bravery

The Arabs would praise men for having died on the battlefield and would criticize and ridicule those who died peacefully on their beds. Nothing meant more to the Arabs than individual honour and the honour of one's clan and tribe. If anyone dared to attack their honour, they would defend it with their lives to the last drop. They would consider it a blemish on their character if they did not help the oppressed who came to them seeking their help and protection.

d. Love for Freedom

The vast desert of the Peninsula was the home of the Arabs who loved freedom and were not under the direct control of any king or ruler. Their honour meant more to them than their very lives. If anyone dared to humiliate them, they would not think twice about killing him.

e. Truthfulness, Honesty and Keeping Promises

In general, the Arabs avoided lying. This reality is perhaps best highlighted in the story involving Abu Sufyaan ﷺ. Still a polytheist and a bitter enemy of Islam, Abu Sufyaan ﷺ travelled abroad and met Heraclius, the leader of a foreign empire. Heraclius began to ask questions about the Prophet ﷺ and about the new faith in Makkah. Abu Sufyaan could have best served his purpose by lying about the Prophet ﷺ, but he did not do so. Instead, he spoke truthfully about the Prophet ﷺ and his good character.

f. Patience in Hard Times and Contentment with the Bare Necessities

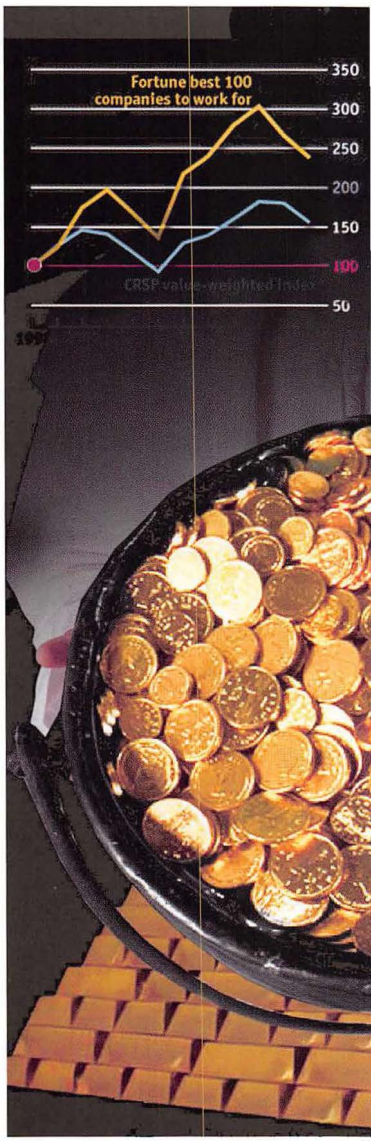
Due to the excessive scarcity of food, the Arabs consumed food in moderate quantities. They looked down upon those who ate too much and used to say: Gluttony does away with intelligence. The Arabs had a natural ability to endure hardships, a quality that they probably developed through living in the harsh desert for many generations. Low supplies of food and water, the winding rocky mountain pathways, the extreme heat of the desert: nothing seemed to perturb them. Once they embraced Islam, they had to be more patient than ever before; in hard times, one of them would go days with a small number of dates and some drops of water.

g. Showing Mercy when Revenge was within One's Grasp

The Arabs did not back down from fighting their enemies. However, it frequently happened that, at the very moment when one of them had the upper hand against their enemy and had the ability to pounce upon them, they would forgive them and leave them alone. The Arabs were also known to show mercy on the battlefield. They would never kill their wounded opponent.

These are just some of the good qualities that the Arabs possessed during the days of ignorance.

1.6. Economic Conditions and Commercial Life in Pre-Islamic Arabia

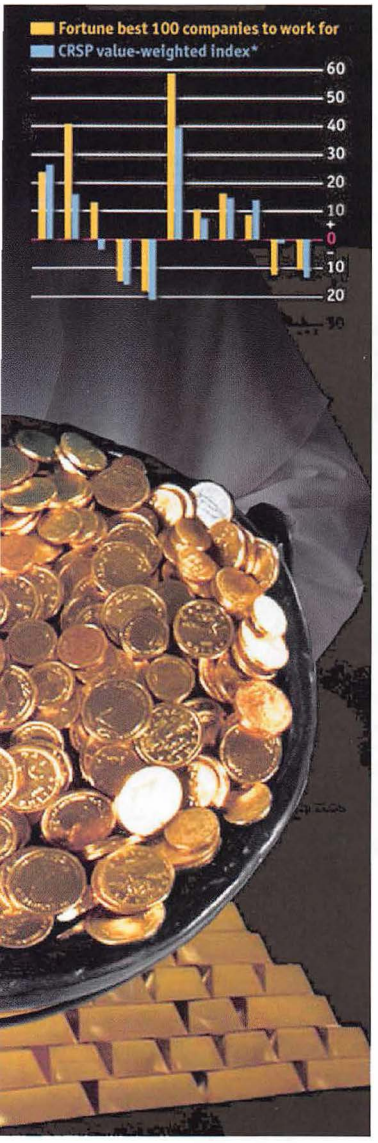


In pre-Islamic Arabia, Makkah was a prosperous commercial centre whose power and influence was growing. The valley of Makkah was barren, with no cultivation whatsoever. Therefore, the Makkans undertook two business journeys every year, one in winter and the other one in summer. In winter, they used to send their trade caravans to Yemen and in summer to ash-Shaam[2], which was a fertile and prosperous country. Being the custodians of the Ka'bah, the Quraysh were treated well by everyone. People would serve them and generally not pose any threat to their life and property. They earned a good profit in their business deals. Moreover, according to a pre-Islamic custom prevalent in Arabia, the months of *Muharram*, *Rajab*, *Dhul-Qa'dah* and *Dhul-Hijjah* (the first, seventh, eleventh

2- The traditional Arabic term Ash-Shaam is a name for the whole "Greater Syria" region that today comprises Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.

and twelfth months of the lunar calendar) were considered 'sacred' in the sense that all tribal warfare had to stop during these months.

During these months, the area around the precinct of the Sacred House in Makkah and the open space beside it were utilized as a trade centre to which people from distant places came for trading. All the essential things required for living were readily available in the market of Makkah. The stores for the sale of various commodities, located in different lanes and avenues mentioned by historians, tend to show the economic and cultural growth of Makkah. The vendors of perfumes had their stalls in a separate alley, and so were the shops of fruit-sellers, grocers, barbers, fresh dates and other wares and trades that stood in different quarters.



A number of these markets were spacious enough, as for example, the market set apart for food grains was well-stocked with wheat, ghee (clarified butter), honey and similar commodities. All these vital goods were brought by trading caravans. For example, wheat was brought to Makkah from Yamaamah. Likewise, cloth and shoe stores had separate quarters allocated to them in the market-place.

Makkah had also a few meeting places, where carefree young men used to gather together for recreation and pastime. Those who were wealthy and accustomed to a luxurious style of living would spend winter in Makkah and summer in Ṯaa'if. There were even some smart young men known for their expensive and trim dresses costing hundreds of *dirhams* (silver coins of that period).

Makkah was the centre of a wealth-producing trade on a large scale. Its merchants sent trading caravans to different countries in Asia and Africa and imported almost everything of necessity and costly wares marketable in Arabia. They usually brought resin, ivory, gold and ebony from Africa; hide, incense, frankincense, spices, sandal-wood and saffron from Yemen; different oils and food-grains, armour, silk and wines from Egypt and Syria; cloth from Iraq; and gold, tin, precious stones and ivory from India. The wealthy merchants of Makkah sometimes presented the products of their city, of which the most valued were leather products, to the kings and nobles of other countries. When the Quraysh sent ʿAbdullaah ibn Abu Rabeeʿah and ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAaṣ to Ethiopia (Abyssinia) to bring back the Muslim emigrants, they sent with hem leather goods of Makkah as gifts to the Negus and his generals.

Women also took part in commercial undertakings and sent out trading caravans bound for Syria and other countries. Khadeejah ﵂, the daughter of Khuwwaylid,

was a famous merchant woman of dignity and wealth. Like other advanced nations of the then world, the commercially minded citizens of Makkah had based their economy on commerce for which they sent out caravans in different directions; they also organized stock markets and created favourable conditions in the home market for the visiting tourists and traders.

This helped to increase the fame and dignity of Makkah as a religious centre and contributed greatly to the prosperity of the city. Everything required by the people of Makkah, whether a necessity or a luxury, reached their hands because of the city's commercial importance. This fact finds a reference in these verses of the Qur'an:

> So let them worship the Lord of this House, Who has fed them against hunger and has made them safe from fear. (*Soorat Quraysh,* 106:3-5)

1.7. Weights and Measures

Makkah was the chief centre of big business in Arabia and its citizens were prosperous and wealthy. The caravan of the Quraysh, which was the cause for the Battle of Badr while returning from Syria, consisted of a thousand camels and carried merchandise worth 50,000 *dinars* (gold coins of that period).

Both the Roman and Sassanian[3] currencies, known as *dirham* and *deenaar* (commonly spelt *dinar*), were in general use in Makkah and other parts of the Peninsula and were of two kinds: one was an Iranian coin known to the Arabs as *baghliyah*, and the other was a Roman coin, which was called *tabriyah*. These were silver coins and thus instead of using them as units of coinage, the Arabs reckoned their values according to their weights.

3- The Sassanid Empire (also spelled Sassanian Empire) was the last pre-Islamic Persian Empire, ruled by the Sassanian Dynasty from 224 to 651. The Sassanid Empire, which succeeded the Parthian Empire, was recognized as one of the two main powers in Western Asia and Europe, alongside the Roman Empire and later the Byzantine Empire, for a period of more than 400 years.

The coins in use during the time of the Prophet ﷺ were generally silver coins. The *deenaar* was a gold coin familiar to the Arabs as the Roman coin in circulation in ash-Shaam (Greater Syria) and Arabia during the pre-Islamic and early Islamic period. It was minted in the Roman Empire with the image and name of the Emperor impressed on it.

The weights and measures in general use in those days were *saaʿ*, *mudd*, *raṯl*, *ooqiyyah*, *mithqaal*, *wasaq*, and so on.

According to Muslim scholars, the metric equivalents of the Islamic weights and measures are as follows.

- 1 *Dirham* = 3.171 grams
- 1 *Deenaar* = 4.25 grams
- 1 *Mithqaal* = 4.25 grams
- 1 *Raṯl* = 408 grams
- 1 *Mudd* = 0.51 litres
- 1 *Saaaʿ* = 2.176 kg, one Sa' of water = 2.75 litres
- 1 *Ooqiyyah* = 127 grams
- 1 *Wasq* = 130.67 kg, or 165 litres.

(This detail concerning the Islamic weights and measures is largely based on *Muʿjam Lughat al-Fuqahaa'* (*Dictionary of Islamic Legal Terminology*) by Dr. Muḥammad Rawaas Qalʿah Jee, Dr. Ḥaamid Ṣaadiq Qunaybee, Daar an-Nafaa'is, Beirut, 1408 AH/1988.

The Beginnings of Islam

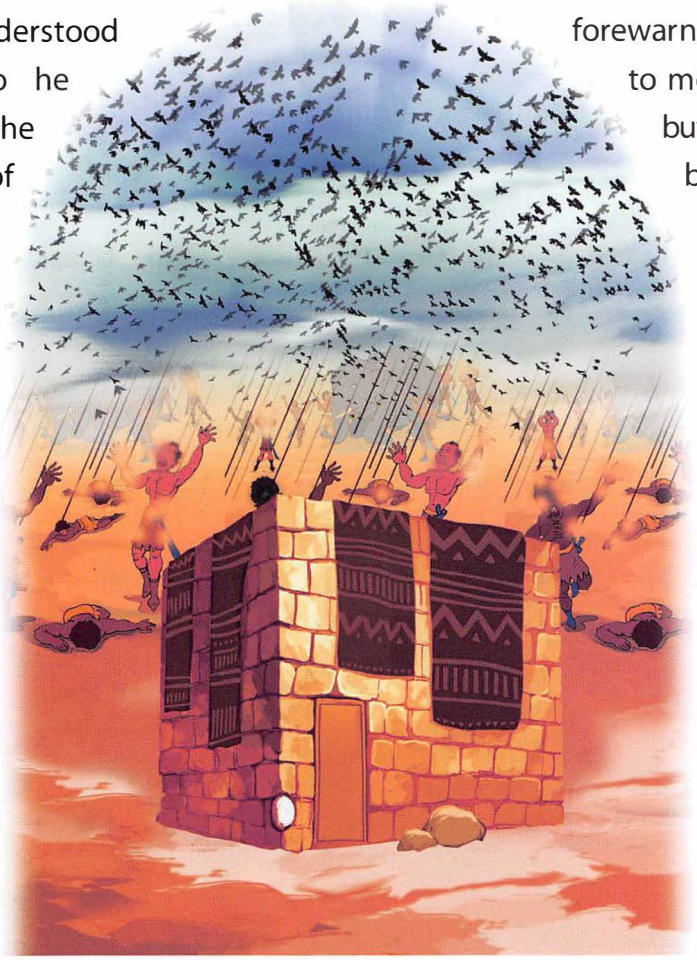
2. Life of the Last Prophet ﷺ

2.1. The Prophet's Birth: 'The Year of the Elephant'

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was born in Makkah on Monday morning, the 12th of *Rabeeʿ al-Awwal*, in the Year of the Elephant, 571 CE, some fifty-five days after the unsuccessful expedition of Abrahah against Makkah.

Yemen at that time was under the rule of Ethiopia, and Abrahah was its governor. He built a grand cathedral in Sanʿaa', hoping to make it take the place of Makkah as the great place of pilgrimage for all Arabia. A man from Kinaanah, a large tribe of western Saudi Arabia in Hijaz, understood Abrahah's motive, so he went to Sanʿaa' with the deliberate intention of defiling the church, which he did one night and returned safely to his people.

When Abrahah heard of this, he swore that he would raze the Kaʿbah to the ground in revenge. Having made his preparations, he set off for Makkah with a large army of sixty thousand warriors, in the front of which he placed a colossal elephant. His army included between nine to thirteen elephants. When Abrahah reached al-Muhassir Valley, between Muzdalifah and Mina, the elephant knelt down to the ground. Abraha's soldiers did everything they possibly could to bring it to its feet, but it stubbornly refused to move. Whenever they directed it towards the north, south or east, the elephant would move quickly, but whenever they directed it towards Makkah it would kneel down. This was the clearest of forewarnings for the army not to move one step forward, but Abrahah was blinded by his ambition for the sanctuary he had built and his determination to destroy the Kaʿbah. Had he and his army turned back, they would perhaps have escaped the great disaster. But it was too late.



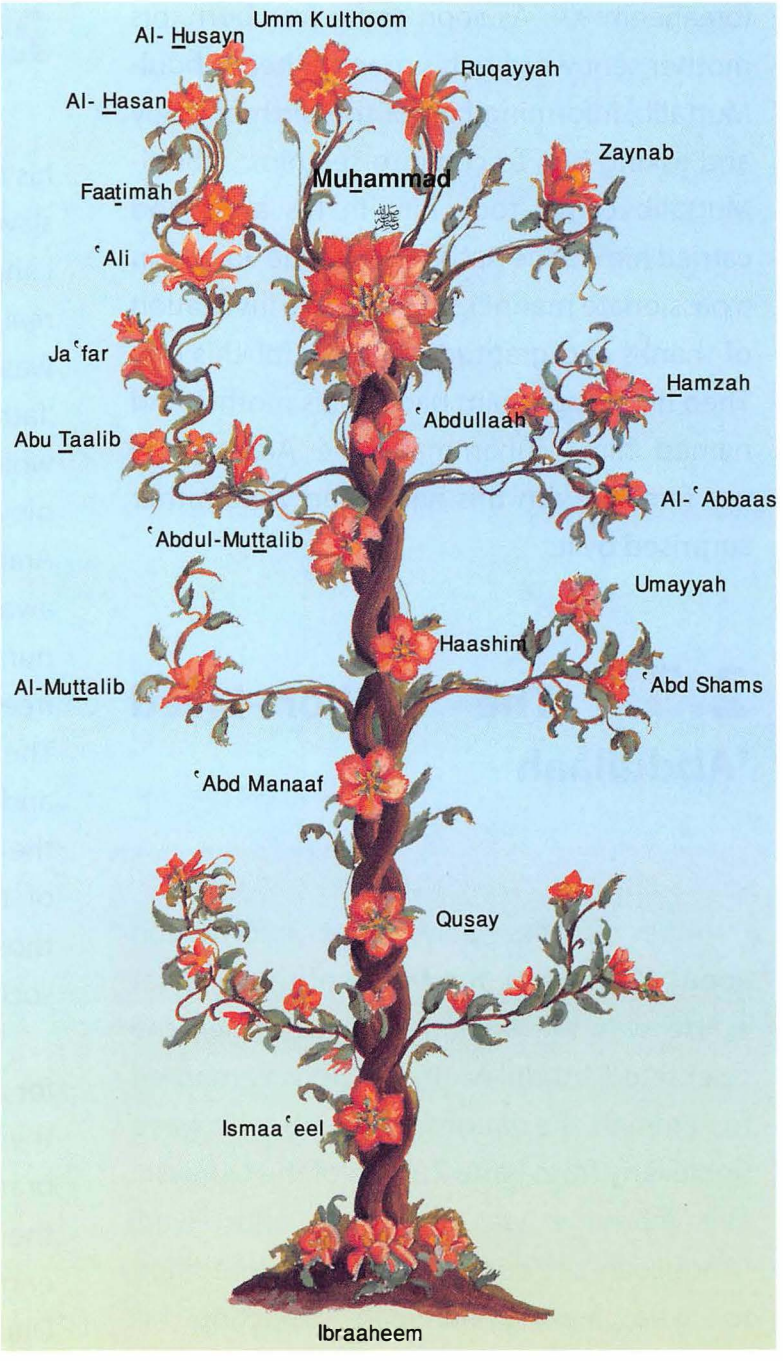
Suddenly the western sky grew dark, and a strange sound was heard in the distance. Its volume gradually

increased. A great wave of darkness arrived upon the army from the direction of the sea, and the air above them was full of birds which were very much like sparrows and swallows. Each bird had three pebbles the size of dried peas, one in its beak and each one of the other two between the claws of each foot.

They swooped to and fro over the army, pelting them as they did so. The pebbles were hard and they landed with such rapidity that they even pierced coats of mail. Every stone found its mark. Every pebble killed its man. As soon as a soldier was hit, his flesh would begin to rot. A large number of Abrahah's soldiers were killed in this way. Many others, Abrahah included, died soon after their return to Ṣanʿaa'.

The Arabs attached great importance to this event. They dated their calendar from it, saying, 'This occurred in the Year of the Elephant', 'so-and-so was born in the Year of the Elephant' or 'this happened so many years after the Year of the Elephant'.

According to many scholars, this event took place in the year 571 of the Christian Calendar. According to others, however, it occurred in the year 570 CE. There is a difference of opinion among scholars concerning the exact date of the birth of the Prophet ﷺ. Some scholars maintain that he was born on the 9th Rabeeʿ *al-Awwal* in the Year of the Elephant.



2.2. The Prophet's Lineage and Ancestry

The Prophet's father was ʿAbdullaah, and his mother was Aaminah, daughter of Wahb ibn ʿAbd Manaaf. ʿAbdul-Muṭṭalib was his grandfather, and Abu Ṭaalib was one of his uncles. The Prophet ﷺ was born among the best of tribes on earth and was of the best of lineage. His ancestry can be traced back to Prophet

Ibraaheem ﷺ. As soon as he was born, his mother sent word to his grandfather, ʿAbdul-Muttalib, informing him of the birth of a boy and asking him to come to see him. ʿAbdul-Muttalib came, took him in his arms and carried him to the Kaʿbah, where he voiced, in a passionate manner, an elaborate invocation of thanks and gratitude to Allah for this gift. Then he brought him back to his mother and named him Muhammad. The Arabs were not familiar with this name and were rather surprised by it.

2.3. The Short-Lived ʿAbdullaah

We possess only scant information about ʿAbdullaah, the father of the Prophet ﷺ. He was the favourite of his father, the celebrated ʿAbdul-Muttalib. He was married to Aaminah, the daughter of Wahb, who was a noble lady from Banu Zuhrah of the Quraysh. The marriage was extremely short-lived. ʿAbdullaah set out on a trading expedition to Syria, leaving Aaminah expecting his child. He never returned. ʿAbdullaah died in Madeenah on his return trip from Syria. When news of his death reached Makkah, Banu Haashim, and especially Aaminah, were grief-stricken. Allah's Messenger ﷺ was not yet born. ʿAbdullaah had no children except the future prophet, nor had Aaminah any other child. ʿAbdullaah was buried in Madeenah. He was twenty-five when he died. Allah's Messenger ﷺ was born shortly after the death of his father.

2.4. Childhood

The first woman who suckled him after his mother was Thuwaybah, the freed female slave of Abu Lahab, with her son, Masruh. Abu Lahab was one of the Prophet's uncles. The real name of this uncle was ʿAbd al-Uzzaa. He was popularly nicknamed Abu Lahab, literally 'father of the flame' on account of his beauty which was most notably expressed in his glowing face. It was the general custom of the Arabs living in towns to send their children away, soon after their birth, to Bedouin wet nurses so that they might grow up in the free and healthy surroundings of the desert. Thereby they would develop a strong body and acquire the pure speech and manners of the Bedouins. They were noted both for purity of their language and for being free from those vices which usually develop in inactive societies.

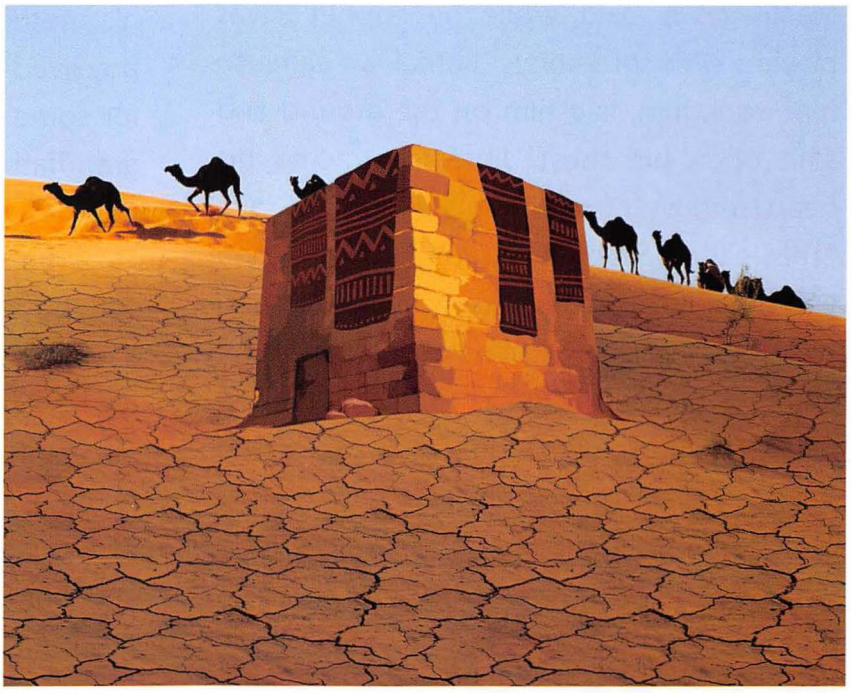
Some of the tribes had a high reputation for nursing and rearing children. Amongst these were the Banu Saʿd ibn Bakr, an outlying branch of Hawaazin, whose territory lay to the southeast of Makkah. The Prophet ﷺ was entrusted to Haleemah, the daughter of Abu Dhu'ayb. She was from Banu Saʿd ibn Bakr. Her husband was al-Haarith ibn ʿAbd al-ʿUzzaa, called Abu Kabshah, from the same tribe.

Traditions describe how Haleemah and all her household were favoured by successive strokes of good fortune while the child Muhammad ﷺ lived under her care. It is narrated that Haleemah described in after-years that she, along with her husband and a recently born son of their own whom she was nursing, set out from her village in the company of some women from Banu Saʿd ibn

Bakr in quest of nurselings to suckle. She said,

It was a year of drought. We had nothing left. I set forth on a grey female donkey of mine and we had with us an old she-camel which could not yield one drop of milk. We were kept awake all night by our son who would keep crying all night because of hunger, for I had not enough in my breast to feed him. At length, we reached Makkah and set about looking for nurselings. Aaminah offered her son first to one and then to another, until she had tried them all and they had all refused.

That was because we hoped for some favours from the boy's father. "An orphan!" we said, "what will his mother and grandfather be able to give us?" We had fixed our eyes on the reward that we would get from the child's father.



Every nurse who had come with me got a baby, and when we were about to depart, I said to my husband, "I hate to return in the company of my friends without having taken a baby to suckle. I shall go to that orphan and take him." So I went and took him for no reason except that I could find none but him.

I carried him back to where our mounts were stationed, and no sooner had I put him in my bosom than my breasts overflowed with milk for him. He drank his fill, and his foster-brother also drank his fill. Then they both slept, although my baby had not been able to sleep the previous night at all. My husband went to that old she-camel of ours and he found her udders full. He milked her and drank of her milk. I also drank with him until we could drink no more. Our hunger was satisfied. We enjoyed a sound sleep during the night, and in the morning my husband said to me, "By Allah, Haleemah, you have taken a blessed child."

Then we set out. I carried him and rode my donkey which outstripped the whole troops of fellow-travellers so much so that none of their donkeys was able to keep pace with her. We reached our dwellings in Banu Sa'd. It was a barren place. But when we brought Muhammad ﷺ to live with us, the barren land soon sprouted lush grass. My flock would come fully satisfied at every evening full of milk. We continued to enjoy this increase and bounty from Allah. The baby was growing well. None of the other boys could match him for growth until the baby's two years had passed, and I weaned him.

By the time he was two-years old, Haleemah took him again to his mother although she was eager that he should stay with her for the blessings he had brought her and her family. The Prophet's mother gave him once more into her keeping and Haleemah brought him again to her home. The Prophet ﷺ stayed with them until he was four or five years old.

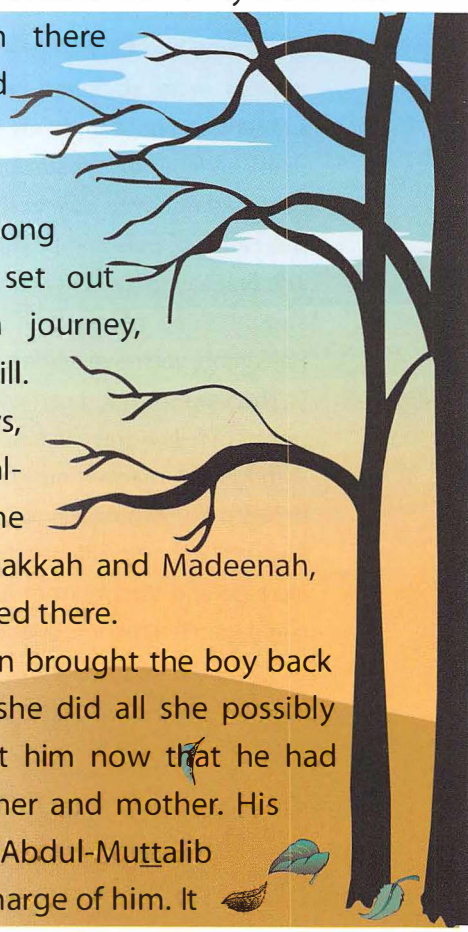
While the Prophet ﷺ was staying in Haleemah's house, a very strange incident took place. An angel came, split open his chest and removed a blood clot from his heart and threw it away. Then he cleansed his heart and replaced it. Muslim has recorded this incident in his *Saheeh* on the authority of Anas ibn Maalik ؓ who said, 'While the Prophet ﷺ was playing with some boys, Jibreel ؑ came to him, took him, laid him on the ground and split open his chest. Jibreel extracted his heart, removed from it a black clot and said, "This is the portion of Satan in you." He then washed the heart with Zamzam water in a basin made of gold, joined the heart together and returned it to its place. The children ran up to their mother and said, "Muhammad has been murdered." They hurried only to find him standing alone, pale and shaken.' Anas ؓ added, 'I have seen the stitch marks on his chest.'

This incident certainly deserves more than a passing thought or mention. What happened on that day was one of the signs of Prophethood. It was a clear proof that Allah had chosen Muhammad ﷺ for a very important message. Purification from Satan's influence was in fact preparation for protecting the Prophet ﷺ from evil of every sort. Although idol-worship and evil deeds were practised on a large scale among the Quraysh, the Prophet ﷺ never ever bowed down to an idol, nor committed a sin. The removal of the blood-clot from his heart certainly purified him from every immaturity and recklessness of youth. The incident also shows us the degree to which Allah protected the Prophet ﷺ and prevented Satan from having any influence whatsoever over him.

2.5. Aaminah and ʿAbdul-Muttalib Pass away

After this incident, Haleemah was so worried about the boy that she took him once more to Makkah and returned him to his mother. He was six years old then. The boy lived happily with his mother in Makkah for some time, winning the affection of his grandfather and his uncles and aunts, and his many cousins with whom he played.

The reunion of orphan Muhammad ﷺ with his real mother was destined to be short-lived. When he was six years old, his mother decided to take him on a visit to his maternal uncles in Madeenah. She was in her early twenties then. She set out to cover a journey of about 500 kilometres with her orphan boy and her female servant Umm Ayman. She spent a month there and then decided to go back to Makkah. However, not long after they had set out on their return journey, Aaminah fell ill. After some days, she died at al-Abwaa', on the road between Makkah and Madeenah, and she was buried there.



Umm Ayman brought the boy back to Makkah and she did all she possibly could to comfort him now that he had lost both his father and mother. His grandfather 'Abdul-Muttalib took complete charge of him. It

soon became clear that his special fondness for ʿAbdullaah had been transferred to ʿAbdullaah's son.

ʿAbdul-Muttalib was the foremost chief of Makkah and the undisputed leader of Banu Haashim. He was the most handsome among the Quraysh men. He was very tall, kind-hearted and generous and enjoyed great character. He was held in high esteem, and no ruler had ever met him but would show him respect and hold him in awe. He had been the leader of the Quraysh until his death.

ʿAbdul-Muttalib was very fond of his grandson, and their intimate relationship grew even stronger as time passed. Every day, he would spread a couch in the shade of the Ka'bah, and out of respect for their father none of his sons would venture to sit on it, but he would seat himself beside the Prophet ﷺ on the couch and stroke his back. Almost everyday they would be seen together. But, alas, him too Muhammad ﷺ was destined to lose very soon.

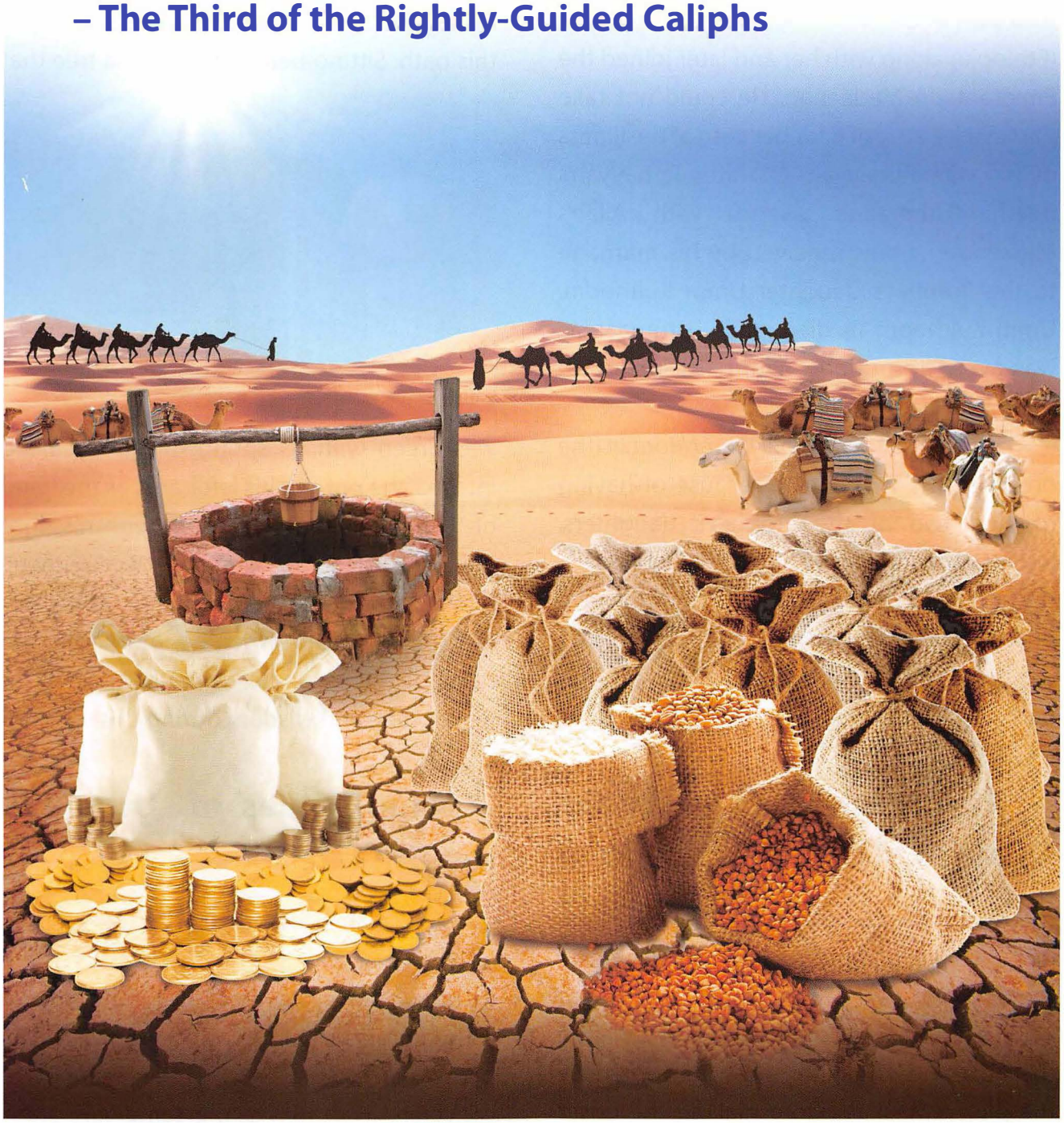
When Muhammad ﷺ was eight years, two months and ten days old, his grandfather passed away in Makkah. Umm Ayman reported that she had seen the youthful Muhammad ﷺ weeping as he quickened his steps to follow the coffin of his guardian and protector. The princely patriarch died at the age of eighty-two, according to the most reliable sources. Some scholars put his age at over a hundred years when he died. When he was dying, ʿAbdul-Muttalib entrusted his grandson to Abu Taalib, who was a full brother of young Muhammad's father.

Abu Taalib continued the love and the kindness that his nephew had received from the old man. Henceforth he was as one of his own sons, and his wife Faatimah did all she possibly could to take the place of his mother. After many years, Allah's Messenger ﷺ used to say of her that she would let her own children go hungry rather than him. Like his father, Abu Taalib was dignified, honoured and greatly respected by his people.

2.6. Muhammad's Early Occupation

Muhammad ﷺ did what he could in his early youth to earn his livelihood. In fact, he tended sheep and goats for a wage and would thus spend day after day alone in the hills above Makkah or on the slopes of the valleys beyond.

3.3. ʿUthmaan ibn ʿAffaan Abu ʿAmr al-Qurashee ﷺ – The Third of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs



ʿUthmaan ibn ʿAffaan, the third Rightly-Guided Caliph (24-35 AH 644-656 CE), was born in Makkah in the year 577 CE, some forty-seven years before the Prophet's *Hijrah* to Madeenah.

He belonged to the great Banu ʿUmayyah clan of the Quraysh tribe. His father's name was ʿAffaan ibn Abul-ʿAaṣ ibn Umayyah al-Qurashee. Abu ʿAmr was his honorary title (*kunyah*). ʿUthmaan ﷺ was of noble lineage, wealthy and extremely handsome. He entered Islam at the invitation of Abu Bakr Aṣ-Ṣiddeeq ﷺ, shortly after the Prophet's mission began in Makkah, and was one of the few people of Makkah who knew how to read and write.

ʿUthmaan ﷺ was a wealthy merchant

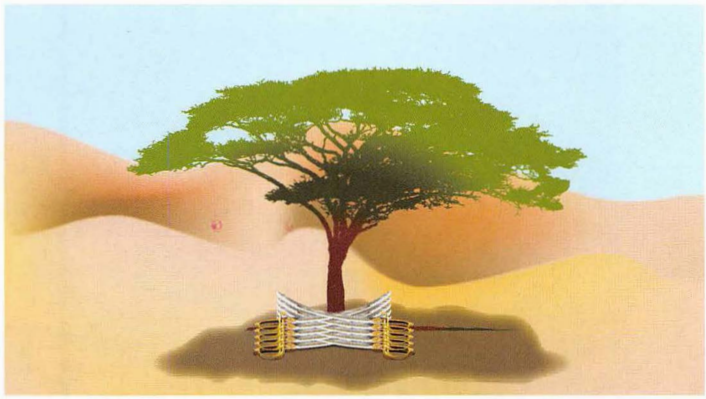
and an accomplished man of the world. He married the Prophet's daughter Ruqayyah ﵂, took part in the two emigrations to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) along with her and later joined the Emigrants in Madeenah. He could not take part in the Battle of Badr because of the illness of his wife Ruqayyah ﵂. After Ruqayyah's death, ʿUthmaan's alliance with Allah's Messenger ﷺ was renewed by his marriage to the Prophet's daughter Umm Kulthoom. Umm Kulthoom ﵂ died while ʿUthmaan ﵁ was away from Madeenah, participating in the Tabook Expedition.

He earned the title of *Dhun-Noorayn* (the one with the two lights) because of having married two of the Prophet's daughters, Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthoom, at different times. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said to ʿUthmaan that if he had another unmarried daughter, he would have given her to him in marriage.

The Prophet's Envoy to the Quraysh at al-Hudaybiyyah

Allah's Messenger ﷺ had halted at the place called al-Hudaybiyyah, just outside the Haram (the Holy Precinct), with about 1400 of his Companions. There he awaited the outcome of events when prevented by the pagan Makkans from making the lesser pilgrimage (*ʿumrah*).

The Prophet ﷺ sent ʿUthmaan ﵁, who had powerful relatives among the Quraysh, to negotiate with the Makkans. When he did not return at the expected time, a rumour spread that he had been killed or captured and that all was lost. At that moment of peril, the Prophet ﷺ took the pledge of allegiance, known as the Pledge of Good Pleasure (*Bayʿat ar-Ridwaan*), from his Companions. The Prophet ﷺ himself represented the absent ʿUthmaan by proxy in this oath. Sitting beneath an acacia tree that



was green with its spring foliage breaking into leaf, he put out his left hand, as the hand of ʿUthmaan, and grasping it with his right hand, pledged the allegiance. The rumour, however, turned out to be false, and there was great rejoicing when he returned to the camp. ʿUthmaan ﵁ was greatly admired for his courage and wisdom during this mission.

The Virtues of ʿUthmaan ibn ʿAffaan ﵁

ʿAa'ishah ﵂ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ was once was lying in bed in her room with his thigh uncovered when Abu Bakr ﵁ sought permission to enter. He was given permission to enter and the Prophet ﷺ conversed with him in the same very state. That is, without covering his thigh. Then ʿUmar ﵁ sought permission and it was given to him and he conversed with him in that very state. Then ʿUthmaan ﵁ sought permission, and the Prophet ﷺ sat up and set right his clothes. When ʿAa'ishah ﵂ asked him why he got up and set his clothes right when ʿUthmaan sought permission to come

in but did not stir and observe such care in arranging his clothes when Abu Bakr and ʿUmar sought permission to enter, he replied, 'Should I not show modesty to someone to whom even the angels show modesty?' (Reported by Muslim)

Once, while the Prophet ﷺ was on Mount Uhud along with Abu Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmaan, the mountain trembled, and he said, 'Be steady, Uhud, for there are on you a prophet, a man of truth and two martyrs. (al-Bukhaaree) The man of truth here is obviously Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq ؓ, while the two martyrs were ʿUmar and ʿUthmaan. The Prophet's prediction later came true.

When the early Muslims migrated to Madeenah, there was a well called Roomah which belonged to a Jew who used to sell its water to Muslims at a heavy price. When the Prophet ﷺ said, 'Whoever digs the well of Roomah will enter Paradise' Uthmaan ؓ purchased it for a very high price and donated it for the use of all the Muslims.

ʿUthmaan ؓ was very generous and always sought to donate his money for the sake of Allah. The Campaign of Difficulty (Jaysh al-ʿUsrah, also called Ghazwat al-ʿUsrah) was a name given to the Campaign of Tabook on account of the extremely difficult circumstances under which it took place. When he heard the Prophet ﷺ say, 'Whoever equips the Army of Difficulty, his reward will be Paradise',[3] ʿUthmaan ؓ brought the Prophet ﷺ a thousand gold *deenaars* which he poured into his lap. The Prophet ﷺ picked them up with his hand and said repeatedly, 'Nothing shall harm ʿUthmaan after what he did today.' It is also narrated that he equipped the Army of Difficulty with seven hundred ounces of gold, or seven hundred and fifty camels and fifty horses.

ʿUthmaan ibn ʿAffaan ؓ was one of the ten Companions to whom the Prophet ﷺ promised Paradise in their lifetime. The other nine were: Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq, ʿUmar ibn al-Khattaab, ʿAli ibn Abee Taalib, Abu ʿUbaydah ibn al-Jarraah, Saʿeed ibn Zayd, az-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwaam, Talhah ibn ʿUbaydullaah, Saʿd ibn Abu Waqqaas and ʿAbdur-Rahmaan ibn ʿAwf. May Allah be well-pleased with them all.

ʿUthmaan ؓ was always very close to the Prophet ﷺ, and he related 146 *ahaadeeth* from him.

ʿUthmaan ibn ʿAffaan's Caliphate

ʿUthmaan ؓ was the third of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafaa' ar-Raashidoon*). His caliphate came about as a result of the unanimous agreement of the Companions. The actual process was as follows: ʿUmar ؓ had excluded his own sons from the succession to the caliphate, which he left to be decided by a consultative council (*shooraa*) consisting of six members, namely Talhah ibn ʿUbaydullaah, az-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwaam, Saʿd ibn Abu Waqqaas, ʿUthmaan ibn ʿAffaan, ʿAli ibn Abee Taalib and ʿAbdur-Rahmaan ibn ʿAwf. ʿUthmaan was unanimously elected caliph by this consultative council. Then the rest of the people all pledged their allegiance to him. ʿUthmaan ؓ remained a rightful leader (*imaam*) until the day he was martyred. He accepted the caliphate after ʿUmar's death in 23 AH.

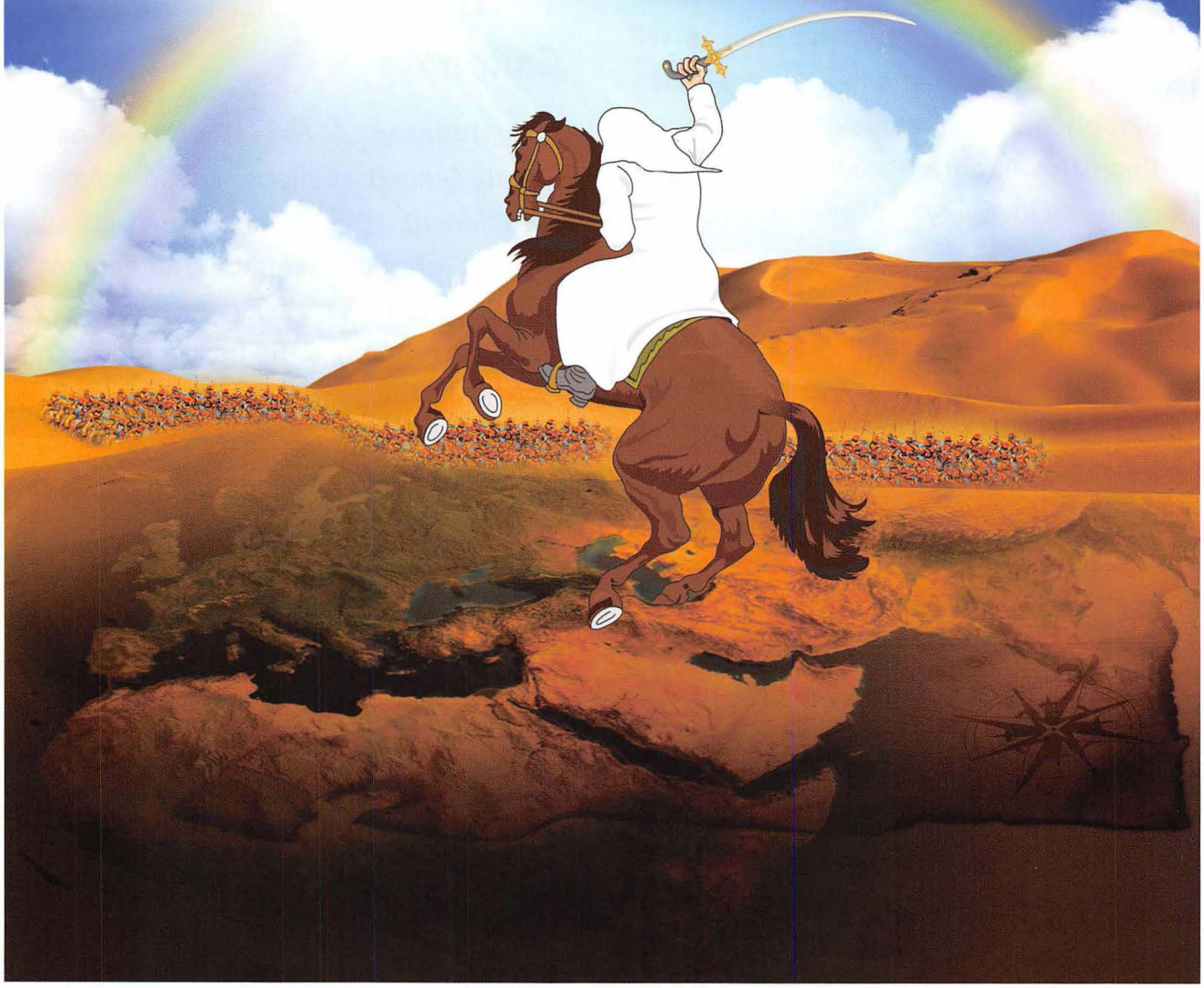
3- Reported by al-Bukhaaree.

During his caliphate, Armenia, Caucasia, Khuraasaan, Kirmaan, Sijistaan, Cyprus and much of North Africa were added to the dominion of Islam. Everyday, more and more people embraced Islam.

In the beginning, 'Uthmaan ﷺ continued the same policies and principles that were adopted by 'Umar ﷺ. One particular achievement of the rule of 'Uthmaan was the establishment of a navy, which was a major development in Islamic history, making the Muslims stronger in defending their shores and helping facilitate the conquest of islands such as Crete and Cyprus.

The first half of 'Uthmaan's caliphate was peaceful. Afterwards, revolt began in Iraq and Iran. Civil war arose and the unity of the Prophet's time was shattered. Despite the troubles of his caliphate, 'Uthmaan ﷺ is held innocent of them.

In the beginning, the policies adopted by



'Uthmaan ﷺ worked well, but the trouble began with some important officials appointed by the caliph. Some of the officials did not behave in a responsible manner as they treated the common people unjustly. This took place particularly in lands distant from Madeenah, in regions where most people were new converts to Islam.

'Umar ﷺ was very careful and strict about the activities of his governors and other officials in various parts of the Islamic territory. Whenever he discovered any trace of corruption by any official, he would replace him. But after his death, things changed rapidly. 'Uthmaan ﷺ was extremely gentle. He was a very humble person and was not as strong as 'Umar was. He started to receive complaints against some of his governors and other officials in distant regions of the Islamic territory. On the basis of these complaints he changed the governors of the provinces of Koofah in Iraq and Egypt, but this not did satisfy many people in these regions.

A number of people once came to Madeenah from Koofah, Basrah and Egypt to complain about their governors in their regions. 'Uthmaan ﷺ listened to them carefully and assured them that he would take action against each and every corrupt official if found guilty. Upon hearing this, the group of complainers left Madeenah, satisfied by the caliph's assurance. But on their way out of the city, something mysterious took place. They found a man who had carried a forged secret letter from the caliph to his governors. The letter commanded them to kill all these complainers when they reached home. The storm burst with gathered fury against the aged caliph as a result of this forged letter.

Hence, a group of rebels came to 'Uthmaan's home to force him to resign. They even produced the letter which apparently bore the official seal of the caliph. 'Uthmaan ﷺ denied the charges. The letter was, in fact, a forgery by an enemy of Islam, named 'Abdullaah ibn Saba', who sought to create trouble in the Muslim community. People, however, refused to believe the caliph and forced him to resign. When he refused, the rebels and the plotters climbed over the walls of his house, crowded in and struch the caliph with their swords. 'Uthmaan was reading the Qur'an when he was attacked. His blood flowed down upon the sacred text. Thus attacked, his faithful wife Naa'ilah cast herself upon her wounded husband, and as she shielded him with her arm, a sword severed several of her fingers, which fell on the ground. The insurgents plunged their weapons into the caliph's body, and he fell lifeless to the ground. A scene of riot followed. Women screamed. The house was gutted. 'Uthmaan ibn 'Affaan ﷺ died at the age of eighty-two in the year 35 AH, after a reign of twelve years. His murderers killed him out of enmity and wickedness.

'Uthmaan ﷺ Prepares an Official Authentic Copy of the Qur'an

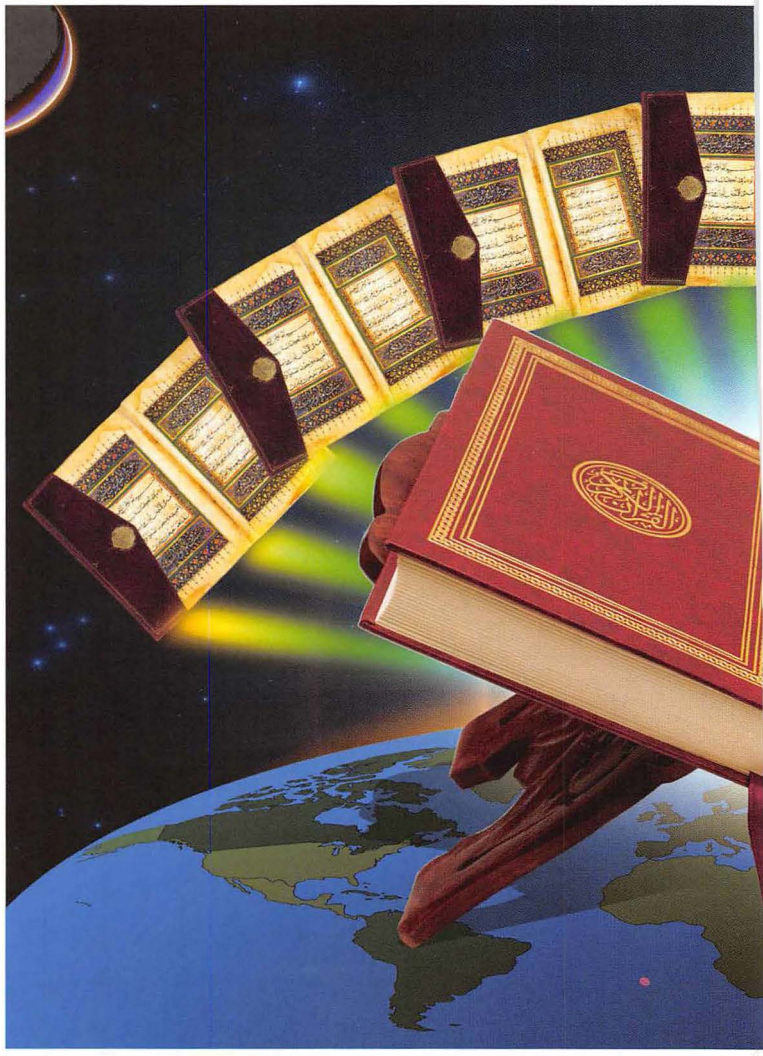
One of the most significant acts of 'Uthmaan ﷺ was the preparation of the official copy of the Qur'an and its distribution to various parts of the Muslim state. It was during the caliphate of Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq ﷺ that the Qur'an was collected and put in

one volume. Once complete, the collected Qur'an was placed in the state archives under the custodianship of Abu Bakr ﷺ. Abu Bakr's contribution, we can summarize, was to collect the first hand Qur'anic fragments then scattered about Madeenah and arrange for their transcription into a master volume. This collection was termed *suhuf*, plural of the word *saheefah*, which literally means 'sheets of parchment'.

Appointing ʿUmar ﷺ as the next caliph on his deathbed, Abu Bakr ﷺ entrusted his successor with the *suhuf*. Wounded fatally by Feerooz Abu Lu'lu'ah, a Christian slave from Persia, towards the end of 23 AH, ʿUmar ﷺ refused to nominate a caliph, leaving the decision to the people. Meantime, he entrusted the *suhuf* to his daughter Hafsah, the Prophet's widow and Mother of the Believers.

During the caliphate of ʿUthmaan ﷺ, a report came from Azerbaijan that the Muslims had fallen into disagreement concerning the recitation of the Qur'an. These regional differences over the pronunciation of the Qur'an had caused friction. Hudhayfah ibn al-Yamaan ﷺ came to ʿUthmaan directly from the border of Azerbaijan and Armenia and said, 'O Caliph, take this community in hand before they differ about the Book like the Christians and the Jews had.' (al-Bukhaaree) Hudhayfah ibn al-Yamaan's warning came in 25 AH, and in that very year ʿUthmaan resolved to end these disputes.

So ʿUthmaan sent Hafsah ﷺ a message stating, 'Send us the *suhuf* so that we may make perfect copies, and then return the *suhuf* back to you.' Hafsah ﷺ sent them to ʿUthmaan, who commanded Zayd



ibn Thaabit, ʿAbdullaah ibn az-Zubayr, Saʿeed ibn al-ʿAas and ʿAbdur-Rahmaan ibn al-Haarith to make duplicate copies and instructed the three Qurayshite men, 'Should you disagree with Zayd ibn Thaabit on any point concerning the Qur'an, write it in the dialect of the Quraysh, as the Qur'an was revealed in their tongue.' They did so, and when they had prepared several copies, ʿUthmaan returned the *suhuf* to Hafsah. (M. M. al-Aʿdhamee, *The History of the Qur'anic Text*, p. 88)

After consulting the prominent Companions, ʿUthmaan formed a council which included Zayd ibn Thaabit and Ubayy ibn Kaʿb.

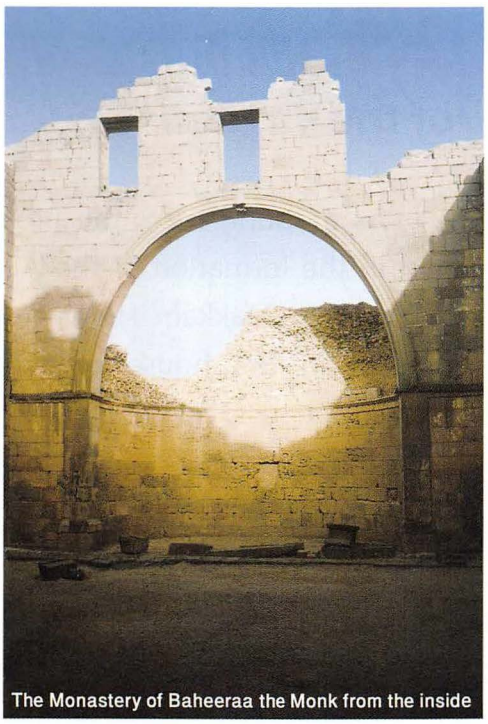
Zayd ibn Thaabit ﷺ was one of the

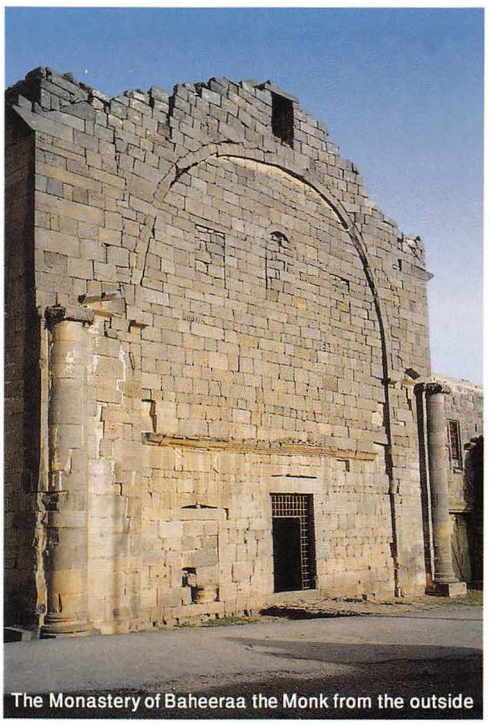
When Muhammad ﷺ was still young, Abu Taalib was going through a financial crisis. He had many mouths to feed, and his business was not going so well. To help his uncle get through these hard times, Muhammad ﷺ worked as a shepherd. In an authentic *hadeeth*, he is reported to have said, 'Every prophet tended sheep.' His Companions asked him, 'And did you?' He replied, 'Yes, I tended them for the Makkans in return for *qaraareet*.' Ibn Hajar mentions that scholars hold two opinions concerning the meaning of the Arabic word *qaraareet*. The first opinion states that a *qeeraat* (singular of *qaraareet*) is a part of a *dinar* or *dirham*, and the second one states that *qaraareet* is the name of a place in Makkah.

Working as a shepherd afforded the Prophet ﷺ the chance to work in peace and quiet, to enjoy the beauty of the desert and to contemplate the wonders and grandeur of Allah's creation. Indeed, Allah would have provided the Prophet ﷺ with wealth and comfort so that he would not have to work as a shepherd, but this practice was a divine training for him so that it would be much easier for him to deal with people and tolerate their harm. Indeed, a shepherd needs a great deal of patience and forbearance to look after his flock. This practice proved useful to the prophets. A shepherd picks up and develops many wonderful qualities: the very qualities that the Prophet ﷺ needed to lead his community to the truth. Some of these qualities include patience, humbleness, bravery, mercy and compassion, and above all the love of earning one's living through lawful hard work.

By doing so his followers were also taught a very good lesson, namely, the most honourable way to live is to eat from what one earns by engaging in lawful work. A person who invites others to Islam must especially avoid taking from what is in their hands. He should be independent of all human beings. A self-sufficient man is dignified in the sight of others. Whatever good he does, he does it for Allah. The Prophet ﷺ once said, "Never has any one eaten a better food than what he has eaten out of the labour of his own hands; and David, the Prophet of Allah, used to eat out of the labour of his own hands. (Al-Bukhaaree, *hadeeth* no. 2072) Moreover, this *hadeeth* is suggestive of the adoption of a lawful occupation, no matter how people may look askance at it. That was the reason why the prophets took such occupations.

When one is self-sufficient, depending upon no one but Allah, one gains the freedom of being able to speak the truth. Because they are dependent upon the generosity of others, many people bow their heads low before evildoers. They remain silent about their wrongdoing for fear of losing their jobs and their livelihood.


The Monastery of Baheeraa the Monk from the inside


The Monastery of Baheeraa the Monk from the outside

2.7. Baheeraa the Monk

When Muhammad ﷺ was twelve years old, he accompanied his uncle, Abu Taalib, on a trade journey to Syria. When they reached Busraa, an ancient city in southern Syria that was under the Roman rule, there was a monk named Baheeraa, who came out of his cell to meet them. Although he had not met them before, he readily recognized the Prophet ﷺ and said while taking his hand, 'This is the master of all mankind. Allah will send him with a message which will be a mercy to all beings.' Abu Taalib asked him, 'How do you know that?' Baheeraa replied, 'When you appeared from the direction of 'Aqabah, every single rock and tree fell down in prostration, which they never do except for a prophet. I can also recognize him by the apple-like 'Seal of Prophethood' below his shoulder bones.' He also asked Abu Taalib to send the boy back to Makkah and not to take him to Syria as there was a serious danger to his life from the Romans and the Jews. Abu Taalib obeyed and sent him back to Makkah with some of his servants.

The trip to Syria was no doubt a major event in the life of the Prophet ﷺ. For the first time, he saw the bustling commercial centres of other lands. The trip brought him into contact with a society which differed considerably from the one in which he had grown up.

2.8. The Sacrilegious (*Fijaar*) War

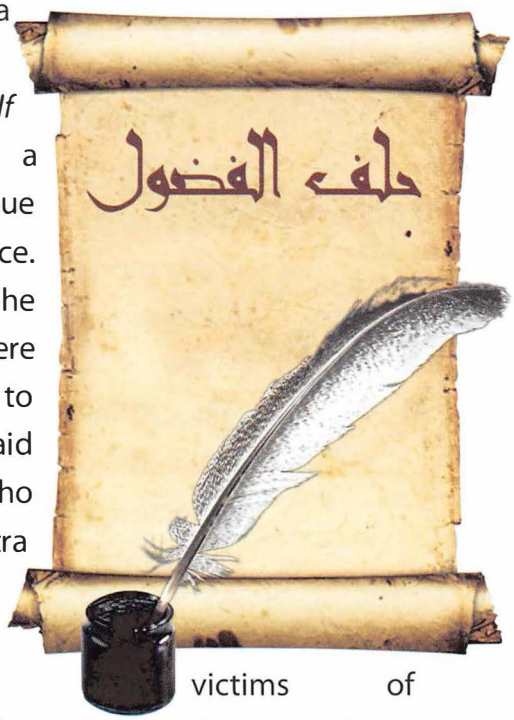
A war that raged between Kinaanah and Quraysh on one side and Qays ʿAylaan, an important clan of the Hawaazin, on another was called the *Fijaar* or the Sacrilegious War because both sides violated the sanctity at the Holy House. The conflict dragged on for three or four years. Allah's Messenger ﷺ took part in one of these battles. His efforts were, however, confined to helping by gathering enemy arrows that had missed their mark and handing them over to his uncles so that they could shoot them back. At that time, the Prophet ﷺ was about twenty years old.

The Arabic word *fijaar* means wickedness. This war was given such a name because the sanctity of Makkah was violated, and the Arabs considered any violation of Makkah to be a wicked crime. The Prophet ﷺ learnt about war and chivalry during these tribal encounters.

2.9. *Hilf al-Fudool*: Alliance of the Virtuous

As a young man, the Prophet ﷺ took part in the formation of the 'Alliance of the Virtuous' in Makkah. He once said, 'I was present in the house of ʿAbdullaah ibn Judʿaan at so excellent a pact that I would not exchange my part in it for a herd of red camels, and if now, in Islam, I were summoned to it I would gladly respond.'

The expression *fudool* comes from the word *fadl*, which means nobility, superiority and virtue. Hence, it was an appropriate name for the alliance. The owner of red camels during those times would today be equivalent to a millionaire.[1]



In fact, *Hilf al-Fudool* was a kind of league against injustice. Members of the alliance were required to come to the aid of those who needed an extra helping hand, such as the oppressed victims of injustice, widows, slaves, orphans, travellers, the poor and the elderly. The objective of this alliance was to protect the defenceless and ensure the safety of strangers in Makkah. The league came about because a

1- Ali Mohammad as-Sallaabee, *The Noble Life of the Prophet* ﷺ, Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2005, Vol. 1, p. 103.

stranger from Yemen sold goods in Makkah to an influential member of a powerful local clan who subsequently refused either to pay the price or to return the goods, as a result of which the wronged seller stood up in the vicinity of the Ka'bah and implored aid for himself as a stranger in the city. Several members of the Quraysh aristocracy rallied to his assistance and secured the return of his goods. Meeting in the house of 'Abdullaah ibn Jud'aan, they pledged henceforth to combat oppressive acts and uphold justice. The Prophet ﷺ, then in his early twenties, was present at this gathering.

2.10. Divine Protection

Allah's Messenger ﷺ was protected by Allah. He distanced himself from the indecencies and bad habits of the *Jaahiliyyah*, the pre-Islamic period of social and moral decline. The term *Jaahiliyyah* is commonly translated as the 'Age of Ignorance': ignorance, that is, of the word of Allah.

Allah's Messenger ﷺ felt a deep sense of revulsion at the worship of idols. Once he was requested to act in the name of the idols al-Laat and al-'Uzzaa, but he replied with the startling answer, 'Do not ever ask me anything for the sake of these idols. I have never hated anything more.'

The Prophet ﷺ never lied or deceived anyone; he was sincere and truthful. He outshone everyone in truthfulness, trustworthiness, bravery and modesty. He respected family ties. He shared the burden of others. He honoured his guests, always provided his own food and was content with simple meals. What set him apart from his fellow Makkans was his absolute truthfulness, trustworthiness, integrity, sense of justice and compassion for the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden, as well as his total refusal to worship any idol or do anything immoral. He had gained experience in trading through his travels with the trade caravans to greater Syria because of his honesty, hard work and the business acumen he showed in trading; he was soon being sought after to take charge of other people's merchandise, that is to say, for those who could not travel themselves so that he would trade on their behalf.

Soon he was popularly acclaimed for these qualities. *As-Saadiq* (the Truthful) and *al-Ameen* (the Trustworthy) were the titles on everybody's lips for Muhammad ﷺ, which itself means the Praised One. Always faithful and truthful, people used to deposit their valuables with him for safekeeping.

2. 11. The Prophet's Marriage to Khadeejah رضي الله عنها

Khadeejah رضي الله عنها belonged to the famous Quraysh tribe. She was the daughter of Khuwaylid ibn Asad. She was from the noblest of families and richest of their women. She was intelligent, resourceful, discreet, affectionate and of noble character. She conducted trade with the help of active partners who got a share in profits. When she learnt of Muhammad's honesty, trustworthiness and high moral qualities, she sent him a message expressing her desire to take her goods for her to Syria. She promised she would give him a share of the profits that was greater than what she would normally give others. He agreed to the terms and travelled in the company of Maysarah, a servant she had provided to be his travel companion.

The Prophet ﷺ succeeded in his trade mission very well. The profits were unusually high. His mild manners and agreeable temperament won him the hearts of men he employed in the course of his journey. Throughout the trip, Maysarah witnessed the wonderful character, nobility and truthfulness of the Prophet ﷺ.

In addition to that, Khadeejah experienced plentiful blessings in her wealth. Based upon these reasons, she had a heart to heart discussion with her friend Nafeesah, the

daughter of Munyah, telling her about the positive feelings she was having about the Prophet ﷺ. Nafeesah went to the Prophet ﷺ and proposed to him on behalf of Khadeejah. The Prophet ﷺ was so pleased with the proposal that he went to his uncles to seek their advice. They all agreed to his marriage to her.

Khadeejah ﵂ was at that time a widow, at the rather advanced age of forty. Very wealthy and with a strong and independent will, she had repeatedly declined marriage offers made by some of the most prominent men of the Quraysh, after the death of her second husband. She had previously been married to ʿAteeq ibn ʿAa'idh al-Makhzumee. She bore him a female child. After him she was married to Abu Haalah at-Tameemee. She bore him a boy. Abu Haalah died before the advent of Islam.

Muhammad ﷺ married her at the age of twenty-five years, in the prime of his youth. The marriage proved to be one of affection and happiness. She was the first woman that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ married, and he did not marry any other woman until she died. Their marriage was wondrously blessed. She bore him six children, two sons and four daughters. Their eldest child was a son named al-Qaasim, and the Prophet ﷺ came to be known as Abul-Qaasim, the father of al-Qaasim. But the boy died in infancy. The next child was a daughter whom they named Zaynab, and she was followed by three other daughters Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthoom, and Faatimah; and finally another short-lived son, ʿAbdullaah. He was also called at-Taahir and at-Tayyib.

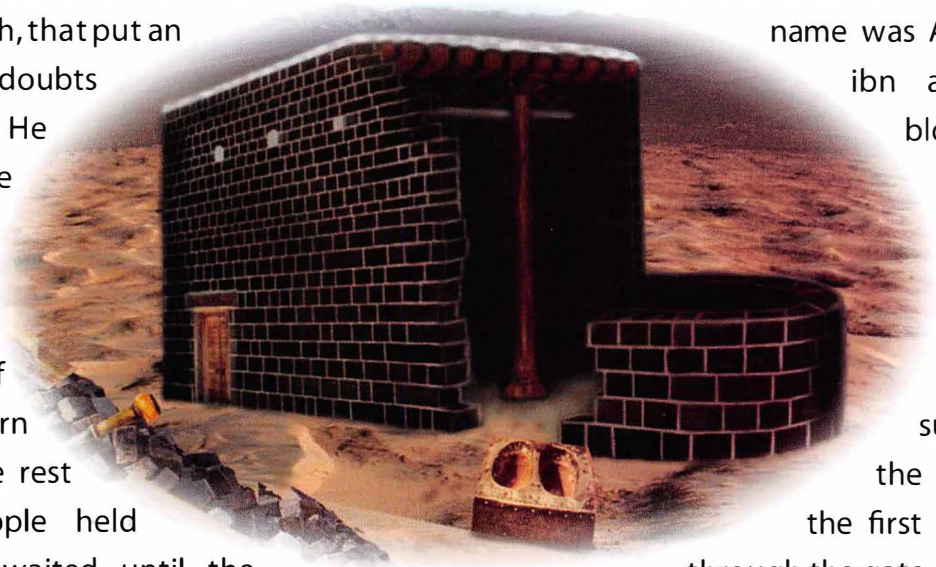
All their daughters except Faatimah ﵂ died during the Prophet's lifetime. Faatimah ﵂ died six months after his own death. All his daughters witnessed Islam, embraced it and emigrated to Madeenah. Of the daughters who married, only Faatimah had descendants. She was the mother of al-Hasan and al-Husayn. Her husband ʿAli was a cousin of the Prophet ﷺ and the fourth rightly-guided caliph.

2. 12. The Rebuilding of the Ka'bah

When the Prophet ﷺ was thirty-five years old, the Quraysh decided to rebuild the Ka'bah. As it then stood, its walls were scarcely above a man's height and it had no roof. Therefore, even when the door was locked, access was easy. It is said that while a woman was burning incense she accidentally set fire to the building, thus causing a great deal of damage to it. Some historians assert that the main reason for the reconstruction was a theft of treasures belonging to the Sanctuary by some people who climbed the roofless walls.

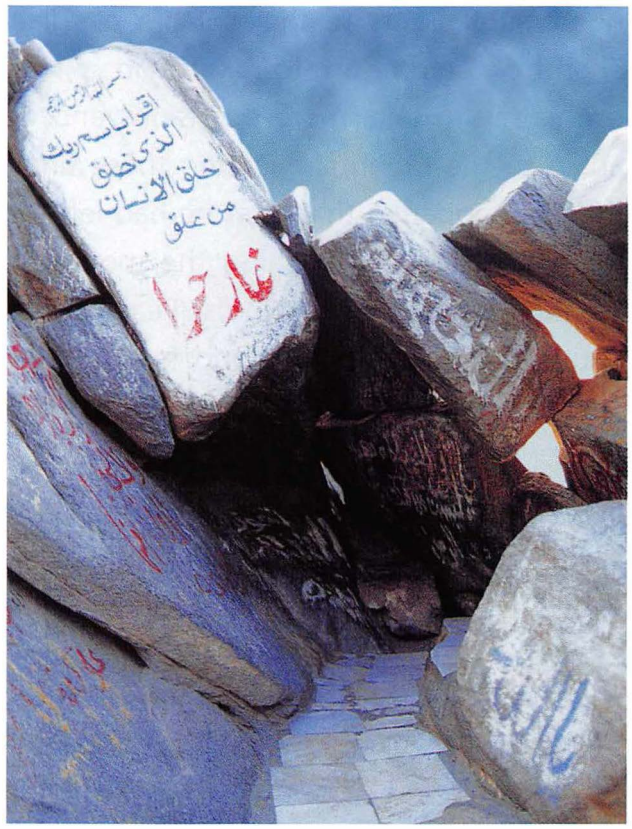
Being situated in perhaps the lowest part of the valley of Makkah, the Ancient House was often flooded by torrents of water coming down from the surrounding high ground and hills. The condition of the building had deteriorated. The Quraysh, therefore, resolved to rebuild it. However, their awe of the Ka'bah made them hesitate to lay hands on it. They were afraid of incurring the wrath of Allah. it was the daring of the chief of Makhzoom, al-Waleed ibn al-Mugheerah, that put an end to their doubts and fears. He started the demolition by pulling down a portion of the southern wall. But the rest of the people held back. They waited until the next morning to see what evil would befall them. When nothing happened, they all joined in the demolition. Four major clans of the Quraysh worked together in harmony, each clan building one wall of the four-walled Sanctuary. Wood from a Roman vessel, which had wrecked at about that time on the Red Sea Coast near Jeddah, was bought and used for the new building, and the Quraysh were assisted in their work by a Roman mason, probably a survivor of the wreck.

But when the building was as high as an average man's height, it was time to place the Sacred Black Stone in the eastern corner. The act of putting the Black Stone in place was considered to be the highest honour, and each of the clans was determined to claim it. A violent disagreement broke out amongst them. Each clan wanted the honour of lifting it to its place. The dispute could have broken out into a serious conflict, but thanks to the wisdom of an old chief of the Banu Makhzoom, whose name was Abu Umayyah ibn al-Mugheerah, bloodshed was averted and a peaceful solution was agreed upon. He suggested to the Quraysh that the first man to enter through the gate of the Mosque



be entrusted with the task of putting the Black Stone in place. The plan was arbitrary, but it worked. They agreed to follow the old man's counsel. As the Quraysh assembled, anxiously waiting with their eyes fixed on the gate, Muhammad ﷺ entered. He was given a warm welcome. They cried with satisfaction and spontaneous excitement, 'Here comes Muhammad! Here comes *al-Ameen* (the Trustworthy)! We accept his judgement'.

When they explained the matter to him, he said, 'Bring me a cloak.' And when they brought it, he spread it on the ground. He then took the Black Stone and laid it in the middle of the mantle and said, 'Let each clan catch hold of the border of the cloak. Then lift it up all of you together.' When they lifted it up to the right height, he took the Black Stone and placed it in the corner with his own hands. The building was then continued and completed above, and roofed over with beams from the stranded ship. This was how Muhammad ﷺ prevented a war from breaking out among the Quraysh by a supreme display of wisdom. The rebuilding of the Ka'bah was perhaps the first major event in which Muhammad ﷺ appeared in public after his much-talked-about marriage with Khadeejah ﵂: the prominent lady of the Quraysh.



2.13. Meditation in the Cave of Hiraa' (Mount Hiraa')

As the Prophet ﷺ approached the age of forty, he came to spend more and more of his time in retreat. He would withdraw into seclusion in the Cave of Hiraa', towards the top of Mount Hiraa', some two miles northeast of Makkah towards the back of the mountain. He applied himself there to ardent devotions, i.e. worship. He spent his time in long vigils, prayers and contemplation—sometimes for several days at a time. This mountain is called *Jabal an-Noor* (Mount of Light) because there the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed.

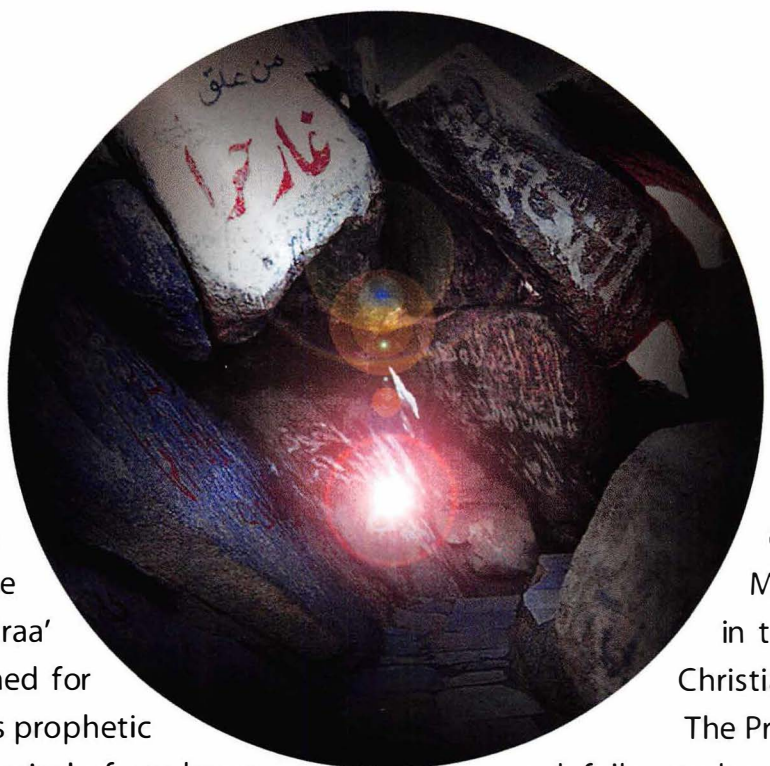
At Mount Hiraa', he would remain plunged in deep thought and reflection. In his solitary retreat, the Prophet ﷺ would be quite alone most of the time. He would take with him provisions and devote a certain

number of nights to the worship of Allah. Then he would return to Khadeejah ﵂, and on his return take more provisions and go again to the mountain. During these times it often happened that after he had left the town and was approaching the mount he would hear clearly the words, 'Peace be on you', and he would turn and look for the speaker, but no one was in sight, and it was as if the words had come from a stone or a rock. Allah's Messenger ﷺ is reported to have said, 'I know the rock in Makkah that used to greet me. I know it very well.' (Muslim, *hadeeth* no. 2277)

The first kind of revelation to which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was initiated was the true dreams during sleep, and he never saw a dream but it came like the breaking of light and dawn. (al-Bukhaaree) This lasted for six months. The first of these Prophetic dreams occurred in the month of *Rabeeʿ al-Awwal*, when the Prophet ﷺ had just completed his fortieth year.

The Prophet ﷺ once said that the true good dream is one of the forty-six parts of Prophethood. We know that the total period of revelation was twenty-three years, of which the first six months formed of true dreams. It is important to note here, however, that no verse of the Qur'an was revealed to him in his sleep. The entire Qur'an was revealed to him while he was awake.

2. 14. Prophethood: The First Revelation



During one *Ramaḍaan*, in his third year of solitude in the cave of Ḥiraa', the Prophet ﷺ was alone in the cave of Ḥiraa' on the night destined for the beginning of his prophetic mission. He was precisely forty lunar years, six months and twelve days old; that is to say, thirty-nine Gregorian years, three months and twenty days.[2]. It was the twenty-first night of *Ramaḍaan*, Monday, August 10, in the year 610 of the Christian Calendar.

The Prophet ﷺ was alone and fully awake in the cave when

2- For more details, see Safi-ur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar*, Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia 2002, pp. 867.

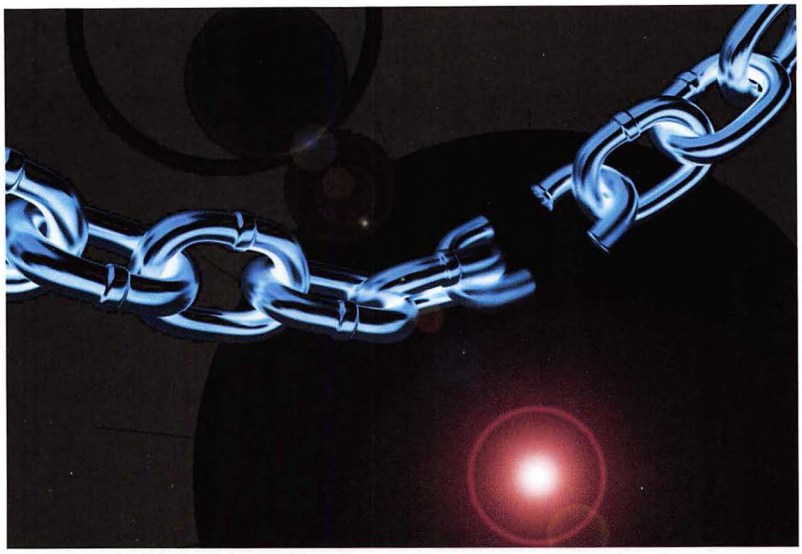
Angel Jibreel ﷺ appeared and said to him, 'Read!' The Prophet ﷺ replied, 'I cannot read.' The Prophet ﷺ himself later narrated what happened next: 'Then the angel took me and pressed me until all strength went out of me, then he released me and said, "Read!" I said, "I cannot read." Then he took hold of me and pressed me again until all strength went out of me; then he released me and said, "Read!" I replied, "I cannot read." Then he took me and pressed me a third time; then he released me and said,

> Read in the Name of your Lord Who has created!
> He has created man from a clinging clot.
> Read, for your Lord is the Most Gracious,
> Who has taught by the pen,
> Taught man what he knew not. (*Surat al-ʿAlaq*, 96:1-5)

Trembling with fear, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ returned to Khadeejah ﷺ and said, 'Wrap me up! Wrap me up!' She wrapped him up until he felt secure again. Then he told her about what had happened and said, 'Indeed, I fear for myself!' Khadeejah ﷺ said, 'By Allah! Allah will never humiliate you! You fulfil the duties of kinship, support the weak, help the poor, honour guests and help those in genuine distress.'

Then she set out with him to her parental cousin Waraqah ibn Nawfal who had embraced Christianity before Islam and used to write the Bible in Hebrew. He was old and blind. Khadeejah ﷺ said to him, 'My cousin, listen to your nephew.' Waraqah turned to Muhammad ﷺ and said, 'What did you see, my nephew?' Muhammad ﷺ told him what he had seen. Waraqah then said to him, 'That was the Angel of Revelation whom Allah sent down upon Moosaa. If only I were younger and would be able to live up to the time when your people will drive you out.' Muhammad ﷺ asked, 'Will they really expel me?' 'Yes,' he replied, 'anyone who ever brought something similar to what you have brought was treated with hostility. If I should live till then, I would certainly give you support and assistance.' Waraqah passed away soon afterwards before the Prophet ﷺ began to preach Islam publicly and before the persecution by the Quraysh started, and the revelations paused for a while. (al-Bukhaaree)

It was an Arab custom, which is also prevalent these days, to address an old and respected man as uncle, hence Khadeejah's words 'your nephew'. Waraqah believed that Muhammad ﷺ was the final Messenger sent to mankind. He is counted among those who embraced Islam. The Prophet ﷺ later stated that Waraqah was one of the dwellers of Paradise. He once said, 'Do not speak ill of Waraqah, for I indeed saw that he had a garden or two gardens in Paradise.' (Reported by al-Haakim)



2. 15. The Pause of Revelations – *Fatrat al-Wahiy*

Between the first revelation mentioned in the above tradition and the next a period elapsed during which the Prophet ﷺ received no revelation, which was a time of deepest distress for him. There is no unanimity regarding the duration of the pause of the revelations or the intermission. It is, however, reasonable to maintain that it was in fact short, lasting only a few days. To say that it lasted about two and half or three years is not correct.

2.16. Revelations Resume

In fact, the pause of revelations for a few days was to relieve the Prophet ﷺ of the intensity of the awe he had experienced in the Cave of Hiraa' and to increase his longing for revelations. After the pause, the revelation came to him again. It is recorded in *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree* that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was heard talking about the break of revelation as follows:

> While I was walking, I heard a voice coming from the sky. I looked up and saw the same angel who had visited me at the Cave of Hiraa', sitting on a throne between the sky and the earth. He filled me with awe and I returned home and said, 'Wrap me up! Wrap me up!' Then Allah the Most High revealed the following verses:
>
> O you wrapped in a mantle!
> Arise and deliver your warning.
> Magnify your Lord.
> Purify your clothes,
> And keep away from idolatry. (*Soorat al-Muddath-thir*, 74:1-5)
>
> After this the revelation started coming frequently and regularly.

Thus, for the first time, the Prophet ﷺ was commanded to preach Islam. The above-quoted verses were the first verses to be revealed after the pause of revelations.

2.17. The Call to Islam in Makkah – the Secret Stage

When Allah's Messenger ﷺ received his Lord's command to 'rise and warn', he indeed rose and warned his people and carried doing so until he met his Lord, some twenty-three years later. He spent these twenty-three years vigorously and relentlessly striving to abide by the noble and weighty order to 'rise and warn'. He complied with his Lord's command with unique vigour, energy and dedication. His efforts in this respect fall into two major stages: a secret stage and a public stage. The secret stage was approximately for the first three years of his mission. The second stage lasted until he finally left Makkah on his famous *hijrah* (emigration) to Madeenah and the rest of his life.

The private stage was marked by secrecy in conveying the message. It was distinguished by great care and caution in carefully inviting certain individuals to Islam.

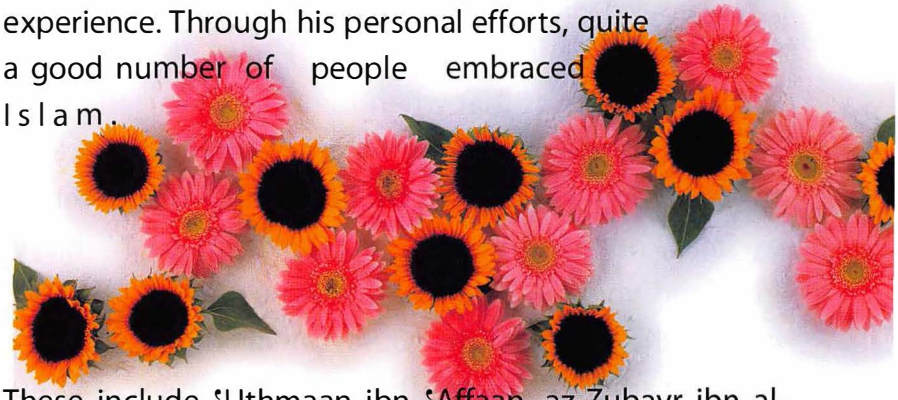
2.18. The Early Muslims

At first, as we have pointed out above, Muhammad ﷺ preached Islam quietly among close relatives, friends and acquaintances. The first to accept Islam was, as is universally acknowledged, his wife Khadeejah. ʿAli ibn Abee Taalib, who was a ten-year-old cousin of the Prophet ﷺ and a member of the household and later son-in-law, was the next convert. The Prophet ﷺ undertook to support ʿAli because of the limited resources of Abu Taalib and the large size of his family. Next was the Prophet's freedman and adopted son Zayd ibn Haarithah. Next to accept Islam was Abu Bakr who was the Prophet's close friend and confidant for many years.

Regarding the conversion of Abu Bakr, Muhammad ﷺ said,

> I never invited anyone to Islam who did not display some hesitation in embracing it except Abu Bakr. He alone did not delay when I invited him to Islam, nor did he hesitate.

Abu Bakr ﷺ was the first convert outside the immediate household of Muhammad ﷺ. He was two years younger than the Prophet ﷺ who was forty years old. Abu Bakr ﷺ was thus the first male adult to accept Islam. Being a successful merchant, he possessed considerable wealth. He was very popular in Makkah owing to his fine and easy manners. He was the first of the prominent personalities of Makkah to accept Islam. He was the first free-born man who openly declared himself a Muslim. People regularly turned to him for advice because of his knowledge and experience. Through his personal efforts, quite a good number of people embraced Islam.



These include ʿUthmaan ibn ʿAffaan, az-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwaam, ʿAbdur-Rahmaan ibn ʿAwf, Saʿd ibn Abee

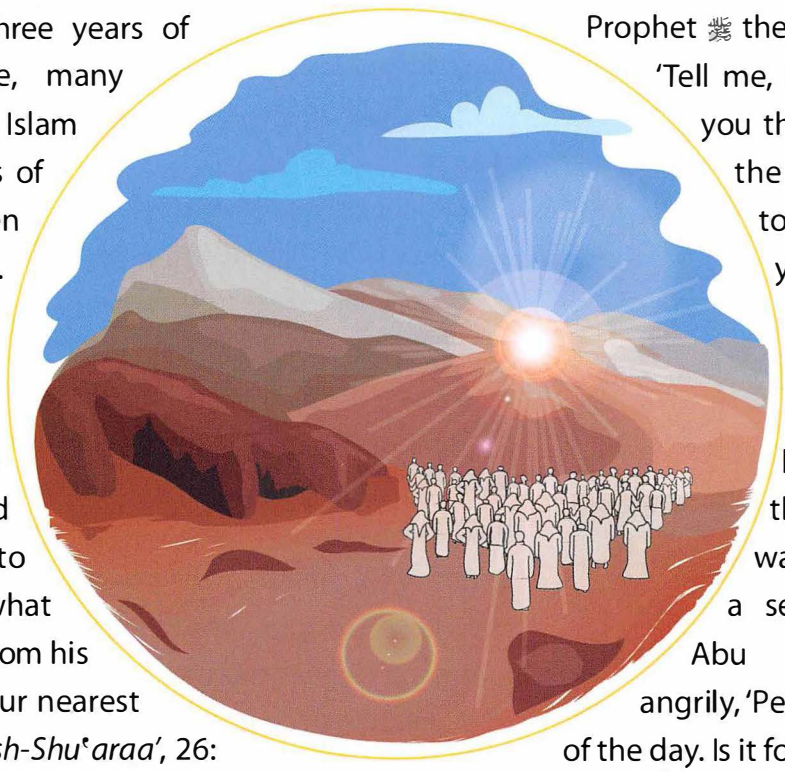
Waqqaas and Talhah ibn ʿUbaydullaah.

Among the early Muslims were also Bilaal ibn Rabaah the Ethiopian, Abu ʿUbaydah ibn al-Jarraah, Abu Salamah ibn ʿAbdul-Asad, al-Arqam ibn Abee al-Arqam, ʿUthmaan ibn Madhʿoon, and his two brothers Qudaamah and ʿAbdullaah. ʿUbaydah ibn al-Haarith, Faatimah bint al-Khattaab, sister of ʿUmar, the second rightly-guided Caliph, Saʿeed ibn Zayd, husband of Faatimah bint al-Khattaab and several others who accepted Islam.

Among the first Muslims, the Quraysh were a clear majority. The thought that the early converts consisted primarily of slaves, social outcasts and downtrodden persons is both wrong and biased. The vast majority of those early Muslims were, in fact, Quraysh free-born men and were not slaves at all.

2.19. The Call to Islam in Makkah – the Public Stage

During the three years of the private stage, many people accepted Islam in Makkah. Groups of men and women entered Islam. Soon the mention of Islam was on everyone's lips in Makkah. Then Allah commanded His Messenger ﷺ to proclaim publicly what had come to him from his Lord: 'And warn your nearest relatives.' (*Soorat ash-Shuʿaraa'*, 26: 214)



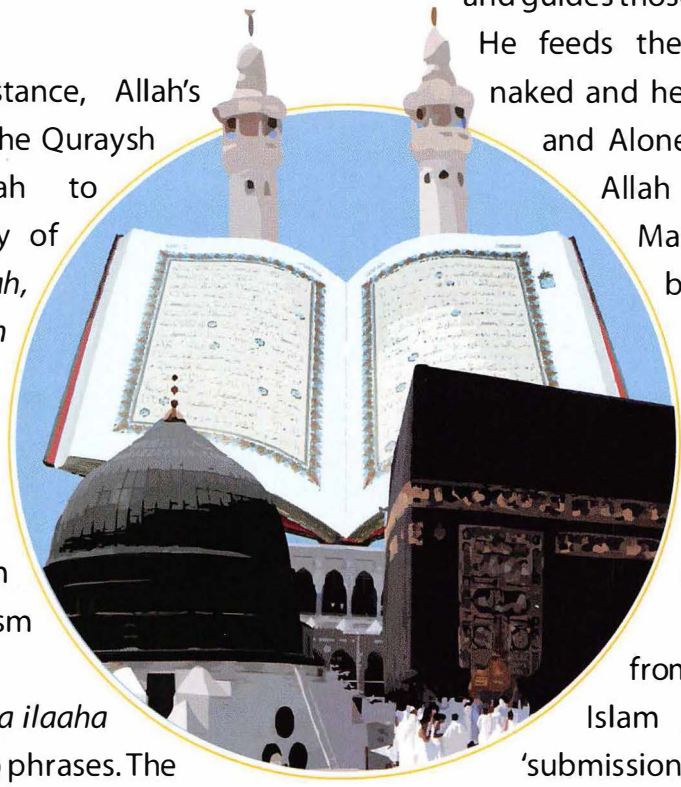
This verse was revealed roughly three years after the first revelation at Hiraa'. Al-Bukhaaree records that when the verse 'And warn your nearest relatives' was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ, he ascended the hill of as-Safaa, near the Kaʿbah, and proclaimed in a loud voice: 'O Banu Fihr, O Banu ʿAdiy,' calling the clans of the Quraysh, till they had all gathered. Among those present was Abu Lahab, an uncle of the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ then addressed them, 'Tell me, if I were to inform you that some cavalry in the valley were about to attack you, would you believe me?'

They replied, 'Yes, we have never experienced any lie from you.' He then said, 'I am a warner to you before a severe punishment.' Abu Lahab shouted angrily, 'Perish you for the rest of the day. Is it for this that you have gathered us?'

The Prophet ﷺ was dismayed by the response. The response of the Quraysh was not warm. It was hostile in the case of Abu Lahab. But Allah comforted the Prophet ﷺ. Abu Lahab was condemned together with his wife in strong terms. *Soorat al-Masad* was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ. Thus the first person to threaten the Prophet ﷺ and attempt to shout him down was his own uncle, Abu Lahab.

The above-mentioned tradition from al-Bukhaaree marks the beginning of the public stage in which Allah's Messenger ﷺ openly called the Quraysh to acknowledge and worship no god apart from Allah, the only True God.

2.20. Essentials of the Prophet's Early Call of His People



In the first instance, Allah's Messenger ﷺ invited the Quraysh idolaters of Makkah to declare the testimony of faith: *Laa ilaaha illallaah, Muḥammadun Rasulullaah* (There is no god but Allah, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah) — the famous Muslim call to pure monotheism (*tawḥeed*).

The statement *Laa ilaaha illallaah* consists of two phrases. The One is a negation, the other is an affirmation. *Laa ilaaha* (there is no god) wipes out the existence of every false god and condemns false worship. The word *ilaah* could refer to any matter, person, idea or notion which is undeservedly taken or adopted as an object of worship or adoration, irrespective of whether it is done out of excessive love or excessive fear, while the two words *illallaah* affirm the existence of the One, True God — Allah.

Allah is there. He is the only True God. He is the Creator and the Provider. He is your Lord and Master. Life and death are under His Command. He alone should be feared. From Him alone we should ask everything. He alone is worthy of worship. His order and His decree are fulfilled in the heavens, in the farthest reaches of the earth and beneath it, in the seas, the skies and every other part of the universe. His knowledge and mercy encompass everyone and everything. He forgives sins, relieves stress, removes woes and guides those who have gone astray. He feeds the hungry, clothes the naked and heals the sick. He is One and Alone and has no partners. Allah is your only Lord and Master. Surrender your beings and your lives totally to Him Alone. Worship and serve no one but Him. There is no god but Allah and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah.

The roots from which the word Islam comes means both 'submission', 'peace' and 'security'. The term Islam thus signifies the religion in which peace, security and submission are attained through total submission to the will of Allah. Everything in the heavens and on earth belongs to Him. No man has a right to be the master of another man or to spread corruption on earth.

Allah's Messenger ﷺ told the Quraysh idol-worshippers: An everlasting life awaits you beyond where you will meet Allah and your life will be justified. You must prepare yourselves for that.

2.21. The Quraysh Reject the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and His Message

This simple message shook the very foundations of the Makkan society. In reality, the Quraysh lived under the yoke of false gods. Idols lorded over them. Man-made gods of their own desires lorded over them. When the Quraysh saw that the Prophet's call was directed against their gods, their principles and their long-standing false practices, they were greatly alarmed. Polytheism (the false belief that there is more than one god) was deeply ingrained in their minds, hearts and souls. Since they did not believe in any divinely revealed religion, their hearts had hardened. They had become a materialistic people. They cared only for their worldly welfare. The situation was extremely grave, they thought.

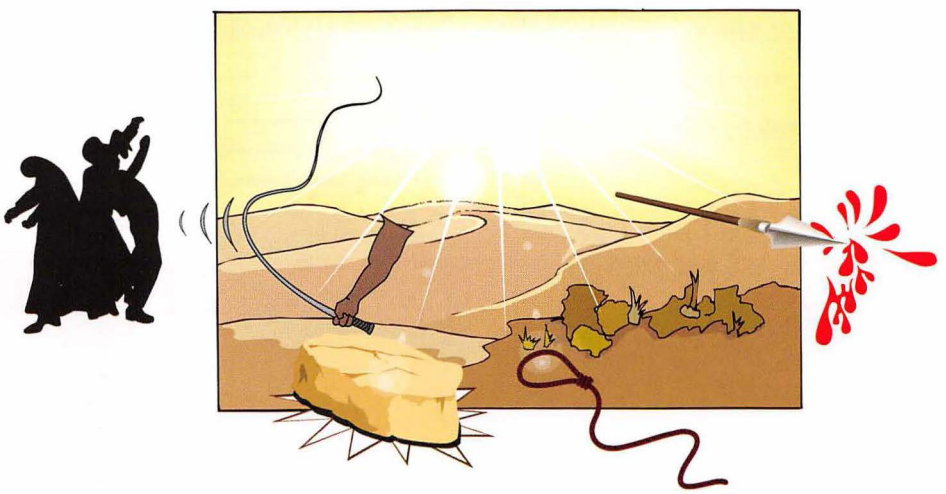
The time of the pilgrimage would soon be upon them. Arabs would come to Makkah from all over Arabia. The Quraysh had a high reputation for hospitality. Now the pilgrims would hear their gods rejected by the Prophet ﷺ and his followers. They would be urged to forsake the religion of their forefathers and to embrace Islam. They were terrified. They would lose their authority. Therefore, when the message of Islam threatened their authority in Makkah, they made up their minds to use all their energies and resources in an effort to protect the authority and wealth to which they had grown accustomed. It was very hard for them to give up their ancestors' way of life. They feared that Islam would bring an end to their economic well-being and would end their free way of life and their superior social status.

Allah's Messenger ﷺ taught that Allah is One. The Makkans had many gods and goddesses. Their fathers and grandfathers had worshipped these gods for generations. The Makkans drew economic benefits from their religious beliefs, which they feared they might lose by becoming Muslims. Makkah was the centre of their religion. The Quraysh were in charge of the Holy Ka'bah. The Ka'bah had three hundred and sixty idols. People came from all over Arabia to worship these idols in the Ka'bah. The Prophet's message threatened them all. It challenged them. It exposed them. Therefore, his immediate enemies in Makkah rose against the Prophet ﷺ and his call. They began to call him a poet, a soothsayer and possessed.

Many simply heard the Qur'an and embraced Islam. Some saw the Prophet ﷺ and were immediately captivated by the light of mercy, generosity and humanity that was visible in his manners and morals, in his works and words. Islam began to spread, and the opposition continued to harden and intensify, growing all the more furious and violent.

2.22. The Quraysh Take Action

Those who embraced Islam and joined the Prophet ﷺ were also tortured in countless ways, just as was the Prophet ﷺ himself: They were mocked, abused, tortured, flogged, imprisoned and boycotted. The Quraysh turned to cheap means in a desperate attempt to turn the tide of the Prophet's Call.



Some were subjected to much more inhuman tortures. They were made to lie on burning coal fires until the melting body fat extinguished them. Some were dragged over burning sand and rocks. Yet such was the strength of their faith that none of them abandoned it in the face of such trials and tribulations.

2.23. The Quraysh Approach Abu Ṯaalib

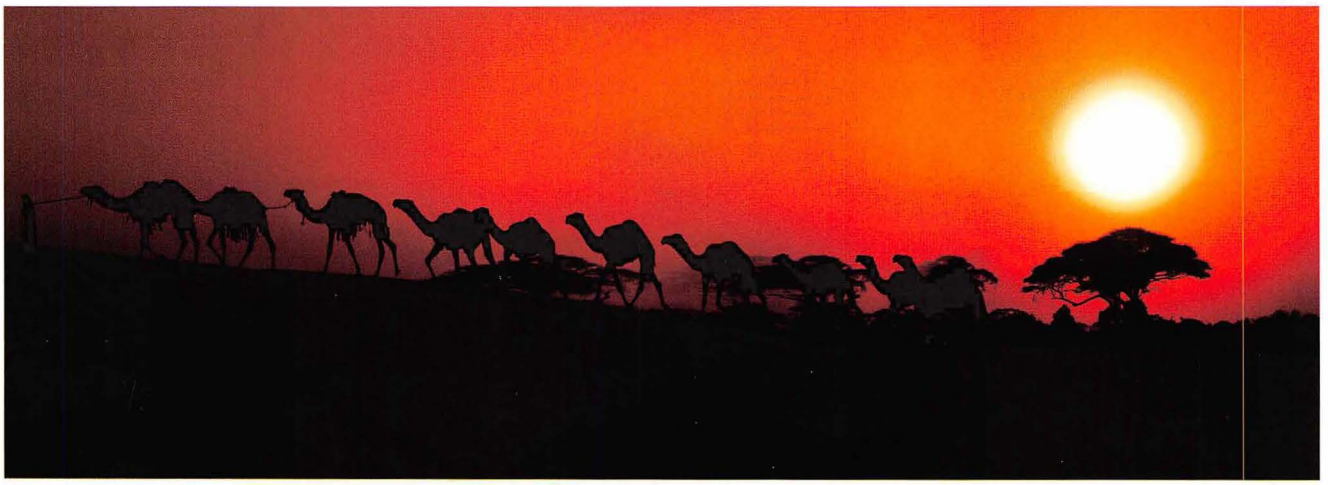
Muḥammad ﷺ continued his mission. He proclaimed the truth loudly. Abu Ṯaalib continued to care for him and defend him. Eventually, a delegation of the chiefs of the Quraysh visited Abu Ṯaalib in a desperate effort to persuade him to forsake his nephew. They said, 'Abu Ṯaalib! Your nephew has insulted our gods. He has criticized our religion, ridiculed our customs and degraded our forefathers. Either leave him to us or there will be a bitter split between you and us.'

They visited Abu Ṯaalib three times. Once Abu Ṯaalib said to the Prophet ﷺ, 'Nephew, your people have come to me with threats. Spare me and yourself. Do not burden me more than I could bear.'

Allah's Messenger ﷺ saw that Abu Ṯaalib was very upset by what had happened. He found it hard to carry on defending him. He said, 'If they were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, I would still not leave it until Allah makes me victorious or I perish doing it.'

Another report states that the Prophet ﷺ looked up into the sky and asked the polytheists, 'Can you see the sun?' They replied in the affirmative. Then he said, 'I am no more capable of giving up this mission than you are capable of stealing a flame from the sun.'[3] Then Abu Ṯaalib told the Prophet ﷺ, 'Nephew, go and say whatever you like. By Allah, I will never surrender you to anyone.'

3- Mahdi Rizqullah Ahmad, *A Biography of the Prophet* ﷺ, Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2005, Vol. 1, p. 172.



2.24. The Muslims' Migration (*Hijrah*) to Ethiopia

The Quraysh intensified their efforts to repress the spread of Islam and to oppress the new Muslim converts. The noble and merciful Prophet ﷺ was moved when he saw the trials and tribulations to which his followers were subjected. However, as the persecution grew unbearable, the Prophet ﷺ said to his Companions, 'If you go to Abyssinia (modern Ethiopia), you will find there a king in whose country no one is wronged.' The Prophet ﷺ himself and a few of his Companions were comparatively safe due to the protection afforded to them by Abu Ṯaalib, but the same did not apply to the rest of his followers.

So, it came about in the month of *Rajab*, in the fifth year of the Prophet's mission, that about a dozen Muslim men and four

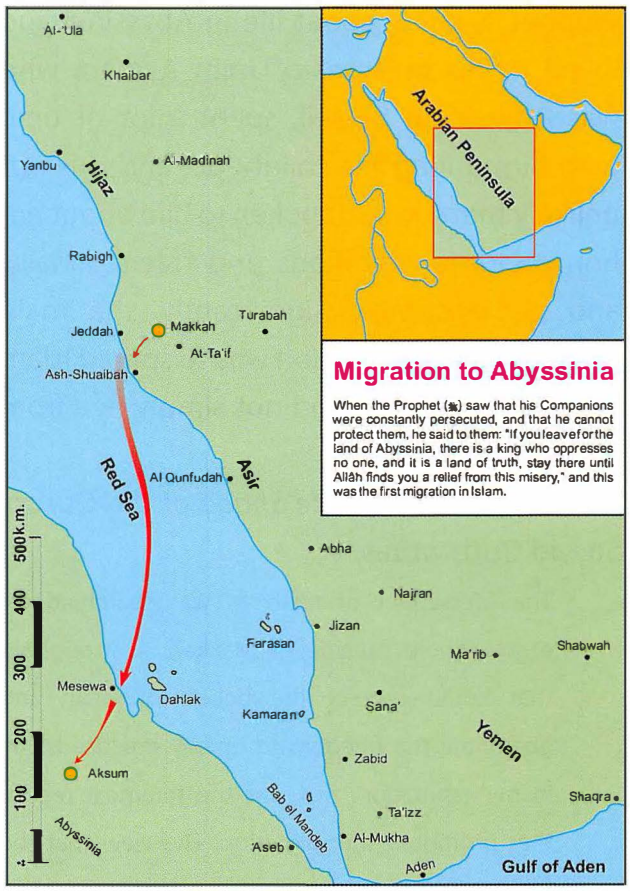
women secretly left Makkah for Ethiopia, where they received a friendly reception by Ashamah Negus, who had obviously strong tendencies towards the doctrine of pure *Tawheed* (Oneness of Allah) preached by the Prophet ﷺ.

These emigrants included a daughter of the Prophet ﷺ, Ruqayyah ﷺ, who was accompanied by her husband ʿUthmaan ibn ʿAffaan ﷺ. With respect to these few emigrants, Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, 'They are the first people to emigrate in the cause of Allah, after Ibraaheem and Loot ﷺ.'

The first migration, or *hijrah*, made a profound impression on the minds of the idol-worshipping Quraysh, for they realized that the Muslims were prepared to sacrifice everything, even home and country, for the sake of their faith. Soon afterwards, the emigrants learnt of mass conversion of the people of Makkah to Islam, and some of them made their way back home Makkah. But this turned out to be only a rumour.

The Prophet ﷺ ordered his followers again to migrate to Ethiopia. In this second migration, eighty-three men and eighteen women participated, for the Muslim community had obviously grown after ʿUmar's acceptance of Islam. Soon afterwards, the Quraysh sent a deputation to Ethiopia, hoping that the emigrants be forced to return to Makkah. But the Negus was by this time fully convinced of the divine origin of the Prophet's teachings, and he firmly refused to surrender the emigrants.

It is important to note that the migration to Ethiopia was not a single event, for it took place in two successive stages. And this was the first migration of Islam.



2.25. Why Abyssinia?

There are a number of reasons why the Prophet ﷺ chose Abyssinia over other lands. Firstly, the Negus, the king of Ethiopia, was a just king, a fact that the Prophet ﷺ himself pointed out when he said that the in Abyssinian king's country no one was wronged. This proved to be true, for the Negus protected the Muslims and refused to hand them over to the Quraysh. Secondly, Abyssinia at that time was a land of prosperity. It was a trade centre to which the Quraysh travelled. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the Quraysh had no authority whatsoever in Abyssinia. The Prophet's Companions could not migrate to any other place within the Arabian Peninsula, since for the most part, and on most occasions, the Arab tribes within Arabia obeyed the Quraysh. Fourthly, the

Prophet ﷺ knew about life in Abyssinia and loved it. His nursemaid Umm Ayman, who was Abyssinian herself, spent a lot of time with him during his childhood, and it is not unlikely that she had spoken to him about her homeland, its traditions and rulers. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the main purpose of the migration was to spread Islam outside of Makkah, and not simply flee from persecution.

In his book *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, Sayyid Qutb writes,

> The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was searching for a stronghold outside of Makkah, a stronghold that could protect the beliefs of Islam and guarantee the freedom to openly practise Islam. In my estimation, this was the foremost reason that prompted the migration. The view that the Prophet's Companions migrated only to save themselves is not supported by strong evidence. Had they migrated only to save themselves from torture and temptation to leave the fold of Islam, those Muslims who were the weakest in status, strength and protection would have migrated as well. But the fact is that slaves and weak Muslims, who bore the major brunt of persecution and torture, did not migrate. Only men who had strong tribal ties – ties that protected them from torture and temptation – migrated to Abyssinia (Ethiopia). In fact, the majority of those who migrated were members of the Quraysh.[4]

The fact that the Negus and other Abyssinian people embraced Islam supports the view that spreading Islam in Ethiopia was one of the reasons behind migration to that land. This is not the place to elaborate on this point here, but it is recommended to read Ali Mohammad as-Sallaabee's *The Noble Life of the Prophet* ﷺ mentioned above.

4- Quoted by Ali Mohammad as-Sallaabee, *The Noble Life of the Prophet* ﷺ, Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2005, Vol. pp. 487-488.

2.26. The Boycott

The failure of the Makkan delegation to obtain the expulsion of Muslims from Ethiopia provoked hostile reaction in Makkah where the persecution of Muslims was further intensified. When the Quraysh saw that the Prophet's Companions sought refuge in a country where they had found security and stability, that the Negus had undertaken to protect them, that the fearsome 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab ﷺ had accepted Islam and that Islam continued to spread among the tribes of Arabia, the Quraysh decided on a total boycott of the Prophet ﷺ and his family.

They wrote a document in which they made it binding upon themselves that they would not marry with them, nor give their daughters in marriage to them; neither would they sell them anything, nor buy anything from them; nor would allow any kind of provision to reach them, not to show mercy to them; not to mix with them; not to sit with them; not to speak to them; not to enter their houses until they handed Allah's Messenger ﷺ over to them. They vowed to observe the terms of the document. They then hung the document inside the Ka'bah, in order to impress it even more upon themselves.

The boycott was fully enforced against the Prophet ﷺ, his followers and their protectors, Muslims and idolaters alike. The boycott took place in the beginning of the seventh year of the Prophet's mission. The isolation and boycott lasted for about three years.

The narrow pass (*shi'b*) of Abu Ṯaalib, to which they had been confined, was a rugged little valley enclosed by hills on all sides and could be entered from Makkah by a narrow way through the mountains. In this dry valley, Allah's Messenger ﷺ, his followers and the clans of Banu Haashim and Banu al-Muṯṯalib were obliged to retire with limited supplies of food and necessities. Soon the supplies of food and basic necessities began to run short. The Quraysh prevented them from going to the market-place. Whenever any merchandise arrived in Makkah from abroad, the Quraysh would purchase all of it, regardless of whether they needed it or not. Their sole intent was to inflict as much harm as possible on the Banu Haashim clans and consequently lay their hands on the Prophet ﷺ.

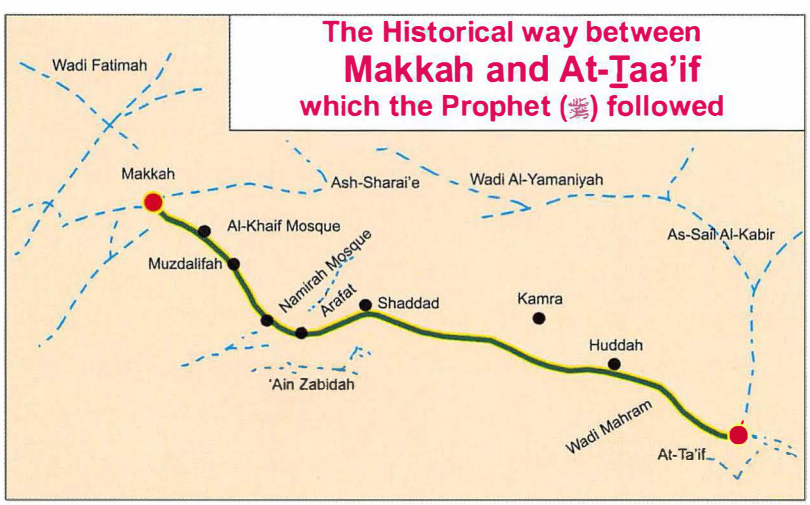
The hardship and suffering became their lot. As days and months of their confinement dragged along, the wailing of hungry children and women in the valley could be heard in Makkah. The siege and embargo became too difficult to bear. They were forced, out of hunger, to eat the leaves of trees. Many idolaters were moved to pity and sympathy. Others were impressed by the courage, devotion and dedication of the Muslims to their cause. The Prophet ﷺ continued to go to the Ka'bah and to pray openly. He used every opportunity to preach to the outsiders who visited Makkah for trade or on pilgrimage during the sacred months. In the third year of the boycott and the siege, many Quraysh leaders began to feel guilty about isolating their kinsmen to perish in the valley. Ultimately, the unjust boycott was lifted and the Muslims were allowed to return to their homes.

The boycott is a useful reminder of the hardships and sufferings which the early Muslims had to bear in the cause of their faith. It also shows that the boycott was a weapon to which enemies of Islam have always resorted in their futile effort to put an end to Islam.

2.27. The Year of Grief

Hardly had the Messenger of Allah ﷺ settled in Makkah after the end of the boycott when two events took place that were particularly hard for him to bear. First, Abu Ṯaalib, his uncle and protector, passed away. This took place in the tenth year of the Prophet's mission. Abu Ṯaalib, however, never became a Muslim. He died as an idolater.

A few days after Abu Ṯaalib's death, Khadeejah ﵂, the Prophet's beloved wife who had always helped and consoled him in times of hardship and distress, also died. She was about sixty-five years old and he was nearly fifty. They had lived together in profound harmony for twenty-five years, and she had been not only his wife, but also his intimate companion, his wise counsellor and the mother to his whole household, which included ʿAli and Zayd ibn Ḥaarithah. Her death left the Messenger of Allah ﷺ without that affectionate support which had for so long helped to sustain him in the face of trial and persecution. He was deeply grieved and was almost overwhelmed by sorrow. The year in which Abu Ṯaalib and Khadeejah ﵂ died became known as the Year of Grief (*ʿAam al-Ḥuzn*) because of the tremendous loss to the already affected Prophet ﷺ.



2.28. The Journey to aṯ-Ṯaa'if

To preach in Makkah now seemed hopeless, and to provoke the Quraysh was not the best wisdom. The Prophet ﷺ, therefore, decided to carry his message to the people of the nearby green and beautiful town of aṯ-Ṯā'if. In the month of *Shawwal,* towards the end of May or the beginning of June 619 CE, in the tenth year of Prophethood, the

Prophet ﷺ set out on foot towards at-Taa'if, about sixty to seventy miles from Makkah, accompanied by his trusted adopted son Zayd ibn Haarithah, to invite people to Islam. Once there, he went straight to a leading family in the city. But their response to his call was very disappointing.

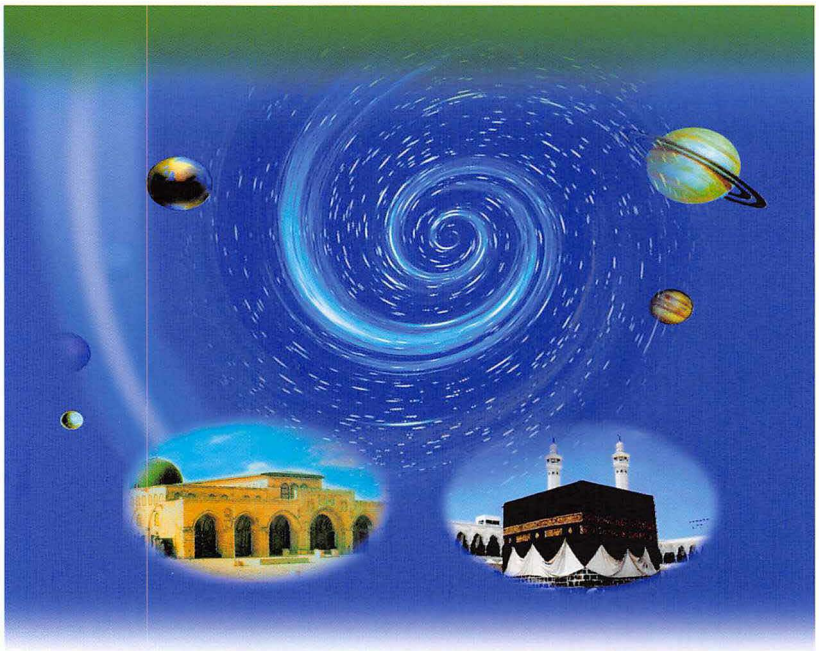
The tribal leaders ridiculed him and rejected his call. They instigated their slaves and street urchins to follow him and shout abuse at him. They kept pelting him with stones until his feet started bleeding. Zayd, who tried his best to shield him, received a painful wound in the head. The insolent mob continued to chase the Prophet ﷺ and his Companion two or three miles across the sandy plains until they were driven to the outskirts of the city, where the Prophet ﷺ and Zayd took shelter in a vineyard. When the vineyard's owners saw the Prophet ﷺ bleeding, they were obviously moved. They sent their Christian slave, 'Addaas with a cluster of fresh grapes on a platter.

Before the Prophet ﷺ started eating he said, 'In the Name of Allah.' 'Addaas looked eagerly into his face, then he said, 'These are not the words what the people of this country normally say.' Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, 'Where are you from, and what is your religion?' 'I am a Christian from Nineveh,' 'Addaas replied. The Prophet ﷺ then said, 'That means from the city of the righteous man Yoonus the son of Mattaa.' Upon saying this, 'Addaas bent over him and kissed his head, his hands and feet. Later on, when the Prophet ﷺ felt somewhat refreshed, he set out towards Makkah.

Late that night he reached the valley of Nakhlah, a halfway halt between the at-Taa'if and Makkah. While he was standing in prayer there, a group of seven *jinn* who passed by listened spellbound to his recitation. As soon as he completed the recitation, they embraced Islam and returned to their community, urging them to favourably respond to the Prophet's call to Islam. Ultimately, the Prophet ﷺ returned to Makkah. The Makkans had learnt of the Prophet's disappointment at at-Taa'if and were preparing a degrading reception for him, but Allah's help arrived. A good-hearted chief, al-Mut'im ibn 'Adiyy, took him under his protection and brought him to his home. Thus did Allah's Messenger ﷺ re-enter Makkah, guarded by a polytheist, scoffed at by his fellow citizens.

At-Taa'if episode was the hardest moment in the Prophet's life.

2.29. The Night Journey and the Ascension to Heaven (the *Israa'* and the *Mi'raaj*)



It is in this period that the Prophet's Night Journey to Jerusalem (*Israa'*) and his ascension from there to heaven (*Mi'raaj*) took place. One night the Prophet ﷺ was awakened from sleep and taken, in the company of Angel Jibreel عليه السلام first to Jerusalem. There he was met by all the prophets, who gathered together behind him as he prayed in the centre of the site of the Sanctuary, the spot where the Dome of the Rock stands today. From the rock, led by Angel Jibreel عليه السلام, he ascended through the seven heavens and beyond. Thus he saw what Allah made him see, the heavenly worlds which no human eye can see. During the journey, the five daily prayers were made obligatory for his followers. This event is referred to in Arabic as *al-Mi'raaj* (ascension into heaven) in the *hadeeth* and the Prophet's biography (*seerah*). It is also briefly referred to in the Qur'an (*Soorat al-Israa'*, 17:1 and *Soorat an-Najm*, 53: 13-18). Both the Night Journey (*Israa'*) and the Ascension (*Mi'raaj*) were bodily occurrences.

When Muhammad ﷺ spoke to the people he met in the mosque of his journey to Jerusalem, his enemies were immediately victorious. They now felt that they had a sure cause for mockery. Every child of the Quraysh knew that it would normally take a rider about a month to go from Makkah to Syria and a month to return. Muhammad ﷺ, they mistakenly thought, claimed to have gone there in one single night. A group of men went to Abu Bakr and asked him, 'What do you think of your friend now? He has told us that he went to Jerusalem last night and prayed there and then returned to Makkah.' Abu Bakr confidently replied, 'If he says so, then it is true. There is nothing surprising about that. In fact, he tells me about the revelations that he receives during any hour of the day or night, and I know him to be speaking the truth.' It was for this reason that the Prophet ﷺ gave him the nickname "*as-Siddeeq*", which means 'the truthful'.

2.30. Madeenah Residents Embrace Islam: A Turning Point in the History of Islam

Soon after the Prophet's return from at-Ṯaa'if and the Night Journey, at the time of the pilgrimage, six men from Madeenah embraced Islam. Madeenah, then known as Yathrib, was a small oasis about 400 kilometres to the north of Makkah. It is now known as *Madeenat-un-Nabiyy* (the City of the Prophet), *al-Madeenah al-Munawwarah* (the Radiant City), or simply Madeenah, for short. These six converts delivered the message of Islam to as many as they could, and at the time of the following pilgrimage in the year 621 CE, twelve persons came. They pledged to the Prophet ﷺ that they would not associate anyone in worship with Allah, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to kill their children, not to utter slander and not to disobey him. This time the Prophet ﷺ sent Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr with them to teach them the Qur'an and Islam and to spread the message of Islam.

More and more people in Madeenah – men, women and tribal chiefs – accepted Islam over the course of a year. At the time of the following pilgrimage seventy-three men and two women came. They met the Prophet ﷺ at al-'Aqabah, a place in the valley of Mina, not far from Makkah. They pledged to protect the Prophet ﷺ as they would protect their own women and children. They invited him and all Muslims in Makkah to Madeenah. When asked what would be theirs if they fulfilled their pledge, the Prophet ﷺ replied, 'Paradise'. Thus the beginning was made, and the foundations of Islamic society and civilization were set.

2.31. Several Migrations

Makkah was no longer a safe place for Muslims to live in. Therefore, Allah's Messenger ﷺ encouraged his followers to migrate to Madeenah. Quietly they started to move out. The Muslims of Quraysh began to migrate in considerable numbers. In a few months, more than a hundred families had left their homes and migrated to Madeenah. And it was not long before most of his Companions had migrated with the exception of Abu Bakr and 'Ali.

The Quraysh did all that they possibly could to stop the migrations. They were aware of the power of the Prophet's message. They sensed the danger that Muslims' presence in Madeenah posed to their northern trade caravan routes. They saw no other way to stop all this but to kill the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Quraysh notables consulted one another on what course of action to take regarding Muḥammad ﷺ.

They finally agreed that each clan would provide one strong and well-connected young man, give them a sword each, and together they would attack the Prophet ﷺ, each striking a blow the moment he would leave his house. That way, they thought, the responsibility for his murder would be divided among the tribes, and his blood would thus be on all the clans' hands. Consequently, the Prophet's clan would have to accept blood money instead of revenge. The Quraysh held this council on Thursday morning, *Ṣafar* 26, in the Fourteenth year of the Prophet's mission (September 12, 622 CE).

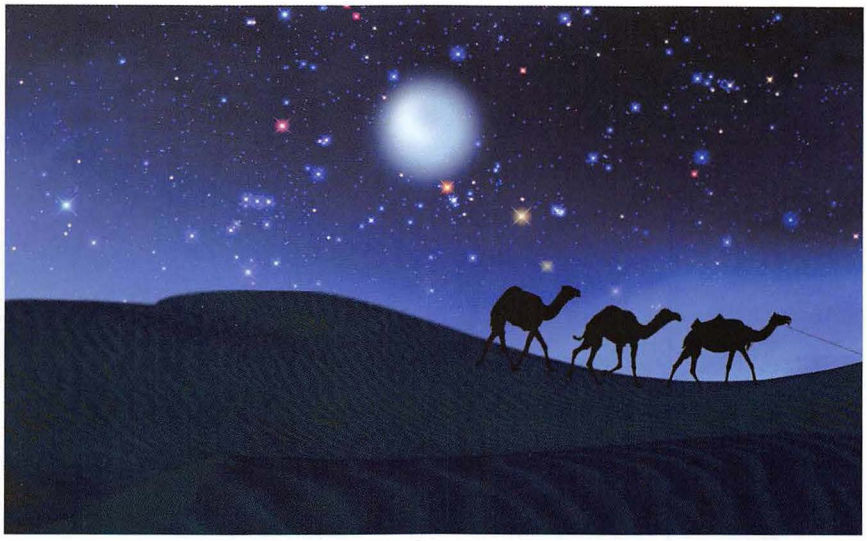
2.32. The Long-awaited *Hijrah* Takes Place

However, Allah had already informed the Prophet ﷺ, through Angel Jibreel عليه السلام, of the Quraysh's wicked plot. The long-awaited hour of undertaking the *hijrah* had come. Having learned of the the plot and guided to leave Makkah for Madeenah, Allah's Messenger ﷺ went at midday to Abu Bakr's house to finalize the emigration. Abu Bakr was overjoyed at having been chosen for the honour and blessing of being the Prophet's companion on his blessed and epoch-making journey.

On that fateful night, as darkness fell, the youths chosen by the Quraysh leaders to murder the Prophet ﷺ surrounded his house. They had decided to pounce on him as soon as he came out of his house for the dawn prayer. Meanwhile, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ handed over all the money and belongings left by the Makkans with him for safekeeping to ʿAli رضي الله عنه. The Prophet ﷺ asked him to stay behind in Makkah so that he would give all the goods deposited in their house for safekeeping back to their owners. The Prophet ﷺ had always been known to be trustworthy (*al-Ameen*), and there were so many Quraysh polytheists who would trust him with their property as they would trust no one else.

The Prophet ﷺ also informed ʿAli رضي الله عنه of what Jibreel عليه السلام had told him about the plot the Quraysh had hatched against him. The Prophet ﷺ took up a green mantle in which he used to sleep and gave it to ʿAli, saying, 'Sleep on my bed in it, and no harm will come to you from them.' ʿAli ibn Abee Ṯaalib lay down on the Prophet's bed and covered himself with the latter's cloak in order to deceive the Quraysh who had become aware of his intention to emigrate and were bent on killing him.

Then the Prophet ﷺ began to recite *Surat Yaa Seen*. When he came to the words, 'And We have put a barrier before them and a barrier behind them; and We have veiled them, so that they cannot see (*Soorat Yaa Seen*, 36:9)', he came out of his house, and Allah took away the conspirators' sight so that they could not see him, and so he passed through their midst and went on his way. When it was dawn, ʿAli rose and went to the door of the house, still wrapped in the Prophet's green cloak. When the plotters saw who it was, they realized that they had been somehow outwitted.



2.33. The *Hijrah*

Allah's Messenger ﷺ thus left his house during the night on *Safar* 27, in the fourteenth year of his mission, corresponding to the 12 or 13 September, 622 CE. He returned to Abu Bakr, and losing no time they went out. As they had planned, they made for a cave at Mount Thawr, a little to the south on the way to Yemen. They knew that as soon as the Prophet's absence was discovered search bands would be sent out to cover all the northern outskirts of the city of Makkah. When they had gone a little way beyond the precincts of Makkah, the Prophet ﷺ stopped his camel. He looked back and said, 'Of all Allah's earth, you are the dearest place to me and the dearest to Allah. Had my people not driven me out of you, I would not have left you.'

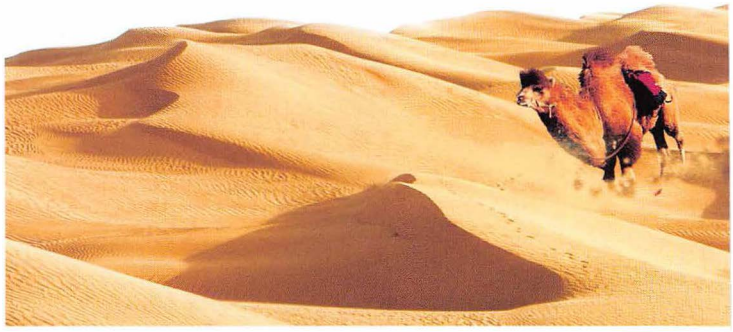
When the Quraysh realized that the Prophet ﷺ had evaded them, they became furious. They offered a reward of a hundred she-camels to anyone who could find him and bring him back to Makkah. Horsemen were already following each and every route from Makkah to Madeenah. Both the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr ﷺ stayed in the Cave of Mount Thawr for three days: Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The Quraysh continued their search to get hold of them. Both al-Bukhaaree and Muslim mention that the Quraysh pursuers actually came to the cave. Abu Bakr ﷺ worried so much about the safety of the Prophet ﷺ that he shook with fear, but the Prophet ﷺ reassured him, 'What do you think of two men whose third is Allah Himself, Abu Bakr?' The Qur'an itself refers to this exchange between the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr ﷺ. When the pursuers were standing above the cave, Abu Bakr ﷺ said, 'If one of them were to look beneath his feet, he would see us, Prophet of Allah.' The Prophet ﷺ confidently answered, 'Do not grieve, for Allah is with us.' (*Soorat at-Tawbah*, 9:40)

An expert and trustworthy man by the name of ʿAbdullaah ibn Urayqiṭ who had not yet embraced Islam had been hired by Abu Bakr as a guide. He reached the cave after three nights according to the plan. He brought with him Abu Bakr's two camels. The camels were very well looked after by Abu Bakr. Allah's Messenger ﷺ insisted on paying the cost of his camel, thus indicating the importance and

desirability of each Muslim paying, as far as possible, the expenses of his own migration. It was the Prophet's *hijrah*, his cutting off of all ties of home and homeland for the sake of Allah. The act of emigration, therefore, must entirely be his own; not shared by anyone else – in any respect. The mount on which the act was accomplished must therefore be his own. The camel's name was al-Qaṣwaa', and she remained his favourite camel.

After three days in the cave, when Allah's Messenger ﷺ and Abu Bakr were ready to be on the road again, Abu Bakr's daughter Asmaa' came along with a large bag of provisions for the journey. She wanted to fasten it to one of the camels, but she could not find a string to tie it with. As she had forgotten to bring a rope, she took off her waistband and tore it into two lengths, using one to tie the bag securely to her father's saddle, and the other to tie their water skin. For this reason, this noble and brave young woman who was later married to the celebrated Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, az-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwaam ﷺ, earned the title '*Dhaat an-Niṭaaqayn*' (the one with the two waistbands). A *niṭaaq* was a waistband of cloth worn by women in the olden days.

The Prophet ﷺ, Abu Bakr, and ʿAamir ibn Fuhayrah, Abu Bakr's freedman departed, and their guide ʿAbdullaah ibn Urayqiṭ led them through the seldom used routes along the coastal way. This incident took place on 1 *Rabeeʿ al-Awwal*, 1 AH (September 16, 622 CE).



2.34. The Suraaqah Incident

The award of one hundred camels, for each of them, which the Quraysh had announced to anyone who would capture the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr, was so tempting that young men were in pursuit on every possible trial. Allah's Messenger ﷺ and Abu Bakr thus began their long and unsafe journey to Yathrib (the old name of Madeenah). They avoided the usual route as much as possible. Their expert guide was remarkably useful in this regard. They had to ride fast for almost all the night and most of the day. The Quraysh were still searching for them.

Suraaqah ibn Maalik al-Mudlijee was a Bedouin of the Kinaanah tribe of Banu Mudlij. He was a warrior and poet who mostly lived in his tribal village near Makkah. Having learnt of the whereabouts of the Prophet ﷺ from a traveller, Suraaqah stole out of Makkah in pursuit of the Prophet ﷺ with the intention of capturing him and Abu Bakr himself so that he would not be obliged to divide the reward with anyone else. When Suraaqah was in sight of the Prophet ﷺ, his mare fell twice, but he continued the chase. As he drew still closer, his mare fell so badly that its forelegs sank up to the knees into the ground, and he was thrown

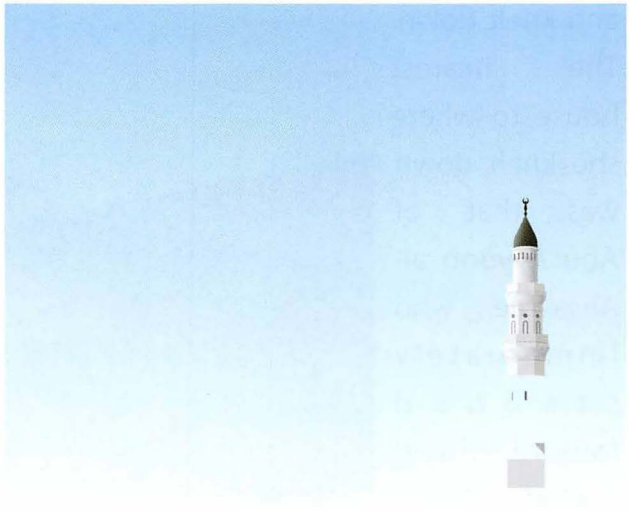
off. He then urged the animal by shouts, and it pulled up, dragging out its forelegs with difficulty. When it could stand again, there arose from the holes which its forelegs had made dust into the sky, like smoke. Suraaqah was very frightened. It became clear to him that the Prophet ﷺ and his party were protected from him by divine force.

He called out loudly and named himself, vowing that he intended no harm. Suraaqah remounted his mare and rode towards them. When he saw how he had been withheld from harming them, it came to his mind that the Prophet's cause would definitely triumph. He said to the Prophet ﷺ that the Quraysh leaders had put a price on his head and informed him of their plans regarding him. He offered them provisions and utensils, but they accepted nothing from him. The Prophet ﷺ simply requested him to keep their whereabouts secret. Suraaqah asked him to write a warrant of security, and the Prophet ﷺ ordered ʿAamir ibn Fuhayrah to do so. He wrote it on a piece of tanned leather. Then the Prophet ﷺ went his way. Suraaqah embraced Islam after the Conquest of Makkah and died in 24 AH.

Gradually the landscape began to change as Yathrib drew closer. At length, it appeared on the horizon. But it was not until noontime that the Prophet ﷺ reached the southern end of the city, a suburb called Qubaa'. He set on 1st *Rabeeʿ al-Awwal*, 1 AH and reached Yathrib on 12th of the same month (September 24, 622 C.E.)

Several days previously news from Makkah of the Prophet's absence and the reward for him had reached the oasis. The people of Qubaa' were expecting him daily. The time of his arrival was now overdue. Every morning, after the dawn prayer, people would go out to look for him. Crowds of chieftains, men, women and children, had been gathering on the outskirts of the city ever since news of his setting out from Makkah had reached them. They would go out beyond the fields and palm groves and would stop and wait until the sun became intense, then they would return to their homes.

They had gone out one morning but returned by the time the Prophet ﷺ and his fellow travellers had begun their descent down the rocky slope. A Jew who happened to be on the roof of his house at that time caught sight of them. Realizing who they were, he called out at the top of his voice that Muhammad ﷺ and his companions had appeared. The call was immediately taken up. Men, women and children hurried from their houses. But they had not far to go. Allah's Messenger ﷺ and his fellow travelling companions had by now reached the outlying palm grove. It was the noon of great delight on all sides. The Prophet ﷺ stopped in the suburb of Qubaa', two miles south of Yathrib. He spent four days there and built Qubaa' Mosque which exists to this day. The Qur'an

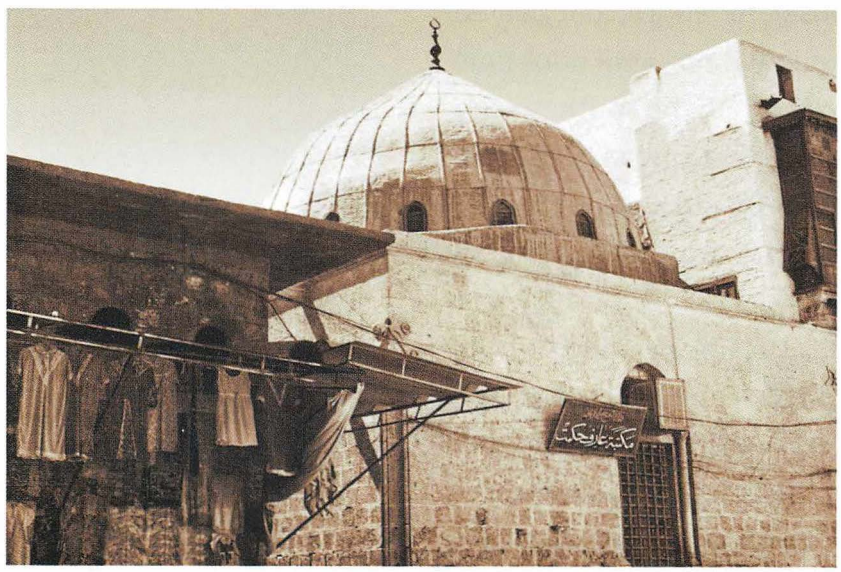


highly commends that mosque because it was built on the foundation of piety from the first day (9:108).

On Friday morning, he set off again. At noon, he stopped among the Banu Saalim ibn ʿAwf, where he offered the *Jumuʿah* prayer. This was the first Friday prayer that he offered in the city that from then on was to be his home. After the prayer, he mounted al-Qaswaa', and the others also mounted their camels and set off for the city. Upon his arrival Yathrib was renamed *Madeenat-un-Nabiyy* (The City of the Prophet ﷺ) – Madeenah, for short.

2.35. The House of Abu Ayyoob al-Anṣaaree

In Madeenah, the Prophet ﷺ was greeted warmly by people in Madeenah. They all asked him to stay with them. They grabbed the halter of his she-camel he was riding but he said, 'Let her go her own way, for she is under the command of Allah.' This happened several times. Many eager invitations were offered. Eventually, the Prophet's she-camel halted in the middle of a large and open plot of land and knelt down. The nearest house to where she knelt down was that of Abu Ayyoob al-Anṣaaree, who immediately stepped forward and invited Allah's Messenger ﷺ, pointing to his two-storey house, only a few metres away. The Prophet ﷺ accepted the invitation and got off his she-camel.



Abu Ayyoob lost no time in moving their luggage into his house. In this way, the problem of the Prophet's stay in Madeenah was settled without creating any feelings of favour or disfavour among the various clans of Madeenah, to whom playing host to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was a high honour. The Prophet ﷺ then asked about who owned the large and open plot of land, and he was informed that it belonged to two orphan boys. So he asked them if they would sell him the courtyard and told him to name their price. They said, 'No, we give it to you, Messenger of Allah.' The Prophet ﷺ would not, however, take it as a gift. He insisted on paying the price and the deal was concluded. Within a few days, the building of the mosque (*Masjid an-Nabawee*) was well underway.

The Prophet ﷺ himself took an active part in the construction of the mosque. The house of Abu Ayyoob al-Anṣaaree was, naturally, the centre of all the attention and emotions which the Prophet's presence attracted, and it remained so for the full seven months of his stay.

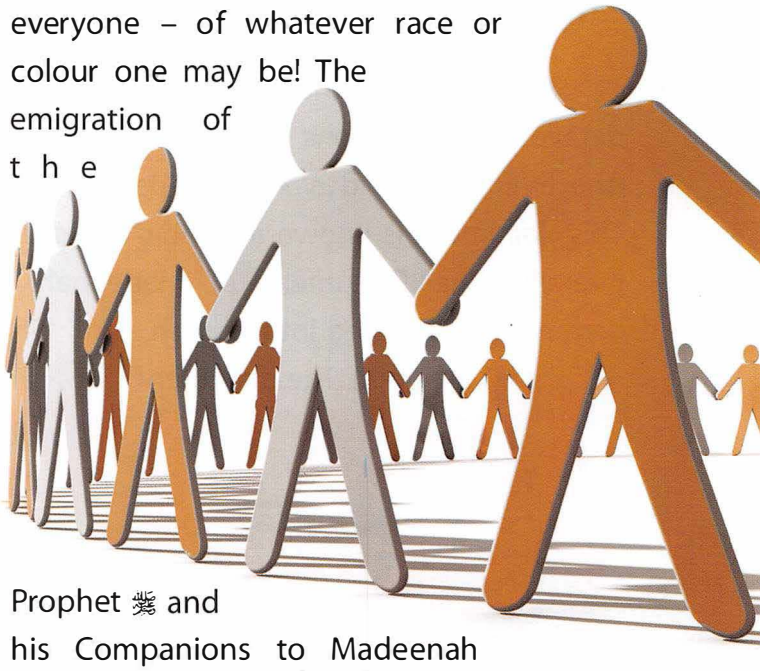
Abu Ayyoob ؓ and his wife were greatly delighted with their guests. Only two incidents marred the happiness of the hosts. The first

was when an earthen pot of water broke and a great deal of water spilt on the floor. Afraid that it might drip down to the floor below, where Allah's Messenger ﷺ was staying, Abu Ayyoob used the whole of his bed sheet in an attempt to soak up the water. Then he went down to the Prophet ﷺ and requested yet again that he move to the upper floor. Seeing his anxiety, the Prophet ﷺ agreed.

The second incident took place when the Prophet ﷺ once returned the food Abu Ayyoob had prepared for him untouched. Deeply upset, Abu Ayyoob rushed upset and asked the Prophet ﷺ, 'Messenger of Allah, did you not like the food tonight?' The Prophet ﷺ replied, 'I did like it, Abu Ayyoob, but I found in it a strong smell of garlic and onions. You may eat it, if you wish. I speak to one, to whom you do not speak,' referring to Angel Jibreel. The *hijrah* of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions heralded an entirely new era in the history of not only Islam but also that of the world. Thanks to the support offered by the *Anṣaar* (literally Helpers – the Madinan Muslims), the Prophet ﷺ was able to realize the aim for which he had up till then been striving: the establishment of an Islamic society, the first of its kind in the world.

With the *hijrah*, it became suddenly clear that Islam aimed at much more than a mere moral reorientation of man. With the migration of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions to Madeenah, it became clear that Islam aspired, among other things, to the establishment of a self-contained community, which would cut across the conventional divisions of tribe and race. The fire of persecution, endured for more than a decade, had purified the minds of the Muslims. It had helped them realize that tribal kinship ties were of no importance as compared with higher loyalty towards an idea. The new conception of brotherhood of men, united not by bonds of blood-relationship but by the awareness of common outlook on life and common objectives, found its expression in the principle of the *Ummah*.

Ummah – an organization open to everyone – of whatever race or colour one may be! The emigration of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions to Madeenah became the living symbol of this development. Years later, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭaab, the second of the four Rightly-guided Caliphs, would recognize the significance of the *hijrah* and declare 622 to be the first year of the new Islamic era. The first thing Allah's Messenger ﷺ did after settling down in Madeenah was to tie the Emigrants (*al-Muhaajiroon*) and their hosts called the Helpers (*al-Anṣaar*) into one brotherhood.



Still today, this brotherhood remains the hallmark of the believers. One person from the Emigrants was made the brother of one from amongst the Helpers. The Helpers offered to share equally all that they possessed with the Emigrants. Thus the Muslims were forged into a close-knit community of faith

and brotherhood. At the same time, steps were taken and the needed institutions built to integrate the entire social life around the centre and heart of the worship of One God – Allah. For this purpose, five daily prayers in congregation were established.

2.36. The Constitution of Madeenah: *Saheefat al-Madeenah*

Next, the Prophet ﷺ drew up a document which detailed the relations primarily between *al-Muhaajiroon* (the Emigrants) and *al-Ansaar* and the Jews of Madeenah. This document is known in Arabic as *Saheefat al-Madeenah* (literally 'The Document of Madeenah, or as is more commonly translated into English as 'The Constitution of Madeenah). The document has been preserved in an early biography of the Prophet ﷺ composed by Ibn Ishaaq (d. 767), which is available to us now in the edition prepared by Ibn Hishaam (d. 833). Dr. Zakaria Bashier discusses this in great detail in his brilliant work entitled *Sunshine at Madeenah* published by the Islamic Foundation, UK. An English version of the *Saheefah* appears in this book on pages 104-8.

The Prophet ﷺ guaranteed for the Jews their religion and their property and conferred on them specific rights and duties. The historic significance of this constitution is considerable, for it gives us a very clear idea about the nature of society and of interfaith relations thought up in this early period.

2.37. The Command of Prayer and *Adhaan*

Although the Muslim five daily prayers were prescribed in Makkah, they were not fully put into action in their congregational form until after the *hijrah*. The command of these obligatory prayers was received by the Prophet ﷺ from Allah during the *Mi'raaj*, or ascensior
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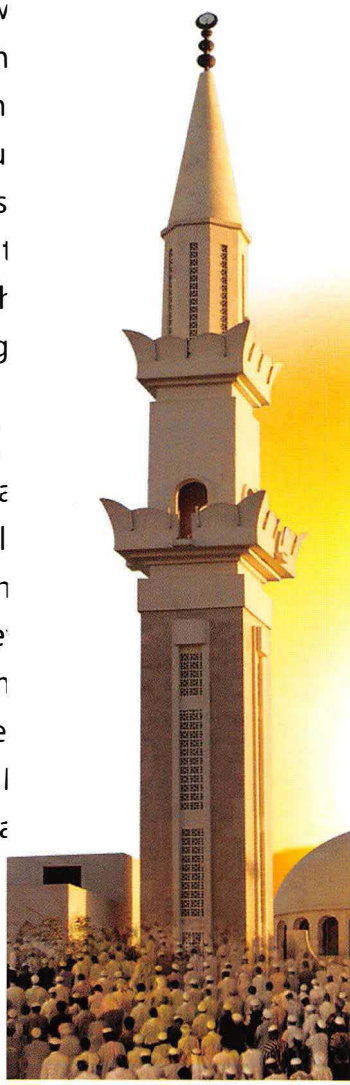
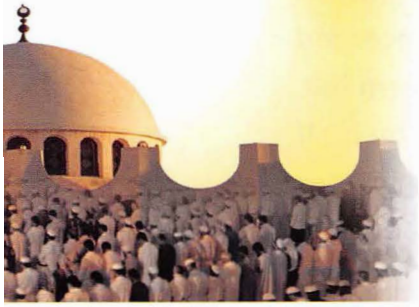


The Prophet ﷺ disliked the way

the Jews and Christians used horns and bells to announce their calls to prayer. Then Allah honoured the believers with the *adhaan* (call to prayer). One of the Prophet's Companions saw the method in a dream. His name was ʿAbdullaah ibn Zayd. The prophet ﷺ accepted ʿAbdullaah's dream as authentic. Thereafter, the *adhaan*, as it is known today, was called out loudly by Bilaal ibn Rabaah as seen in the dream by ʿAbdullaah ibn Zayd ؓ. Bilaal was chosen because of the wonderful qualities of his voice.



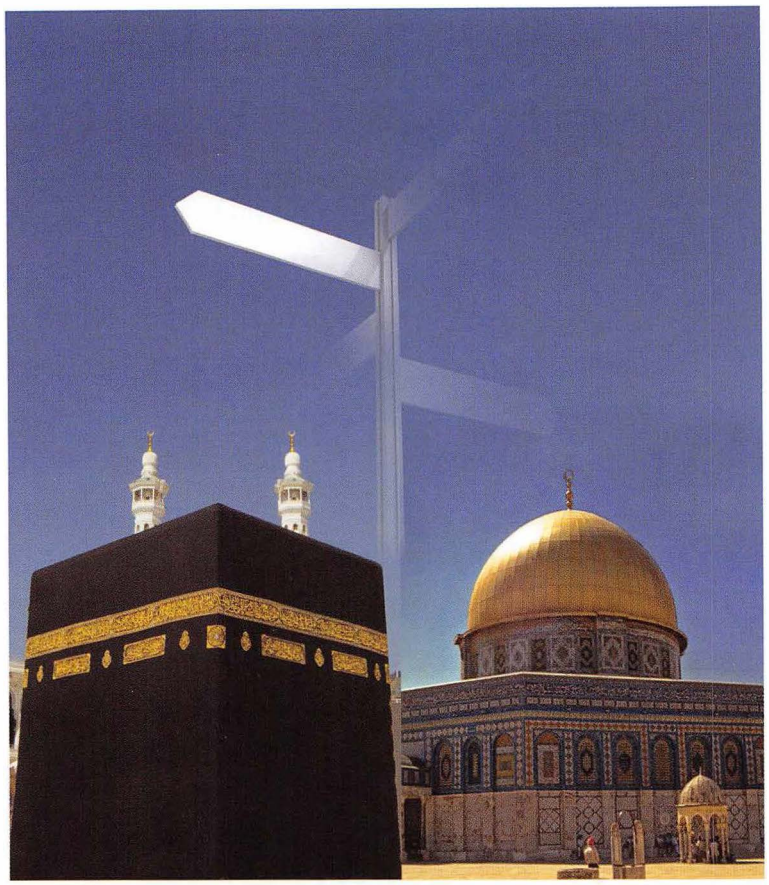
2.38. The Hypocrites: *Munaafiqoon* (sing. *Munaafiq*)

Islam began to spread rapidly throughout Madeenah, and some of the learned rabbis also embraced it. These rabbis included ʿAbdullaah ibn Salaam whose acceptance of Islam annoyed other Jews. They envied Islam and were, at the same time, frightened of it. A group of hypocrites, therefore, emerged. Their leader was ʿAbdullaah ibn Ubayy ibn Salool, whose control and authority were not questioned before the advent of Islam. But his people were now rapidly embracing Islam. He and others like him who were greedy for power and authority became open enemies of Islam, while others became hypocrites. The hypocrites represented the 'internal' unseen enemy.

2.39. The Change of the *Qiblah*: The Direction of Prayer

Until the time he was in Makkah, the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions, used to offer the prayer in a manner that he would be facing both the Kaʿbah and Jerusalem. The Prophet ﷺ prayed, as a rule, before the southern wall of the Kaʿbah, towards the north, so as to face the Kaʿbah and Jerusalem. This was, however, not prompted by any specific revelation. After his migration to Madeenah, this was no longer possible on account of a change in directions to face the Kaʿbah as before in prayer. This separation from the Kaʿbah was naturally very painful for him, and he anxiously waited for guidance in this regard.

For some eighteen months, after his arrival at Madeenah, the Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims turned their face in prayer towards Jerusalem (*Bayt-ul-Maqdis*), just as the Jews used to do. About eighteen months after his arrival at Madeenah, he received a revelation (*Surat al-Baqarah*, 2:142-150) which definitely established the Kaʿbah as the



qiblah of the followers of the Qur'an. This obviously displeased the Jews of Madeenah.

The wisdom of maintaining Jerusalem as the *qiblah* in this interim period and then changing it to the Ka'bah as described by the Qur'an was to test the believers in order to distinguish the true among them from the false. This was necessary to sort the raw and weaker elements that had joined the Muslims' ranks from among the People of the Book. It was expected that after going through this test, they would wholeheartedly embrace Islam or would clearly be separated from sincere Muslims. The change in *qiblah* was indeed a hard test. With the announcement of the *qiblah*, the Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims rejoiced greatly and felt relieved and honoured. But the Jews were annoyed with the Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims.

This historic episode signalled the formation of a Muslim community, charged with the mission of Allah's guidance and following the most ancient message of Prophet Ibraaheem عليه السلام, turning towards the most ancient House of Allah which he built along with his son Ismaa'eel عليه السلام. The Jews questioned the causes and grounds of the sudden change and expressed their disapproval of it.

2.40. War and Peace

As has already been mentioned, after the Prophet ﷺ arrived in Madeenah, he formed an alliance with the Jews. Next, he approached all the nearby tribes and tried to persuade them to make an alliance or at least enter into a no-war pact. Many tribes did. Thus the small group forced to leave Makkah assumed strategic importance. But the Makkans who had earlier plotted to kill the Prophet ﷺ were now determined to wipe out this budding community of Islam.

In the roughly thirteen years of the Prophet's Makkan phase, resistance to the Makkan establishment and defence against Makkan persecution was conducted through peaceful means: through the peaceful spread of the message of Islam, freeing of slaves and other acts of charity, and migration at first to Ethiopia for some and then to Madeenah. But the situation changed dramatically after migration to Madeenah.

The Prophet ﷺ had already received a revelation (*Soorat al-Ḥajj*, 22:39-40) permitting the Muslims to resort to armed combat, for the Muslims had been wronged and unjustly persecuted by the Quraysh for over thirteen years. At the end of the period, they were forced to migrate and leave their homes, families, wealth, lands and property and their means of livelihood. It is very important to note that the Quraysh pagans persecuted the Muslims merely because they said that 'Allah Alone is our Lord'. The verse quoted above calls upon Muslims to fight against religious oppression.

2.41. Campaigns and Expeditions

The Prophet ﷺ now began sending out military expeditions against his enemies. Several such expeditions were sent before the Battle of Badr, which took place on 17th *Ramaḍaan*, 2 AH (634 CE).

A close look at the Prophet's expeditions before Badr shows that the real object was not to obtain booty. These expeditions were merely meant to compel the Makkan Quraysh to give open battle. The Prophet ﷺ understood that the position of the Muslim Community at Madeenah could never become secure unless the Quraysh were made to realize, by means of a crushing defeat, that an entirely new period had begun in the history of their country.

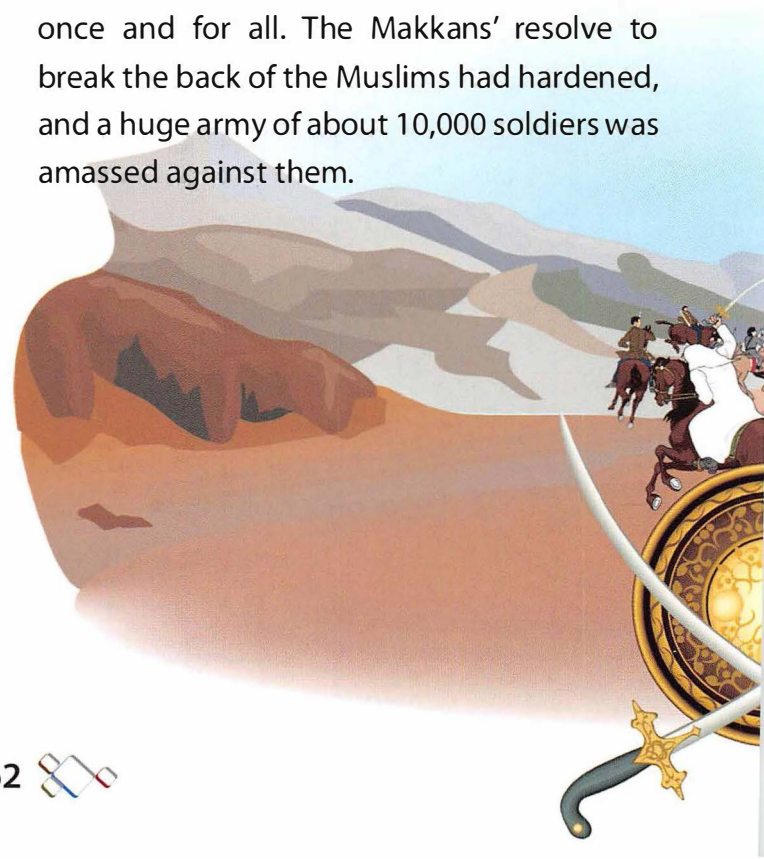
At the beginning of *Ramaḍaan* 2 AH, the Prophet ﷺ set out from Madeenah at the head of some 313 Companions, for the first time assisted by warriors from the *Anṣaar*, seemingly with the intention of attacking the great Makkan caravan led by Abu Sufyaan, now on its way home from Syria. A heavily armed Makkan force marched towards Madeenah on the pretext of protecting their trade caravan. The Prophet ﷺ, despite his community's small number and lack of arms, decided to face their threat boldly. On 17th *Ramaḍaan*, at Badr, the two forces met and fought a battle in which 313 believers defeated the 1000-strong well-equipped Makkan army.

Seventy of the Makkan chiefs who had been most active and violent in persecuting the Muslims were killed. Many others were taken prisoner and were later released for ransom. For the first time, prisoners of war were treated humanely and kindly. They were fed and housed in the same way as their captors ate and lived. In the third year after the *hijrah*, a 3000-strong Makkah force again marched on Madeenah both to avenge the defeat at Badr and to make another attempt to wipe out the Muslims. 700 of them were chain-mailed and 200 mounted. The Muslims numbered only 700. The two armies met just outside Madeenah near Mount Uḥud.

At first the Muslims were gaining ground in this battle, but the tide turned against them when a large contingent of Muslim archers, sensing victory at hand, deserted their posts in the hope of being able to collect their booty. The Makkan cavalry led by the brave Khaalid ibn al-Waleed, who later rose to fame as a stalwart warrior in the Muslim armies, saw his chance and swooped down on the Muslim flank and rear. In the resulting fight, some seventy Muslims, including the Prophet's uncle Ḥamzah, were martyred. The Prophet ﷺ himself was wounded. The remaining Muslim forces at the last minute rallied, causing the Makkans to quit fighting instead of pursuing their earlier partial victory.

As for the polytheists, twenty two of them were killed .They failed to pursue their advantage and clinch the victory.

The next major battle known as *al-Khandaq* (the Battle of the Trench) took place in the month of *Shawwaal*, in the year 5 AH (627 CE) The Makkans now planned to make a final attack on Madeenah to settle the matter once and for all. The Makkans' resolve to break the back of the Muslims had hardened, and a huge army of about 10,000 soldiers was amassed against them.



The Jewish tribe of Banu an-Nadeer played a considerably evil role in the formation of the Makkan confederacy. The Banu an-Nadeer by that time had been exiled to Khaybar from Madeenah by the Prophet ﷺ for the following reasons: **(1)** for non-payment of their contribution to the blood money they owed to the tribe of Banu ʿAamir on account of tribal alliances; and **(2)** the Qur'anic revelation to the Prophet ﷺ warning him against Banu an-Nadeer Jews' plot to kill him. Another Jewish tribe, the Banu Qaynuqaaʿ had previously been expelled from Madeenah after some of its men put to death a Muslim man, who in defending the honour of a Muslim woman, had killed a Jewish man who had dishonoured her.

At the beginning of the Battle of the Trench, the Banu an-Nadeer shamelessly came out against the Muslims and succeeded in arousing the Banu Ghatafaan tribe to join the Makkan confederacy by promising to offer them half the date harvest of Khaybar, on the anticipation that they would regain their former lands if the Muslims were defeated. A third Jewish tribe, the Banu Quraydhah, openly pretended neutrality while hatching a secret conspiracy with the Quraysh and the Banu Ghatafaan against the Muslims. These actions of the Jewish tribes were in utter violation of the terms of the Constitution of Madeenah.

The Battle of the Trench gained its name from the trench (*khandaq*) that was dug around the city of Madeenah, a strategy attributed to the Companion Salmaan al-Faarisee, who knew it as defensive plan from his native Iran. The pagan Makkans tried vainly to cross the trench for several days, but they finally gave up. The siege lasted for over 25 days. Internal differences, lack of supplies, the deep trench, the cold weather and the high winds forced the Makkan army to withdraw. This was the turning point in the history of conflict with the Makkans. Madeenah was never to be attacked again.

The Prophet ﷺ now moved swiftly against the treacherous Banu Quraydhah and demanded their unconditional surrender. He realised the threat they posed and decided that their fate should be judged by a member of one of their allied tribes, to which plan the Jews agreed; and all present, accepted to abide by the decision. Saʿd ibn Muʿaadh was selected as the judge from the Aws tribe, which was allied with the Banu Quraydhah. Saʿd ؓ decided that all the men of Banu Quraydhah should be put to death, their women and children made captive and their

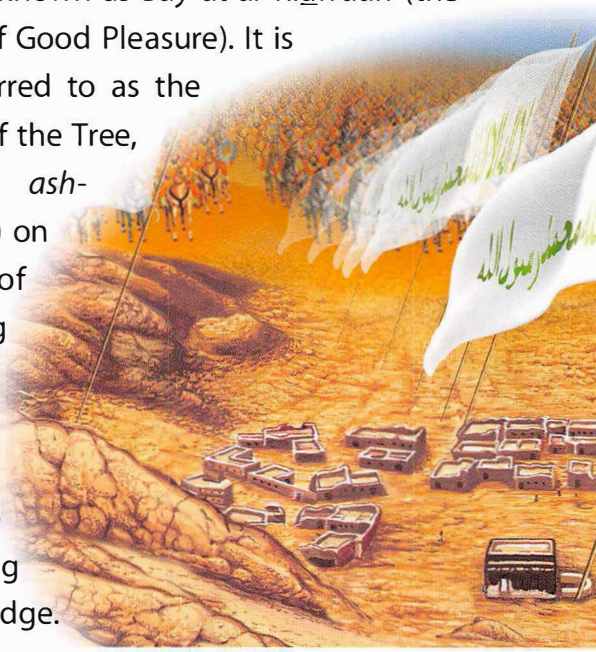
property divided. The Prophet ﷺ said to him, 'You have judged with the judgement of Allah from above the seven heavens.'

It is significant to realize, however, that these Jewish tribes were punished on account of their particular acts of treachery, which threatened the safety of the Muslim Community, and certainly not on account of their being Jews.

From the beginning the Jews were given full rights of citizenship. Yet they committed acts of treason and deception. Subsequent generations of Jews, however, were never held responsible for the evil deeds of the Jews of Madeenah. On the contrary, Muslims always treated them justly and kindly.

In the sixth year after the *hijrah* (628 CE), the Prophet ﷺ decided to set out with about 1400 or 1500 of his Companions to perform the lesser pilgrimage (*'umrah*) at Makkah. They were unarmed, but the Quraysh chiefs, against all established and standard traditions, refused them admission. The prophet ﷺ learnt of this and encamped at a place called al-Hudaybiyah just outside the sanctuary at Makkah. The Makkans sent emissaries to the Prophet ﷺ, informing him that they would not be permitted to enter Makkah that year to perform the lesser pilgrimage. Negotiations took place between the two sides. Finally a treaty known in Arabic as *Sulh al-Hudaybiyah* was agreed upon by the two sides which promised the ending of war for ten years. Some of the conditions of the treaty of al-Hudaybiyah were unfavourable to the Muslim side, such as the one which required that if an individual from the Quraysh were to come over to the Muslims without permission from his guardian, he was to be sent back to his people. On the other hand, a Muslim defector to the Quraysh would not be returned. The prophet ﷺ later made an exception for the Quraysh women who, upon accepting Islam, migrated to join the Muslims in Madeenah. He refused to send them back. He realized the unusually delicate situation in which they would find themselves if they were sent back to their Makkan relatives. Moreover, a revelation came down to forbid the return of any believing women to the disbelievers (*Soorat al-Mumtahinah*, 60:10).

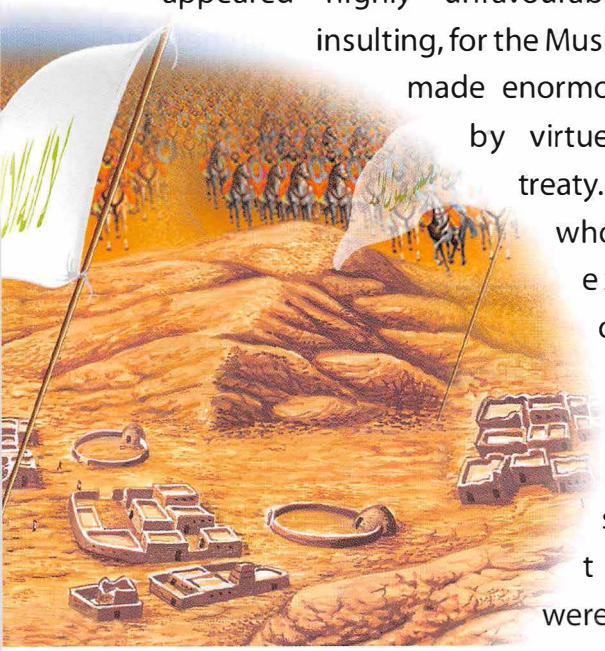
According to the terms of the treaty, permission was given to the Muslims to perform the lesser pilgrimage the following year. While the negotiations were in progress, Muslims swore a pledge to the Prophet ﷺ, which is known as *Bay'at ar-Ridwaan* (the Pledge of Good Pleasure). It is also referred to as the Pledge of the Tree, (*Bay'at ash-Shajarah*) on account of having sat under a tree while making the pledge.



Then the Prophet ﷺ broke camp and returned to Madeenah. On his journey back, Allah revealed to the Prophet ﷺ that the truce of al-Hudaybiyah was not a setback but rather a victory (*Soorat al-Fath*, 48:1-3).

Al-Hudaybiyah treaty gave the idol worshippers and believers an opportunity to mix. The idol worshippers soon came to appreciate the good qualities of the Muslims. Many of them embraced Islam during this period. The pledge appears prominently in accounts of the life of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions. It was a test of faith for the Muslims in those sorely stressful circumstances. The high estimation of those who swore the pledge under the tree is reflected in a *hadeeth* in which the Prophet ﷺ is reported as having said, 'Not one of those who pledged their allegiance under the tree will enter the Fire.' (Muslim and Abu Daawood)

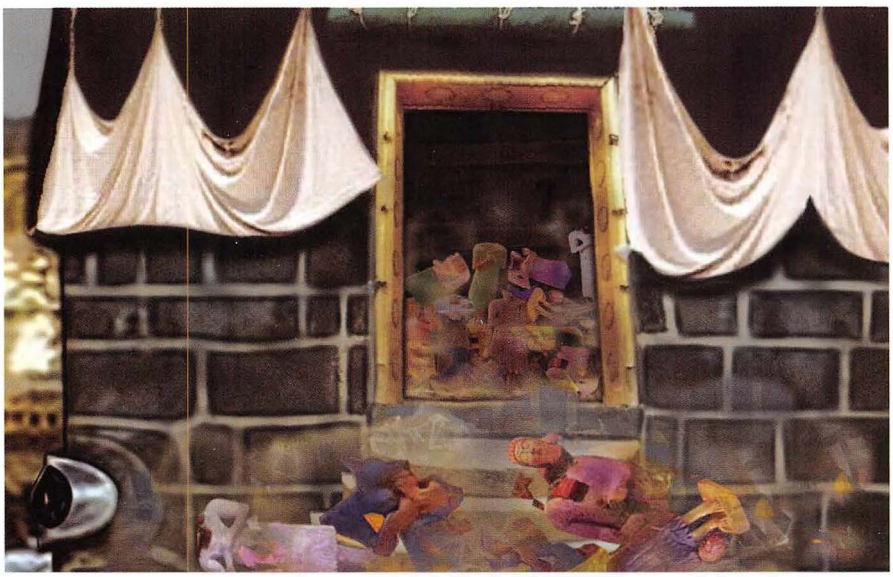
Although the terms of the truce appeared highly unfavourable, even insulting, for the Muslims, they made enormous gains by virtue of the treaty. Those who were expelled out of Makkah and attacked several times were now recognized as an equal force, to be treated respectfully and taken seriously. The result was that many Makkans and Arab tribes either accepted Islam or made peace with the Prophet ﷺ.



As soon as al-Hudaybiyah truce was signed, the Prophet ﷺ sent letters to various neighbouring Arab and non-Arabs rulers and kings including Chosroes of Iran and Heraclius, the emperor of the Byzantine Empire, inviting them to Islam. He assured them that he was not interested in their kingdoms or wealth. They could keep these for themselves only if they worshipped Allah alone, the only true God.

Within two years, however, in the year 8 AH (630 CE), the Makkans broke the treaty. It was now time to deal with their never-ending hostility. The Prophet ﷺ reacted firmly to this turn of events. He mobilized an army of about 10,000 men and set out for Makkah. The Quraysh had by now become quite demoralized; they were aware that they had broken the terms of the treaty. They no longer wished to put up a resistance. The Prophet ﷺ captured the city and declared a general amnesty for all those inside Makkah who would surrender without resistance. He forgave all those who had been his bitterest enemies all his life, persecuted him and planned to kill him and driven him and his Companions out of Makkah and had marched thrice to Madeenah to destroy the Muslims. This signal event is referred to as *al-Fath*, literally 'the Opening', or the 'Opening of Makkah'.

The Ka'bah was cleansed of the 360 idols which had been housed within it. An icon of the Virgin Mary with the Christ child in her arms and a painting of the patriarch Abraham (Ibraaheem) were also destroyed. Taking his cue from the words spoken by Prophet Joseph (Yoosuf) to his errant brothers, the Prophet ﷺ told those who had earlier shown merciless hostility towards him or his family and towards



Islam in general, 'There shall be no reproach this day. May Allah forgive you, for He is the Most Merciful of the merciful.' (*Soorat Yoosuf*, 12:92)

Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyaan, who had caused the death of Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle, at the Battle of Badr, was forgiven. Habbaar ibn al-Aswad, whose chase of the Prophet's daughter Zaynab while attempting to migrate from Makkah to Madeenah had caused her to have a miscarriage, was also pardoned.

The neighbouring Roman Empire now made ready to attack and wipe out the Muslims in Madeenah. However, when the Prophet ﷺ marched to Tabook on the northern border, his determination, courage and timely action made the enemy lose heart and withdraw. The Tabook Expedition took place in the year 9 AH.

After the Prophet ﷺ had subdued Makkah, returned victorious from Tabook, and the Thaqeef tribe of at-Taa'if embraced Islam, Arab delegations started pouring into Madeenah from all directions to profess their acceptance of Islam, or at least to express their acknowledgement of the Prophet's political authority. The year 9 AH (630-631 CE), therefore, came to be known as the Year of Deputations. The total number of delegations mentioned by scholars was more than seventy.[5]

There was also a delegation of sixty men from the Christians of Najraan which the Prophet ﷺ kindly received. He concluded with its members a pact according to which Muslims would grant full protection to their churches and possessions in return for the payment of protection taxes.

In the year 10 AH (632 CE), the Prophet ﷺ set out to perform the pilgrimage (*Hajj*) in Makkah. This was the only pilgrimage he had ever performed. In the plain of 'Arafat, he gave a sermon of supreme beauty and lasting value, which is much cited by the Prophet's biographers. Shortly after returning from the pilgrimage, the Prophet

5- Safi-ur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar*, Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia 2002.

ﷺ contracted an illness from which he did not recover. His prophetic mission had achieved success and was nearing its end. During the last few days of his illness, he appointed Abu Bakr ﷺ to lead the congregational prayers. His sickness lasted ten days.

On Monday, 12th *Rabee' al-Awwal*, in the year 11 AH (Monday, June 8, 632 CE), the Prophet ﷺ breathed his last in his home in Madeenah. He was sixty-three years and four days old when he died. The Companions now disagreed as to where he should be buried. Abu Bakr ﷺ recalled having heard him say, 'No prophet dies but is buried where he has died.' So the grave was dug in the floor of ʿAa'shah's apartment near the couch where he was lying. Then all the people of Madeenah visited him and prayed over him. He was laid in his grave by ʿAli and others who had prepared him for burial. Later, Abu Bakr and ʿUmar too were buried in the same apartment. With the passing away of the 'Seal of the Prophets' (*Soorat al-Ahzaab*, 33:40), the age of prophets and revelation came to a close.

2.42. The Issue of Succession to the Prophet ﷺ

When the earthly life of the Prophet ﷺ had come to an end, news of his death fell on the Companions like a flash of lightning. They were stunned because of their intense love for him. Every one of them thought that the Prophet ﷺ was more gracious and considerate to him than to any other Companion. Some of them could hardly believe the news of his death. ʿUmar ibn al-Khattaab ﷺ rebuked the man who told him about the Prophet's death. He went to the mosque and warned the audience that he would cut off the hands and legs of those who claimed that the Prophet ﷺ was dead.

When ʿUmar ﷺ was speaking thus, Abu Bakr ﷺ arrived from as-Sunh, where he lived. The news had quickly spread over the whole oasis. Without pausing to speak to anyone, he went straight to his daughter's apartment and drew back from the Prophet's face the mantle with which he had been covered. He kissed him between his eyes and said, 'Dearer than my father and mother, you have tasted death which Allah had decreed

for you. No death shall ever come to you after this death.'

As for the caliphate of Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq, it came about through the unanimous agreement of the Helpers (*al-Ansaar*) and the Emigrants (*al-Muhaajiroon*). In the hall of Banu Saa'idah, Muslims paid homage to Abu Bakr ﷺ as the successor of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. They were determined that the Prophet ﷺ would leave the world with the Muslims united and under a strong leader who could take change of their affairs.

Then Abu Bakr gave thanks to Allah and addressed the people, saying, 'I have been given the authority over you, and I am not the best of you. If I perform my duty well, help me; and if I should deviate, correct me. You must be God-fearing. Piety is the most intelligent practice and immorality is the most foolish. The weak among you will be strong in my sight until I secure his rights, if Allah wills. The strong among you will be weak in my sight until I wrest the right from him, if Allah wills. Obey me so long as I obey Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. If I disobey Allah and his Messenger ﷺ, you owe me no disobedience.' Abu Bakr's inaugural address as the first caliph ranks as one of the most important speeches in the records of Islamic history.

2.43. Remembering the Prophet ﷺ: The Most Beautiful Model

One must always remember that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ never claimed to possess any superhuman qualities: 'I am only a man like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is One God.' (*Soorat as-Sajdah*, 41:6)

When the Makkans challenged him to provide proof for his prophethood by performing miracles he said that the only miracle he had was that he had received the divine revelation in clear Arabic language, which was proclaimed through him, in the form of the Noble Qur'an: 'Say, "If all the people and all the *jinn* were to come together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they would not produce its like even if they back up one another with help and support."' (*Soorat al-Israa'*, 17:88)

No matter how eloquent the Arabs were and how perfect their highly refined traditional poetry was, they could not produce something similar in form and content to the Glorious Qur'an. The Qur'an challenged them to produce ten *soorahs* but they could not:

> Do they say, 'He has fabricated it?' Say, 'Bring then ten *soorahs* like it, and call all those whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful.' (*Soorat Hood*, 11:13)

The Qur'an also challenged them to produce one single *soorah*, but they again failed:

> And if you are in some doubt concerning what We sent down upon Our special devotee, then bring one *soorah* like it, and call upon all your helpers besides Allah, if you are truthful. (*Soorat Al-Baqarah*, 1:23)

The Prophet ﷺ knew that he was only a human being, and was repeatedly reminded in the Qur'an that he was only a man whose only privilege was

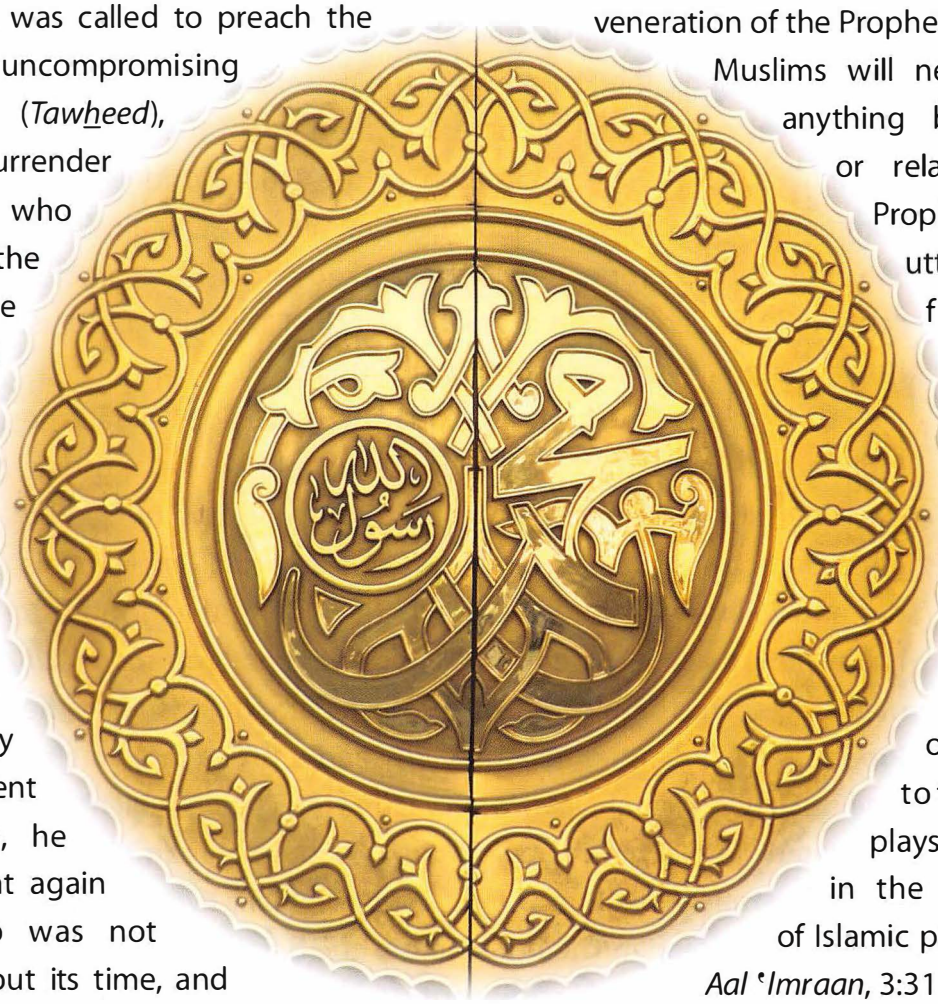
that he was granted revelation. As the Qur'an cautions him,

> Say, 'I do not say to you that Allah's treasures are with me, nor that I know the unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel. I only follow what has been revealed to me.' (*Soorat al-Anʿaam*, 6:50)

He was also reminded that only Allah the Almighty is able to guide mankind:

> Indeed, you cannot guide all those whom you love [to Islam]. Rather it is Allah alone who guides whomever He wills so.' (*Soorat al-Qaṣas*, 28:56)

Thus he was called to preach the message of uncompromising monotheism (*Tawḥeed*), of absolute surrender to One God who alone is the Creator, the Sustainer and the Judge.



When the Makkans ridiculed him, asking persistently when the Day of Judgment would come, he had to repeat again that he too was not informed about its time, and that he was only a clear warner.' (*Soorat al-ʿAnkaboot*, 29:50); awakening the heart of those who are in fear of this 'Hour' (See, for instance, *Soorat Ṭaa Haa*, 20:15; *Soorat an-Naaziʿaat*, 79:42, among other verses of the Qur'an).

Yet there are several verses in the Qur'an that point to the Prophet's exceptional role. The Prophet ﷺ was sent as a mercy to all the creatures: *raḥmatul-lil-ʿaalameen* (*Soorat al-Anbiyyaa'*, 21:107); Allah and His angels invoke peace and blessings upon him.' (*Soorat al-Aḥzaab*, 33:56) 'He is most surely of an outstanding character.' (*Soorat al-Qalam*, 68:4) In several places one finds the divine command 'Obey Allah and obey the Messenger' or similar commands. Such Qur'anic guidance formed the basis of a veneration of the Prophet ﷺ. Even now Muslims will never mention anything belonging to or relating to the Prophet ﷺ without uttering the formula *ṣallallaahu ʿalayhi wasallam* (Upon him be Allah's peace and blessings).

The obedience due to the Prophet ﷺ plays a central role in the development of Islamic piety. In *Soorat Aal ʿImraan*, 3:31 we read, 'Say, "If you love Allah , then follow me. Allah will love you and forgive you your sins."'

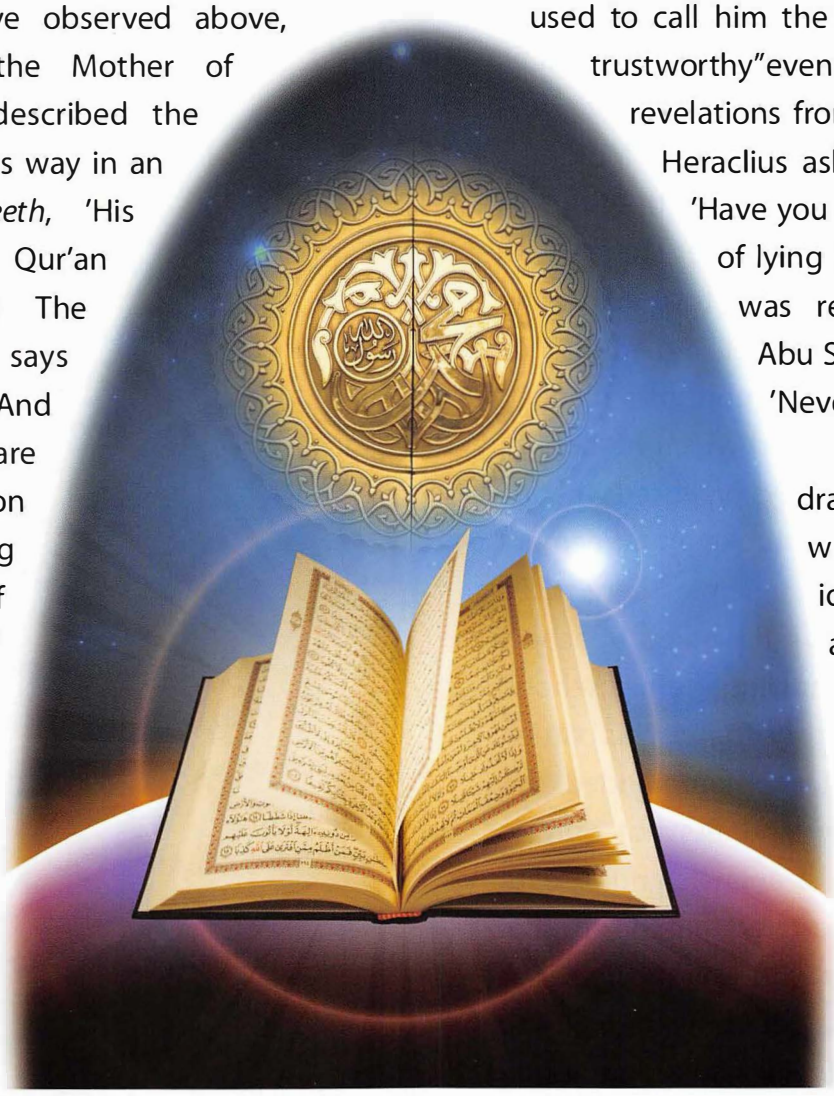
In the twofold profession of faith '*Laa ilaaha ill-Allaah, Muḥammadur-Rasoolullaah*' (There is no god worthy of worship except Allah, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of

Allah), the second half defines Islam as a distinctive religion. The Prophet ﷺ is singled out by Allah the Almighty. He is truly the chosen one, *al-mustafaa*, and for this reason his *Sunnah*, his way of life, emerges as the uniquely valid rule of conduct for the Muslims. If you wish Allah to love you, you must love His Messenger ﷺ by following his *Sunnah*, for the Prophet ﷺ is, indeed, as the Qur'an declares, "*uswatun hasanatun*" (an excellent model) (*Soorat al-Ahzaab*, 33:21). The Prophet's *Sunnah* consists of his statements, actions, tacit approval, physical appearance, inner qualities and biography; and because of the great significance of the Prophet's beautiful example, the science of *hadeeth* came to occupy a central place in Islamic studies.

For Muslims, the Prophet ﷺ is the moral exemplar of piety and ethical conduct for all time and the best of mankind. His *Sunnah* represents the realization of the Qur'anic ideals and commands and is the second source of law after the Qur'an. When ʿAa'ishah ؓ, the Prophet's wife, was asked about his character, she simply replied that his character was the Qur'an itself, that is, he translated the Qur'an's commands into reality.

Various *ahaadeeth* from standard compilations detail the Prophet's daily conduct in the domestic field, in the mosque, in all worldly matters, among other things. The love nursed by Muslims for the Prophet ﷺ remains undeniable and visible to this day and will remain so forever. Such devotion to the Prophet ﷺ has inspired a scholarly genre in Islamic lands known as *shamaa'il*, or characteristics of the Prophet ﷺ, which detail, for instance, the Prophet's inward and outward beauty and nobility of character. One such work is al-Qaadee ʿIyyaadh's *As-Shifaa*, which was translated into English by ʿAisha ʿAbdur-Rahman Bewley under the title *Muhammad, Messenger of Allah*. Every student of Islam must read it. The book praises the details the Prophet's specific attributes, such as his fortitude in the face of trials and tribulations, the gentleness of his temperament, his humility, aversion to showiness and his physical handsomeness, which are to be used as role models by all generations of believers. At this point, we wish to present only some aspects of these qualities that people nowadays badly stand in need of emulation.

2.44. His Character was the Qur'an Itself



As we have observed above, ʿAa'ishah ﵂, the Mother of the Believers, described the Prophet ﷺ in this way in an authentic *hadeeth*, 'His moral was the Qur'an itself.' (Muslim) The Qur'an itself says about him, 'And indeed, you are most surely on an outstanding standard of character.' (*Soorat al-Qalam*, 68:4)

The Prophet ﷺ was sent as a mercy to all mankind. He was sent solely for the purpose of perfecting good morals. The moral qualities mentioned in the Qur'an and the injunctions revealed by Allah, were all harmonized in his person. He lived up to all the principles he brought and to which he called, in private as well as in public. Throughout human history, great men have always sought to keep their private lives and personal behaviour secret. This is not the case with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, as is evident from the detailed record of the *Sunnah*.

He was the very pattern of excellence and the noblest exemplar. His own people used to call him the "the truthful and trustworthy" even before he received revelations from his Lord. When Heraclius asked Abu Sufyaan, 'Have you ever accused him of lying before the Qur'an was revealed to him?' Abu Sufyaan ﵁ replied, 'Never.'

He never drank wine, nor worshipped idols, nor sought amusement in an improper manner. He was affectionate to the poor and tender-hearted to the weak. He would never deny anything he was asked for. He gave assistance and support to the oppressed and never took revenge for himself unless one of Allah's laws was violated.

He devoted himself completely to the worship of Allah. He fasted so much that it sometimes seemed that he never went a day without fasting. He would also spend long stretches of the night in optional prayers until his feet would swell. When ʿAa'ishah ﵂ once asked him why he would spend so much time in prayer when Allah had forgiven him all his past and future sins, he replied, 'Should I not be a grateful servant?'

He shunned all forms of showiness and appearances of pride that commonly characterize holders of high offices and heads of states. ʿAa'ishah ؓ once said, 'The family of Muhammad ﷺ never had their fill of barley bread for two consecutive days until he died.' (al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

The mattress on which the Prophet ﷺ slept was made of leather stuffed with palm tree fibre. According to al-Bukhaaree and Muslim, the Prophet ﷺ died in such a condition that his armour was pledged to a Jew for some food which he bought for his family. He always practised what he preached and never broke an agreement with any of his enemies or acted treacherously even if he feared treachery from them. He did not engage in falsehood in order to gain victory in any of his battles.

The Prophet ﷺ commanded his followers to show kindness not only to humans but also to animals and insects. Abu Hurayrah ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, 'A traveller who was thirsty saw a well on the way. He got inside the well and when he came out he saw a dog licking mud because of thirst. The man thought to himself that the dog should be as thirsty as he was, and so he got into the well again, filled his leather sock with water and carried it out holding it with his teeth. And thus he quenched the dog's thirst. Allah was pleased with this act of kindness and pardoned his sins.' The Companions asked, 'Messenger of Allah, is there also a reward in the matter of beasts and wild animals also?' The Prophet replied, 'There is recompense in regard to every creature that has a living heart.'

He prohibited all types of abuse and tormenting a person under sentence of death. However, in spite of his extreme tenderness, he commanded severe retribution for criminals and offenders.

He had enormous charm and a great sense of humour. He used to joke on occasion though he uttered nothing except the truth. He used to exchange good-natured fun in order to amuse and delight his Companions. In fact, he would bend down so that his grandsons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn could ride on his back.

He was very brave. More than once fearless men fled away leaving him alone, while he stood with full composure facing the enemy without turning his back. ʿAli ibn Abee Taalib ؓ, who was known for his valour, once said that when fighting became intense on the battlefield, the Prophet ﷺ would be seen in positions nearest to the enemy. (Muslim)

He was always at great pains to look and act human. He ate and worked, slept and entered into conjugal relationships. He was involved in trade, war, affairs of the state and the wide range of matters that suited his sublime and noble nature. As Safi-ur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri has put it:

> Ill-manners and indecency are two qualities completely alien to him. He was decent and did not call anybody names. He was not the sort of person who cursed or made noise in the streets. He did not exchange offences with others. He pushed back an offence or an error by forgiveness and overlooking. Nobody was allowed to walk behind him (i.e. as a bodyguard). He did not feel himself superior to others not even to his slaves (men or women) as far as food or clothes were concerned. (p. 321)

When he entered his house, he behaved like any other man and would help his wives. He carried out household chores. He never stood up or sat down without the name of Allah being on his lips. He gave all those who sat with him such attention that they believed that he paid more attention to them than to anyone else. When someone asked for help, he would either give him what he needed or speak kindly to him. He would never name a person whom he had heard ill-news about — which he hated. Instead he would say, 'Why do certain people do such-and-such a thing?'

The Prophet ﷺ lived for twenty-three years after the beginning of his mission. This period of his life was the busiest and most fruitful. He fulfilled his mission of calling mankind to the worship of One True God—Allah. Throughout this period, he strove hard against arrogance, evil and unbelief. He taught and educated those who followed him. He succeeded in establishing Islam in the world, made it reign supreme and built, on its basis, a state which was founded on the principles of the worship of Allah and brotherhood among the faithful.

2.45. Fulfilment of His Mission

These facts speak of a massive and miraculous transformation the Prophet ﷺ brought: a unique experience in the history of mankind whose echoes still last. Mark the miraculous change for the better that the Prophet of Islam ﷺ had almost immediately brought about in his former violent, immoral and religious countrymen. Makkah and the whole Arabian Peninsula had been soaked in spiritual lifelessness: people were sunk in superstitions, cruelty and vices. Thirteen years before the migration (*hijrah*), Makkah lay lifeless in this corrupt state. What a change those thirteen years had produced! A band of several hundred people had rejected idolatry, adopted the worship of the true One God and surrendered themselves unconditionally to the guidance of what He revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, praying to the Almighty with frequency and fervour, looking for forgiveness through His mercy and striving hard to follow through good deeds, almsgiving and justice. They now lived under a constant sense of the Omnipotent Power of God and His timely care over the smallest of their concerns. But a few years since they were totally immersed in superstition, idol worship and practising all sorts of vice, they now prostrated themselves five times a day in prayer to Almighty Allah—the true One God.

The Prophet ﷺ often advised his Companions to treat their wives kindly. He would say, 'The best among you are those who are the best to their wives, and I am the best amongst you to my wives.' (Reported by at-Tirmidhee) He was once seen placing his knees on the ground for his wife Safiyyah ﷺ to help her step on and mount a camel.' (al-Bukhaaree)

In a word, his character was the Qur'an itself.

2.46. The Prophet's Statesmanship: The Constitution of Madeenah (*Saheefat al-Madeenah*)

If there is an international law which is equally applicable to all nations of the world and is not limited to a few particular countries, then it must have originated with the advent of Islam. Muslims are perhaps the only nation in the world that can authentically claim to possess an international law. As a matter of fact, an international law which is both truly 'international' and 'law' began with the Muslims.

After their migration to Madeenah, the Prophet ﷺ founded a state and framed a constitution for it. Upon reaching Madeenah, he found that it was inhabited by many tribes that had been fighting with one another for nearly a hundred and twenty years. There was no central authority and no government.

There were two kinds of Muslims in Madeenah, that it to say, those who belonged to the city, *al-Anṣaar* (the Helpers) who provided assistance to the Prophet ﷺ and his companions when they migrated to Madeenah, and *al-Muhaajiroon* (the Emigrants), who had migrated there from Makkah. The majority of the population, however, consisted of those who had not yet embraced Islam. There were Jews as well as a sprinkling of Christians. The tribes of Madeenah were at odds with one another, hence the impossibility of electing a leader from among themselves who would be acceptable to all the tribes. Therefore, they decided to opt for a neutral person and they chose the Prophet ﷺ as their leader. The rights and duties of the ruler and the ruled were written down in detail, and a legal document was prepared. This is the document which can be called the Constitution of the city-state of Madeenah.

The document which has reached us contains important details about domestic administration. This document is accepted by modern scholars as authentic, which was drawn up sometime before the Battle of Badr in 624 CE. The rights of religious freedom are clearly asserted and defence arrangements are also spelled out together with laws of war and peace. The military *jihaad* in this period is conceived of as a defensive enterprise in which the Muslims (referred to mostly as believers), those who are attached to them and to the Prophet ﷺ, including the Jews, engaged.

If one studies the life of the Prophet ﷺ objectively, one would not fail to reach to the conclusion that Muhammad ﷺ was a true Messenger of Allah.

For Further Study

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2. Mahdi Rizqullah Ahmad, *A Biography of the Prophet* ﷺ, Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2005.
3. Ali Mohammad as-Sallaabee, *The Noble Life of the Prophet* ﷺ, Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2005.
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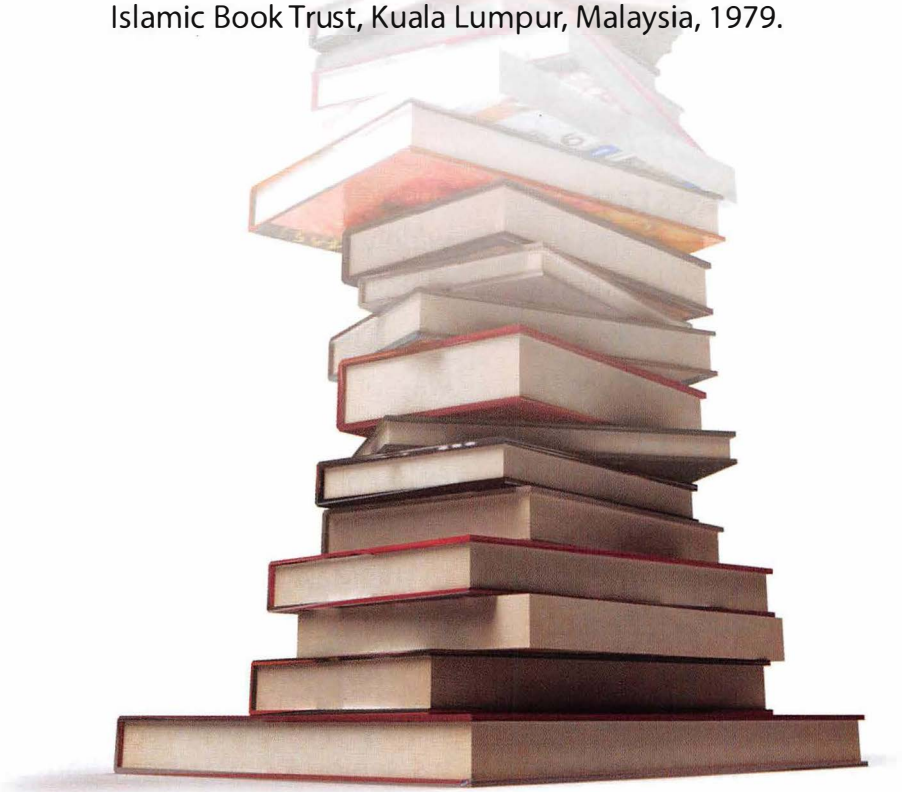
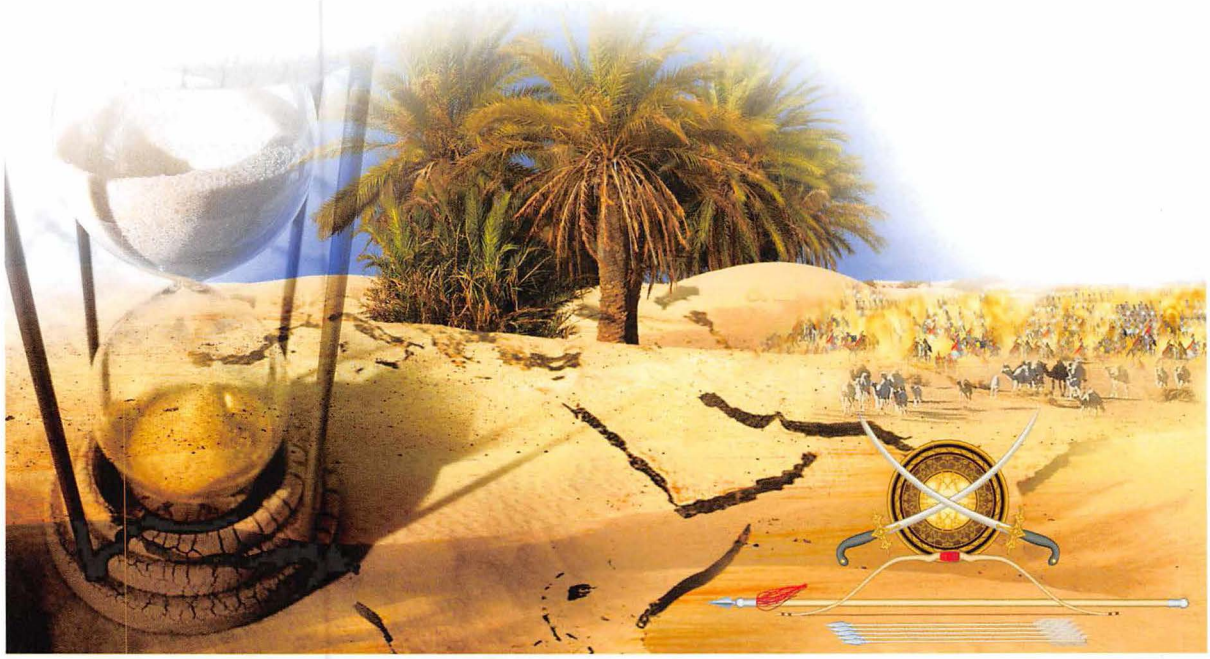


The Beginnings of Islam

3. The Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs

3.1. Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq ﷺ: The Champion of Truth - The First of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs



His Name and Ancestry

His full name was Abu Bakr ʿAbdullaah ibn Abu Quhaafah at-Taymee. He had the honorific surname of ʿ*Ateeq*, which is variously explained by scholars. The majority of scholars hold that ʿ*Ateeq* was his surname, not his name. To some he was called ʿ*Ateeq* because he was handsome and graceful. Some argue that he was called ʿ*Ateeq* because of his spotless ancestry.

His real name was ʿAbdullaah. He was called Abdulkaʿbah in the Days of Ignorance (*Jaahiliyyah*), and the Prophet ﷺ named him ʿAbdullaah. His mother was Salmaa bint Sakhr. She was the cousin of Abu Quhaafah and was widely known as Umm al-Khayr. The name of his father Abu Quhaafah was ʿUthmaan. Abu Bakr ﷺ was his *kunyah*. The Arabs' polite way of addressing people is by referring to their parenthood, so that one is addressed as father or mother of so-and-so, hence the word *kunyah*. Both his mother and father belonged to the Makkan family of Kaʿb ibn Saʿd of the clan of Taym, a branch of the Quraysh.

Abu Bakr ﷺ was younger than the Prophet ﷺ who was two years and two months his senior. He was born and brought up in Makkah and lived as a well-to-do merchant in Makkah.

Abu Bakr ﷺ Embraces Islam

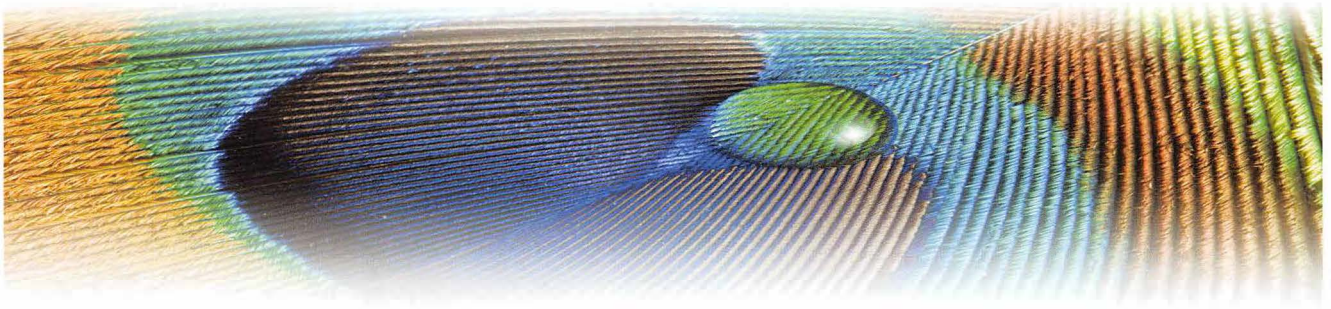
Among men, Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq ﷺ was the first to believe in the Prophet ﷺ and the first to offer the prayers led by the Prophet ﷺ. In fact, he was the first to embrace Islam among men, while ʿAli ibn Abee Taalib ﷺ was the first to embrace it among the boys and Khadeejah ﷺ the first among women.

Abu Bakr ﷺ was the Prophet's first supporter, and he soon assumed an important position in the newly-formed Muslim community. Especially characteristic of him was his unshakeable faith in Allah's Messenger ﷺ. On occasions when others doubted, for instance after the Prophet's account of his night journey (*al-Miʿraaj*) or when the pagans did not know what to make of his conduct (as on the occasion of al-Hudaybiyyah Peace Treaty), he remained unshaken. It is this faithfulness which gained him the surname of *As-Siddeeq* ('the great confirmer of the truth' or 'the champion of truth) which has constantly remained attached to him throughout the historical tradition of Islam.

His character was gentle. Whenever he read or recited the Qur'an, he would shed tears. His daughter ʿAa'ishah ﷺ related that he wept with joy at the news that he would accompany the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in his emigration to Madeenah.

He was shrewd and a man of agreeable nature. He was also liked and respected by everyone due to his wide knowledge, refined manners and delightful presence. Many people would come to consult him about many issues. He was the embodiment of good and was spotless, just and righteous. It is because of this that when the Prophet ﷺ invited him to Islam, he embraced it without hesitation. He feared nothing and took it upon himself to follow and adhere to the truth. He promised to lend all help and support to the cause of Islam and fulfilled this promise in the face of hardship and misery.

Many people, including ʿUthmaan ibn ʿAffaan, Talhah ibn ʿUbaydullah, Saʿd ibn Abee Waqqaas, ʿAbdur-Rahmaan ibn ʿAwf, and ʿUthmaan ibn Madhʿoon (may Allah be pleased with them) accepted Islam at the hands of Abu Bakr ﷺ. He purchased the freedom of several slaves. No sacrifice was too great in his eyes for the sake of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. He never left the company of the Prophet ﷺ. Amid the greatest dangers, he faithfully stood by the Prophet ﷺ, his friend and master. His life attained its highest peak when Allah's Messenger ﷺ chose him to accompany him when he emigrated from Makkah to Madeenah.



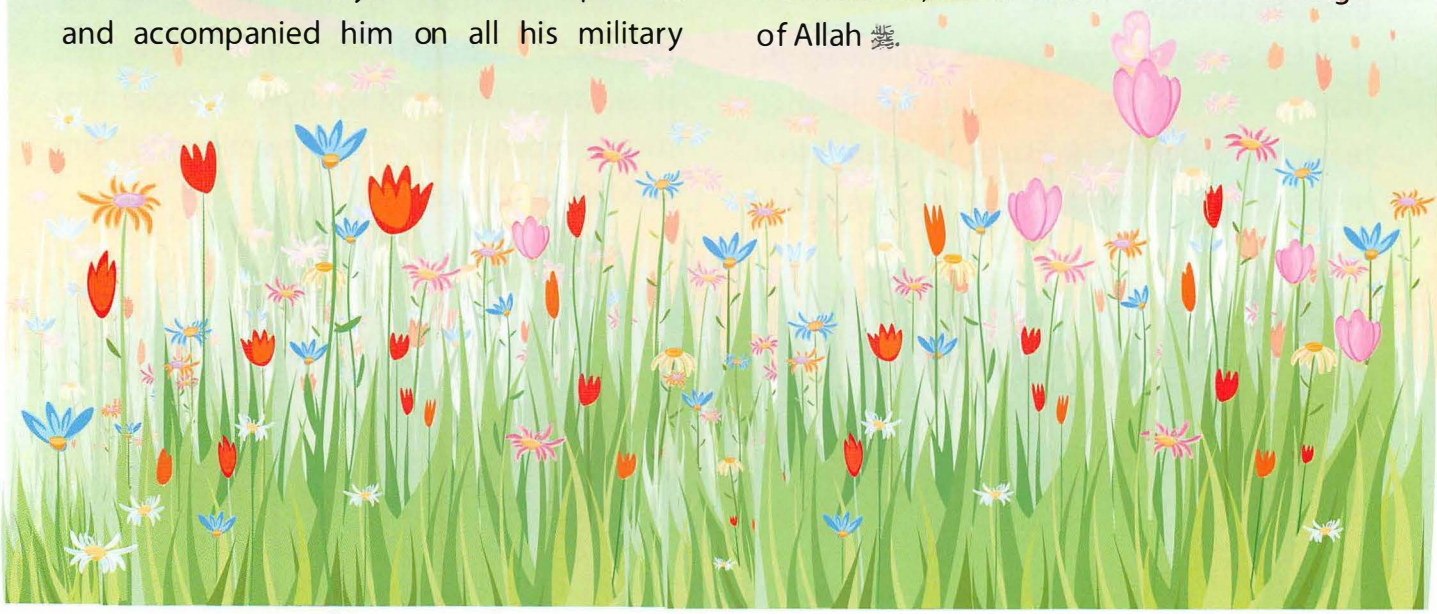
His self-sacrificing companionship was rewarded by his name being made immortal in the Glorious Qur'an as 'the second of two' (*Soorat at-Tawbah*, 9:40). On that very occasion, the Prophet ﷺ said to him, 'What do you think, Abu Bakr, of two people with Allah as their third?' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

Abu Bakr ﷺ never left the company of the Prophet ﷺ without his permission. He emigrated for the sake of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, leaving his family and business in Makkah, stayed with the Prophet ﷺ in the cave and accompanied him in every battle. His family also emigrated to Madeenah later with the exception of his son ʿAbdur-Rahmaan, who had remained an unbeliever and even fought at Badr against the Muslims before he finally accepted Islam and emigrated to Madeenah.

In Madeenah, Abu Bak ﷺ set up a modest household in the suburb of as-Sunh. Through his daughter ʿAa'ishah ﷺ, whom Allah's Messenger ﷺ married shortly after the *Hijrah*, the tie between the two was strengthened still further. Abu Bakr ﷺ was the most valiant. He was almost always with the Prophet ﷺ and accompanied him on all his military expeditions. The Prophet ﷺ entrusted him with a standard in the Khaybar campaign and later in the Tabook expedition. The Prophet ﷺ sent him to Makkah to conduct the pilgrimage in the year 9 AH.

Abu Bakr ﷺ was the most generous, the most learned and the wisest of the Prophet's companions. His knowledge of the Qur'an surpassed that of all other companions. This is the reason why the Prophet ﷺ delegated the task of leading the prescribed prayers to him during the days of his final illness. His memory was very strong indeed, and his knowledge of the Prophet's *Sunnah* was so deep that the Prophet's companions would turn to him to seek his opinion.

Abu Bakr ﷺ possessed a keen power of judgement and enjoyed the Prophet's company right from the beginning of his Prophethood until the end of his earthly life. These distinctions and outstanding qualities made it possible for ʿUmar ibn al-Khattaab ﷺ and his companions to choose Abu Bakr ﷺ as the head of the Muslim community, or caliph (*khaleefah*), the full title being *Khaleefatu Rasoolillaah*, the successor of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.



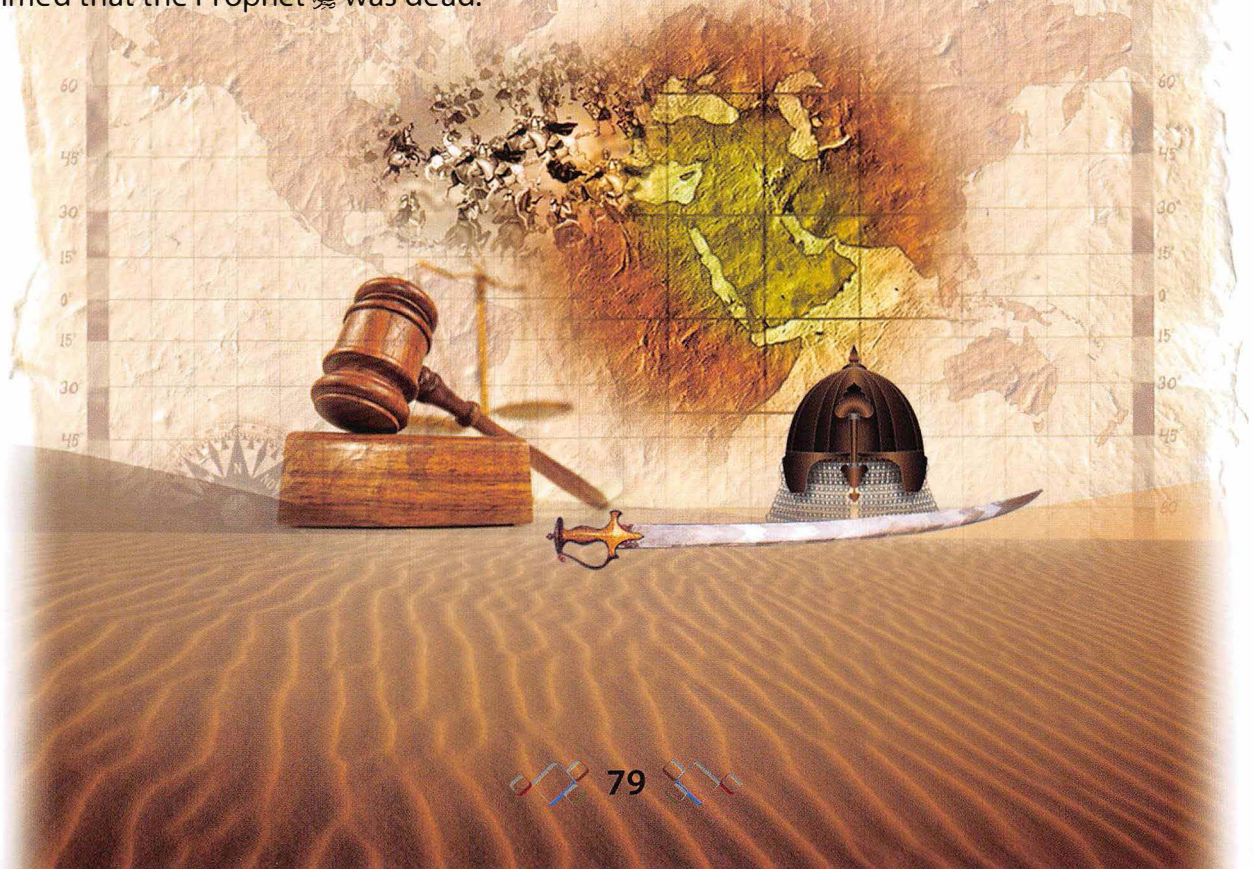
Caliphate of Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq

When the earthly life of Allah's Messenger ﷺ came to an end, news of his death descended on his Companions like a thunderbolt. They were stunned because of their intense love for him. Every one of his Companions thought that the Prophet ﷺ was more gracious and considerate to him than to any other Companion. Some of them could hardly believe the news of his death. 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab ﷺ rebuked the man who told him about the Prophet's death. He went to the mosque and addressed the people saying, 'He has not died. He has rather gone to his Lord, just as Moosaa عليه السلام had, remained absent from his people for forty nights, after which he returned to his people. By Allah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ will indeed return, just as Moosaa returned to his people.' Then 'Umar warned the audience that he would cut off the hands and legs of those men who claimed that the Prophet ﷺ was dead.

Abu Bakr's Bravery

When 'Umar ﷺ was speaking thus, Abu Bakr ﷺ arrived on horseback from as-Sunh, for the news had quickly spread over the whole oasis. Without pausing to speak to anyone, he went straight to his daughter's apartment and drew back from the Prophet's face the mantle with which he was covered. He kissed him between his eyes and said, 'You are dearer to me than my father and mother. You have tasted death which Allah has decreed for you, but after this you will never die again.'

By saying this Abu Bakr ﷺ was actually refuting 'Umar's claim that the Prophet ﷺ would come back to life. Reverently, he drew the mantle over his face again and went out to the throng of men whom 'Umar ﷺ was still addressing. 'Gently, 'Umar,' he said to him. Then, after giving praise to Allah, he said, 'O people, whoever worships Muhammad must know that Muhammad is indeed dead, but whoever worships Allah must know that indeed Allah is Living and will never die.'



Then he recited the following verse, which had been revealed after the Battle of Uhud:

> Muhammad is but a messenger, and messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn upon your heels as disbelievers? Whoever turns upon his heels will do no harm to Allah at all, and Allah will reward the grateful.' (*Soorat Aal-'Imraan*, 3:144)

It was as if the people had not known of the revelation of this verse until Abu Bakr ﷺ recited it that very day. They took it from him, and it was on all their lips. 'Umar ﷺ later said, 'When I heard Abu Bakr recite that verse, I was so astounded that I fell to the ground. My legs would no longer carry me, and I knew that Allah's Messenger ﷺ had died.'

This incident is the strongest evidence of Abu Bakr's bravery—if bravery is defined as having a firm and steadfast heart in times of hardships and calamities. In fact, there was no calamity that was greater than the death of Allah's Messenger ﷺ. May Allah be well-pleased with Abu Bakr ﷺ for helping save the Muslim nation from many hardships. He solved many of the problems that afflicted Muslims and understood the truth on those occasions when no one else did—not even 'Umar ﷺ.

As for the caliphate of Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq, it came about through the unanimous agreement of the Helpers (*al-Ansaar*) and the Emigrants (*al-Muaajiroon*). There was no disagreement about this at all. Abu Bakr ﷺ gave thanks to Allah and addressed the people, saying,

> I have been given the authority over you, but I am not the best of you. If I do well, help me; if I do wrong, set me right. Sincere regard for truth is faithfulness and disregard for truth is deception. The weak amongst you shall be strong in my sight until I have secured his rights, if Allah wills, and the strong amongst you shall be weak in my sight until I have grabbed from him the rights of others, if Allah wills. Obey me so long as I obey Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. If I disobey Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, then you owe me no obedience whatsoever. Arise for your prayer, may Allah have mercy on you.

Through his simple but sturdy character and strong determination, Abu Bakr ﷺ conducted the young state of Madeenah through the most difficult and dangerous times and left it at his death in such a firm position that it could support the rule of the powerful and talented 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab ﷺ.

Expedition to the Syrian Border

Abu Bakr ﷺ soon had an occasion for showing his unwavering resolve to carry out to the utmost the will of Allah's Messenger ﷺ in things both big and small. Just before he fell sick, the Prophet ﷺ had given orders for an expedition to the Syrian border in order to avenge the disaster which had befallen the Muslim army during the Battle of Mu'tah, in which Zayd ibn Harithah ﷺ, the army leader, fell. His son Usaamah ibn Zayd ﷺ, though still a young man of seventeen years, was nominated by the Prophet ﷺ to command the army. The camp, including all available fighting men, had been set up at al-Jurf, just outside Madeenah, on the Syrian road. Usaamah ﷺ had broken camp on the death of the Prophet ﷺ.

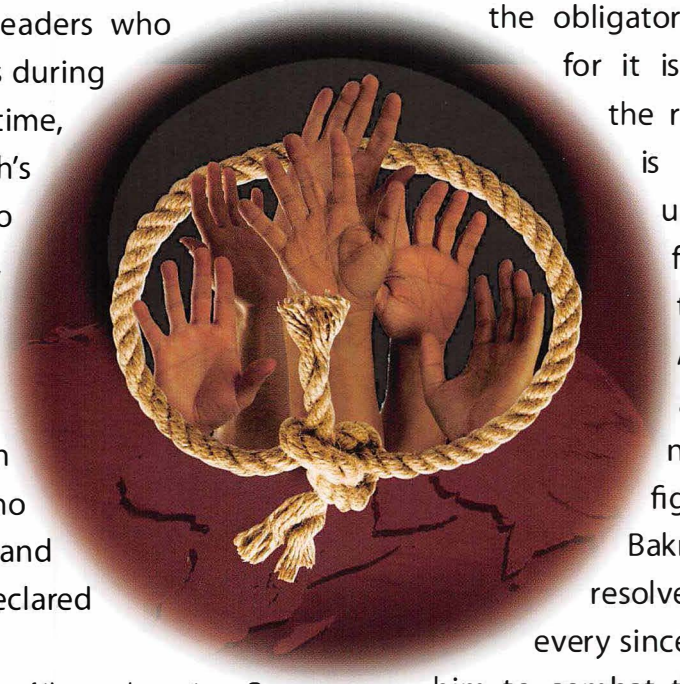
The next day, after Abu Bakr ﷺ was elected caliph, he took the banner and, restoring it to Usaamah ﷺ in token that he was still commander, bade the army to march to the Syrian border against the Romans. The sense of the army, and of Usaamah ﷺ himself, was against leaving the city defenceless and the caliph exposed to risk of sudden danger. But Abu Bakr ﷺ was firm. Calm and unmoved, Abu Bakr ﷺ said, 'Were the city swarming round with packs of starving wolves, and I was left alone, the force will still go; not a word from Allah's Messenger ﷺ, my master's lips, shall fall to the ground.'

When it was suggested that a more experienced general should command the army to the Syrian border instead of Usaamah, Abu Bakr's anger kindled and said, 'Never! will i appoint a man in the place of a man appointed by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ?'

While all was ready for the march, Abu Bakr ﷺ went to the camp and accompanied the army a little way on foot, saying, 'I will walk and soil my feet for a brief moment in the way of Allah Most High. Truly every step taken in the way of the Lord is equal to the merit of manifold good deeds and wipes out a multitude of sins.' After a while, he paused and said to Usaamah, 'If it is your will, give 'Umar leave that he may return to the city for strength and counsel.' So Usaamah ﷺ gave him leave. What a great discipline!

Abu Bakr ﷺ Handles Widespread Apostasies[1]

During the Prophet's twilight days, some of the hypocrites claimed prophethood for themselves. Among them was Musaylimah *al-Kadhdhaab*, that is Musaylimah the Liar. Now, sparked by the Prophet's passing, large-scale apostasy flared across most of the region. Some of their tribal leaders who had lost their positions during the Prophet's lifetime, followed Musaylimah's example, giving rise to new false prophets, such as Tulayhah ibn Khuwaylid and the false prophetess Sajaah bint al-Haarith ibn Suwayd who married Musaylimah and accepted his self-declared prophethood. Tulayhah and Sajaah, however, later reverted to Islam.



The situation was so acute that some Bedouin Arabs, who had newly accepted Islam and were ignorant of its lofty teachings, refused to pay the *zakaat* (the purifying dues). This situation kindled Abu Bakr's anger and he insisted, 'By Allah, I will definitely fight anyone who makes a distinction between the obligatory prayer and *zakaat*, for it is an obligation upon the rich. By Allah, if there is even a single cord, used for hobbling the feet of camels, which they used to give to Allah's Messenger ﷺ as *zakaat* but have now withheld, I would fight them over it.' Abu Bakr ﷺ stood alone in his resolve, like a firm rock, till every sincere believer sided with him to combat these apostates – the deserters of faith.

1- Apostasies is the plural form of the word apostasy. Generally, apostasy denotes rejection or desertion of one's religious faith.

Abu Bakr ﷺ hurried to Dhul-Qassah, some nine kilometres away from Madeenah. He summoned all the available troops of the Muslim army and distributed them into eleven regiments. He then appointed a distinguished commander for each, along with a banner and a specific target and fought the rebellious tribes and false prophets.

Of these, perhaps the biggest and the fiercest battle was waged in Yamaamah against Musaylimah who enjoyed very strong tribal ties in the area and whose forces exceeded forty thousand men armed to the teeth. ʿIkrimah ibn Abu Jahl was sent to fight him, but because of his limited success, he was despatched to some other territory. The army was instructed to wait for the arrival of a new commander, Khaalid ibn al-Waleed ﷺ, who, by the Grace of Allah, inflicted a crushing defeat on Musaylimah's formidable forces. Following the Prophet's example, Abu Bakr ﷺ treated the vanquished mercifully, and thus helped restore peace in the country.

Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq ﷺ and the Compilation of the Qur'an

During the Battle of Yamaamah against Musaylimah the Liar, around seventy Companions, who had memorized the Qur'an, were martyred. This battle took place in the year 12 AH. The martyrdom of such a large number of memorizers of the Qur'an alarmed ʿUmar ﷺ, so he went to Abu Bakr ﷺ and said, 'Many of the memorizers of the Qur'an have been martyred, and I am worried that more might be killed in the forthcoming battles. This will certainly lead to the loss of the Qur'an unless you compile it.' ʿUmar ﷺ not only realised the danger of this great loss, but also proposed a solution.

Abu Bakr ﷺ replied, 'How can I do something which Allah's Messenger ﷺ did not do?' Abu Bakr ﷺ could not even think of undertaking a project that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had neither done nor commanded to be done. ʿUmar, however, continued to convince him and made him aware of the merits of such an idea, and Abu Bakr ﷺ finally realised the importance of such a project and agreed to undertake it. Therefore, they both decided to put Zayd ibn Thaabit ﷺ in charge of collecting the entire Qur'an in one manuscript.

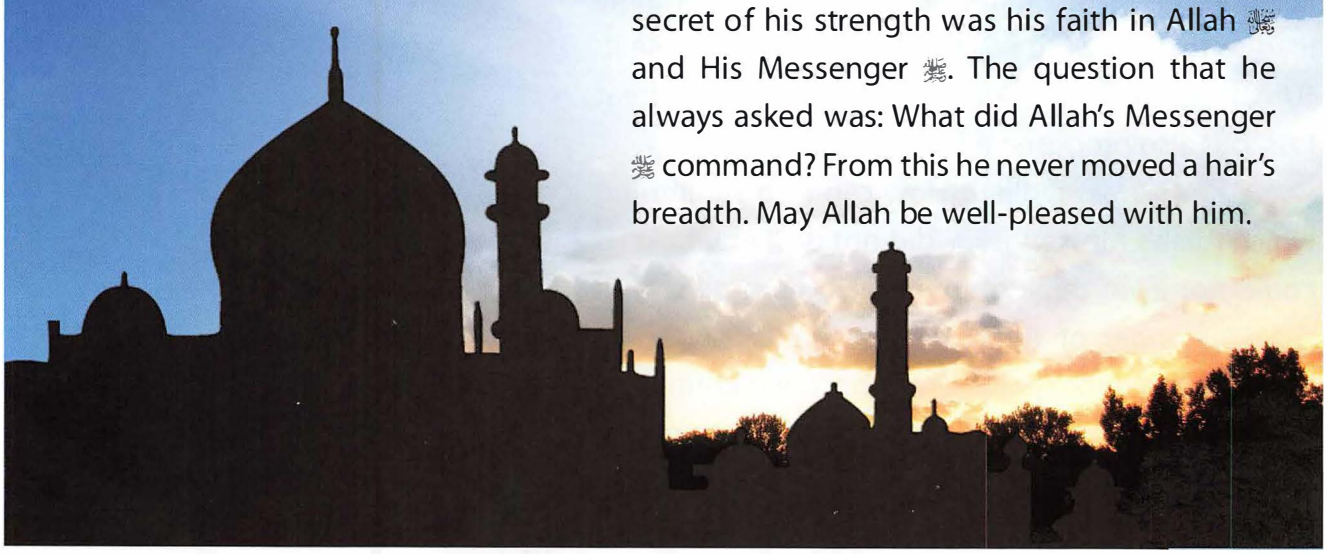
Zayd ibn Thaabit ﷺ was actually the person best suited for this demanding task, so he set about collecting the various fragments of the Qur'an from 'pieces of wood and the breasts of people'. People brought him the scraps and parchments upon which they had written the Qur'an. Now for the first time, the Qur'an was compiled in the form of one book, barely two years after the death of the Prophet ﷺ when all of the prominent Companions were still alive. The written copy of the Qur'an was called a *Muṣ-ḥaf*, which remained with Abu Bakr ﷺ and, after his death, with 'Umar ﷺ, then with Ḥafṣah, the daughter of 'Umar and a wife of the Prophet ﷺ. Thus the Qur'an was preserved in its entirety, and none of its verses was lost or omitted. By doing this, Abu Bakr ﷺ accomplished a momentous task. In fact, he was the first person to compile the Book of Allah.

Abu Bakr ﷺ died on the 22nd *Jumaadaa al-Aakhirah*, in the year 13 AH and was buried beside the Prophet ﷺ. His short reign of about two years and six months was mostly taken up by wars. During his caliphate, Syria and Palestine, as well as much of Iraq, were added to the Islamic lands.

Personality

As caliph, Abu Bakr ﷺ lived as simply as before, at first in his house in as-Sunḥ and subsequently, when the distance became inconvenient, in the town itself.

Tradition gives us a good description of Abu Bakr's appearance: he was somewhat short in stature, with a thin face, scanty fair, aquiline and sharp nose, a high forehead, deep-seated eyes and a mild, but a wise and resolute expression. His countenance was handsome despite his old age. To him, faith in the Prophet ﷺ had become second nature. The grand secret of his strength was his faith in Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ. The question that he always asked was: What did Allah's Messenger ﷺ command? From this he never moved a hair's breadth. May Allah be well-pleased with him.



3.2. ʿUmar ibn al-Khattaab ﷺ: *al-Faarooq* – The Second of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs

His full name was ʿUmar ibn al-Khattaab Abu Hafs al-Qurashee al-ʿAdawee. It is authentically reported that the Prophet ﷺ once prayed to Allah that He would assist Islam by causing ʿUmar's reversion[2]. A day later, in *Dhul-Hijjah*, in the year 6 AH, ʿUmar ﷺ embraced Islam. He was then twenty-six years old. The Quraysh regarded his reversion as a severe blow to their prestige.

2- The term reversion refers to the act of reverting, returning to a former practice, belief, condition, etc. According to the Qur'an (*Soorat al-Aʿraaf*, 7:172), the ability to perceive the existence of Allah and His Oneness is inborn in human nature, with which every human being is gifted from birth. It is worthwhile to mention here the famous saying of the Prophet ﷺ, which is recorded by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim, 'Every child is born in their original purity (*fitrah*), and it is but their parents who make them a Jew, a Christian or a Zoroastrian.' Hence, a person who embraces Islam merely returns to his original inborn, natural condition (*fitrah*). Reversion, therefore, conveys a deeper meaning, although the term 'conversion', which denotes change in character, form, function, spiritual change from sinfulness to righteousness, change from one religion, belief, and viewpoint to another, can also be used.

A Turning Point in the Fortunes of Islam

ʿUmar's acceptance of Islam was a turning point in the fortunes of Islam. In fact, his reversion added to the strength of the Muslim community, his emigration to Madeenah led to victory and his caliphate was a great blessing to the Muslims. ʿUmar's strong personality greatly increased the prestige of the small community of Muslims in Makkah. Muslims were not able to pray before the Kaʿbah until ʿUmar ﷺ embraced Islam. From that day onward, the influence of the Muslim community grew without interruption, until it reached its zenith in the majestic empire created by ʿUmar ﷺ.

The Virtues of ʿUmar ibn al-Khattaab ﷺ

Abu Hurayrah ﷺ reports,

> We were once sitting with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when he said, 'While I was asleep, I saw myself in Paradise, and lo, there was a woman performing her ablution by the side of a palace. I asked [the angels], "Whose palace is this?" They replied, "It is Umar's."' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

Once, Allah's Messenger ﷺ said to ʿUmar ﷺ, 'O Ibn al-Khattaab! By Him in whose Hand my soul is, if Satan encounters you in some way, he would certainly take a way different from yours.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

Allah's Messenger ﷺ Gave ʿUmar the Title of *al-Faarooq*

Until ʿUmar's conversion, the Muslims could not hold their prayers in public. However, after the arrival of ʿUmar into the fold of Islam, they were able to offer their prayers in the courtyard of the Kaʿbah.

Entering al-Arqam's house, ʿUmar found the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions, including Hamzah and Abu Bakr, still reciting and studying the Qur'an privately, lest the Quraysh should harm them.

But the outspoken and lively ʿUmar did not find secrecy and timidity to his liking. He did not rest content until he persuaded Allah's Messenger ﷺ and his Companions to appear in public and declare their faith and its commands before everybody. So the Muslims formed into two columns: Hamzah ﷺ headed one, while ʿUmar ﷺ headed the other. In fact, this was the first public presentation in history, and its efforts were outstanding. The Quraysh were overawed by the bold attitude of the small company of believers. It was because of the great role ʿUmar ﷺ played in the success of Islam that Allah's Messenger ﷺ gave him

the title of *al-Faarooq*, or 'the Distinguisher', that is, the one who distinguishes between truth and falsehood.

ʿUmar ﷺ participated in all of the battles of the Prophet ﷺ. He succeeded Abu Bakr ﷺ as caliph, led the defeat of the Persian and the Roman empires and managed to extend the rule of Islam from Iran to Egypt. During his ten-and-a-half-year caliphate, Iraq, Egypt and all the Arabian Peninsula were added to the dominion of Islam, and about twelve thousand mosques were built. He is known for his profound knowledge of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, and for creative insight into the Islamic Law. He has related 530 *ahaadeeth* from the Prophet ﷺ.

Once, Allah's Messenger ﷺ said of him, 'There were, before you men from Banu Israa'eel who were inspired without being prophets; and if anyone of them were in it my community, then it would definitely be ʿUmar.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

ʿUmar ﷺ laid the foundations of the new government and society. In fact, it was ʿUmar who established the Public Treasury (*bayt al-maal*) and offices of accounts. It was also ʿUmar ﷺ who regulated the Islamic Calendar. He introduced for this purpose the Islamic Year, commencing with the new moon of the first month, *Muharram*, of the year in which the Prophet ﷺ emigrated from Makkah to Madeenah. Hence, the Islamic Year was named *al-Hijrah* or the Era of Emigration.

ʿUmar's Character

ʿUmar's life requires few lines to sketch. Simplicity and duty were his guiding principles, and impartiality and devotion were the leading features of his administration. He was the caliph of a vast empire, but he never lost the balance of a wise and sober judgement. 'Where is the caliph?' the visitor would ask as he looked around the court of the Madeenah Mosque, and all the while the Commander of the Believers would be sitting in simple attire before him.

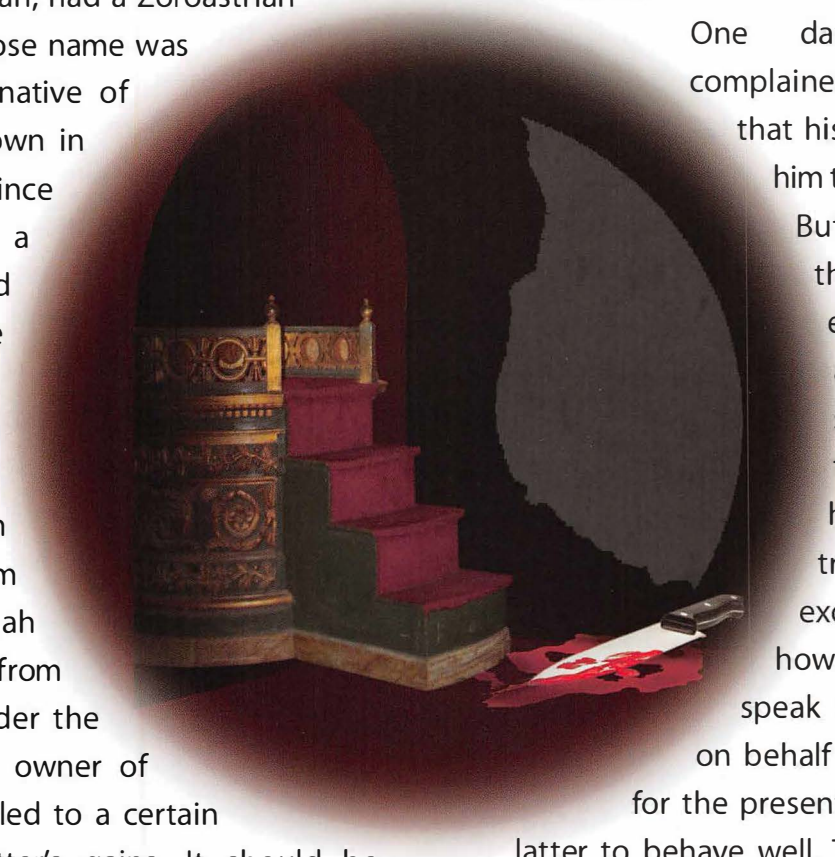
Responsibility so weighed upon him that he was heard to exclaim, 'If only my mother had not borne me; would that I had been this blade of grass instead.' His sense of justice was strong. Whip in hand, he would tread the streets and markets of Madeenah, ready to punish offenders on the spot.

But even with all this he was kind-hearted. Countless acts of kindness are recorded of him, such as relieving the needs of widows and

orphans; for instance, journeying in Arabia during the famine, he came upon a poor woman and her hungry, weeping children seated round a fire on which was an empty cooking-pot. ʿUmar hastened on to the next village, obtained bread and meat, filled the pot, and cooked an ample meal, leaving the little ones laughing and playing. ʿUmar was the first to assume the title of '*Ameer-ul-Mumineen*' or the Commander of the Believers.

ʿUmar's Martyrdom

Al-Mugheerah ibn Shuʿbah, the governor of Koofah, had a Zoroastrian Persian slave whose name was Abu Luʿluʿah, a native of Nahaawand, a town in Hamdaan Province in Iran. He was a highly skilled workman. He was a carpenter, blacksmith and sculptor. Al-Mugheerah wished to let him work in Madeenah and to profit from his earnings. Under the Islamic Law, the owner of a slave was entitled to a certain share in the latter's gains. It should be remembered that Islam gradually abolished the system of slavery completely.



Although ʿUmar ﷺ had previously forbidden any non-Muslim adult foreigner to enter Madeenah, the capital of the Islamic Empire, he consented to al-Mugheerah's request in the hope that the people of Madeenah would benefit by the Persian slave's skills. Abu Luʿluʿah set up his trade in Madeenah and prospered. Al-Mugheerah used to take four *dirhams* (silver coins) from his daily earnings, which was absolutely reasonable.

One day, the slave complained to the caliph that his master charged him too high a tribute. But, on finding that the Persian slave's earnings were far above the small sum demanded from him, ʿUmar held that the tribute was not excessive. ʿUmar, however, intended to speak to al-Mugheerah on behalf of the slave. But for the present, he advised the latter to behave well. This angered the slave, and when ʿUmar asked him whether he could build a windmill for him, he darkly and sarcastically replied, 'I will make for you such a mill that all the people will talk of.' ʿUmar realised that it was a threat, but he ignored it.

Abu Luʿluʿah provided himself with a double-bladed dagger and hid it in the mosque. On the morning of Wednesday, 27 *Dhul-Hijjah* 23 AH (5 November 644 CE),

he stabbed ʿUmar ﷺ during the *Fajr* prayer. Barely had ʿUmar pronounced the *takbeer* (*Allaahu Akbar*) when the Companions who had assembled for the *Fajr* prayer heard him cry out, 'The dog has killed me.' ʿUmar received several deep wounds. Abu Lu'lu'ah, a sturdy, bulky, coarse man attempted to escape from the mosque, stabbing anyone who stood in his way with his double-bladed dagger. In this way, he stabbed thirteen men, seven of whom died.

Seeing all this, a man from among the Muslims threw his *burnus* over him. A *burnus* is a hooded cloak and is used to this day by the Arabs in North Africa and in the Sahara. In the early days of Islam, it was widely used in Arabia. When Abu Lu'lu'ah knew that he was going to be caught, he killed himself with the same dagger.

In spite of his deep wounds, ʿUmar ﷺ took the hand of ʿAbdur-Rahmaan ibn ʿAwf and made him advance to lead the prayer. Those close to ʿUmar saw what had happened, but those in the remote parts of the mosque perceived nothing except that they missed ʿUmar's voice, and they started uttering the words '*Subhaanallah*' (Glory be to Allah). ʿAbdur-Rahmaan ibn ʿAwf ﷺ led the prayer, making it short.

It speaks a great deal for the discipline of those early Muslims that the turmoil caused in the front ranks by the assassination of ʿUmar and several other Companions did not break up the congregation. Only those who were in the front ranks moved from their places. The rows further down remained standing in prayer as they had been. The expression *Subhaanallah* (Glory be to Allah) is normally used when the followers of the congregation think that the *imaam* (the prayer leader) has made a mistake in his recitation or in the ritual of prayer. Controlled by their sense of discipline and regard for the prayer, the Muslims present in the mosque did not know what had happened in the front. They probably thought that their *imaam* had forgotten the words of the Qur'anic text he was reciting and paused too long to remember them.

'See who it was that has stabbed me!'

After the congregation had dispersed, ʿUmar ﷺ said to ʿAbdullaah ibn ʿAbbaas ﷺ, 'O Ibn ʿAbbaas! See who it was that has stabbed me.' So Ibn ʿAbbaas went round and then came back and said that it was the slave of al-Mugheerah who had stabbed him. 'That skilled craftsman?' ʿUmar asked. Ibn ʿAbbaas replied in the affirmative. ʿUmar then said, 'May Allah punish him. I had only done the right thing for him. Praise be to Allah who has not caused my death at the hands of a man who professes Islam.'

ʿUmar ﷺ was then taken to his home. It has been reported that when he later fainted and the Companions thought he was going to die that very moment, one of them suggested that they should recite the call to prayer (*adhaan*), for this was the thing which ʿUmar had loved most and it would revive him. They recited it and, sure enough, he regained consciousness, looked around and said, 'The prayer? By Allah, those who do not perform the prayers are by no means Muslims.'

Although he was profusely bleeding, ʿUmar ﷺ performed his ablution and offered the *Fajr* prayer which he had missed.

A drink made of dates was brought to him. He drank it, but it came out from his belly. Obviously, his stomach was perforated. Then milk was brought to him. He drank it, and it also came out through his wound. It was only when this happened that they knew he was going to die.

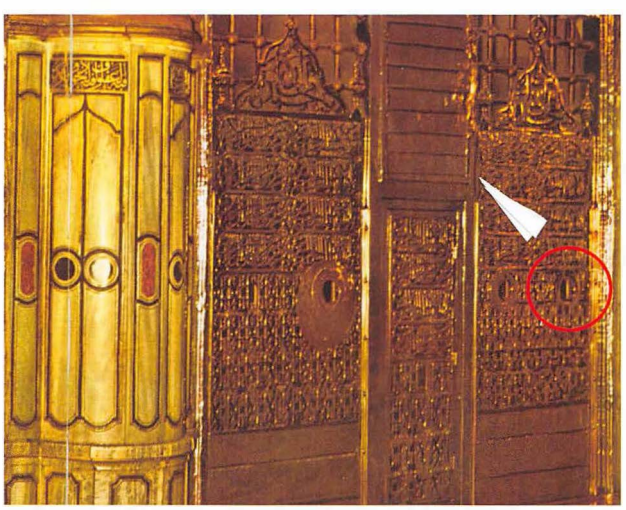
The Companions came to visit him and console him. ʿUmar happened to see a young man whose lower garment was touching the ground. He called him and said, 'Young man, lift your garment. For indeed, this is better for your dress, and wss more respectful towards your Lord!' It is characteristic of ʿUmar that even on his deathbed he did not cease to pay full attention to the religious injunctions and to advise his subjects in this respect.

Our teenaged jeans-wearing young Muslim men who drag their trousers on the ground should pause here for a few moments to ponder over this valuable counsel.

ʿUmar ﷺ then turned to his son ʿAbdullaah and said, 'ʿAbdullaah, find out how much debt there is on me.' It was counted and it was found that it was eighty-six thousand *dirhams* or so. ʿUmar had, in reality, spent it on several pilgrimages he had performed with a large following of poor people and for some State emergencies. ʿUmar ﷺ then commanded that it should be repaid on his behalf. It is clear that it was a personal expenditure. ʿUmar ﷺ could have rightly regarded it as having been spent in the interests of the community of which he was the head, but his uncommonly keen sense of responsibility demanded that the above expenditure, which did not come under any of the conventional budgetary headings (today we would reckon it as miscellaneous expenses), should be paid from his own means.

ʿUmar ibn al-Khattaab ﷺ then said, 'Go to ʿAa'ishah, Mother of the Faithful, and say, 'ʿUmar offers you his greetings, but do not mention the title "Commander of the Faithful", for I am no longer the Commander of the Faithful. Tell her, "'ʿUmar ibn al-Khattaab asks your permission to have him buried beside his two Companions."' By this he meant the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq ﷺ , whose graves were within ʿAa'ishah's chamber. ʿAa'ishah ﷺ replied, 'I really wanted it for myself, but today I will give him preference over myself.'

ʿUmar ﷺ died and then was laid to rest beside his two companions. In fact, ʿUmar was one of the ten Companions to whom the Prophet ﷺ promised Paradise in their lifetime. The caliphate of ʿUmar lasted for ten and a half years. (See Muhammad Asad's translation of *Saheeh Bukhaaree: The Early Years of Islam*, 1981)



personal scribes of the Prophet ﷺ and he had collected the Qur'an during the rule of Abu Bakr ﷺ. The members of the council compared the official copy of the Qur'an prepared during the time of Abu Bakr with the recitation of those who had memorized the Qur'an. If there was any difference in the pronunciation of any words, they consulted the people of the Hijaz who were more familiar with the language and dialect of the Quraysh. Thus, an authentic copy of the Qur'an was prepared. This definitive copy, once verified against the *suhuf*, was read to the Companions in 'Uthmaan's presence. With the final recitation over, he sent duplicate copies for distribution throughout the various provinces of the Islamic State.

The Number of Certified Copies Made

How many copies did 'Uthmaan ﷺ distribute? According to some scholars, eight copies were made, and 'Uthmaan ﷺ retained one for himself. The cities of Koofah, Basrah, Damascus, Yemen, Bahrain, Makkah and Madeenah each received a copy. With the task complete, the ink on the final copy dry, 'Uthmaan ﷺ commanded that all fragments of the Qur'an circulating in people's hands be burnt. People were pleased with 'Uthmaan's decision. No one voiced any objections whatseover. 'Ali ibn Abee Taalib once observed, 'By Allah, he did what he did with these fragments in the presence of all of us all [and none of us objected].' (M. M. al-A'dhamee, *The History of the Qur'anic Text*, p. 94)

No copy was sent without a *qaari'* or reciter. 'Uthmaan's main purpose was to eliminate all occasions for disputes in recitation. Uniformity of the Qur'anic text throughout the world for fourteen centuries, between all countries and all divergent Muslim sects, is proof enough of 'Uthmaan's matchless success in gathering all Muslims upon a single text.

The *Imaam*'s Manuscript

This is the name used for the copy of the Qur'an which 'Uthmaan ﷺ kept for himself and from which he was reading when he was martyred. There were traces of blood on it. According to some scholars, this copy is now kept in Istanbul, Turkey.

As Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah (1908-2002) states,

> The manuscript is preserved in Topkapi Museum of Istabul. It is attributed to 'Uthmaan. I have seen it myself. The page bearing the verse: 'But Allah will suffice you...'(*Soorat al-Baqarah*, 2:137) has red spots on it. It is said that it is the blood of 'Uthmaan who was martyred while he was reading the Qur'an. (*The Emergence of Islam,* Bhawalpur Lectures, published by Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad, p. 26)

According to Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah, who spent most of his life in Paris, the official copy of the Qur'an which was sent to Damascus by 'Uthmaan ﷺ is now preserved in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. How did it reach there? Dr. Hamidullah states,

> When Tamerlane (Taimoor the lame) conquered Damascus, the most precious treasure he came by in the loot was this copy of the Holy Qur'an. He brought it to Samarkand, his own capital, and preserved it there. (Samarkhand is now in Uzbekistan) The copy remained there until the Russians conquered the city in the nineteenth century. The famous copy of the Qur'an was shifted by the Russian Commander-in-chief to St. Petersburg (Present-day Leningrad).
>
> Russian historians suggest that it was sold by the ruler of Samarkand to the Russian Commander. The idea is to establish that the Russians had not stolen, but had bought the copy. In any case, it remained in St. Petersburg until the end of the First World War. When the Communists came to power, many who did not want to live under the new regime emigrated to different countries. One of them was 'Ali Akbar Topchi Bashi who went to Paris. I had an opportunity to meet him.
>
> 'Ali Akbar Topchi Bashi was a senior officer of the army when the Tsar was killed. He sent a commando force to take over the royal palace in St. Petersburg and seek out the rare copy of the Qur'an from the royal library. The copy was found and then sent to Tashkent in a railway engine compartment.

Dr. Hamidullah continues,

> When the Communists took over Tashkent, they did not transfer the copy in question to Leningrad, with the result that it is still there in Tashkent. During the days of the Tsars, fifty copies, based on the photo of the manuscript, were printed. I know about a few of them. One is in America; another in England. I saw a copy in Kabul. Another copy is in Cairo. I have its microfilm. (*The Emergence of Islam*, pp. 25-26)

3.4. ʿAli ibn Abee Ṯaalib ﷺ – The Fourth of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs

ʿAli ibn Abee Ṯaalib ﷺ was a cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet ﷺ and the fourth of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. His father, Abu Ṯaalib, was the son of ʿAbd-al-Muṯṯalib ibn Haashim. His mother was called Faaṯimah bint Asad ibn Haashim.

ʿAli ﷺ received the surname of Abu Turaab (the one smeared with dust) from the Prophet ﷺ whose daughter, Faaṯimah, he married. Once, ʿAli ﷺ and Faaṯimah ﷺ had a quarrel. SoʿAli intended to spend the night in the mosque. When the Prophet ﷺ asked Faaṯimah about ʿAli and she told him that he was in the mosque, the Prophet ﷺ went to him and saw that his wrap had slipped from his back which was covered with dust. The Prophet ﷺ set himself to wipe the dust from his back, saying twice, 'Get up, Abu Turaab (father of dust).' (al-Bukaahree) No name was dearer to ʿAli than this.

ʿAli ﷺ embraced Islam at the age of ten, shortly after Khadeejah ﷺ had embraced it. He was born in Makkah, twenty-three years before the *Hijrah* and was brought up from the age of five by the Prophet ﷺ himslef. ʿAli ﷺ was one of the ten to whom the Prophet ﷺ promised Paradise during their lifetime (*al-ʿashrah al-mubashsharoona bil-Jannah*). He was also one of the six men appointed by ʿUmar ﷺ on his deathbed.

When the Prophet ﷺ decided to emigrate to Madeenah, his departure was facilitated by ʿAli ﷺ, who made people believe that the Prophet ﷺ was still in the house he had occupied. He also stayed behind a few days in order to return the trusts people had left with the Prophet ﷺ to their rightful owners.

ʿAli ﷺ became renowned as a warrior during Islam's struggle for survival. He participated in the Battles of Badr, Uhud, the Trench (*al-Khandaq*), Khaybar and in nearly all the Prophet's military expeditions except that of Tabook, during which the Prophet ﷺ commanded him to remain in Madeenah in charge of the affairs there as well as the Prophet's family while he himself was proceeding on the Campaign of Tabook. When ʿAli ﷺ expressed his disappointment, the Prophet ﷺ said to him, 'Will you not be pleased that you are to me like Haaroon was to Moosaa?' (al-Bukhaaree) The Prophet ﷺ referred to the example of Moosaa ﷺ who left his brother Haaroon (Aaron) ﷺ in charge of his people when he himself ascended Mt. Sinai. ʿAli ﷺ is reported to have been highly gratified by this comparison.

ʿAli ﷺ himself conducted an expedition to Fadak against the Jewish tribe of Banu Saʿd, during the Conquest of Khaybar. He received sixteen wounds at Uhud, and on the day when Khaybar was stormed, he carried the banner, which was given to him by the Prophet ﷺ. Al-Bukhaaree records: Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, 'Tomorrow I shall give the standard to a man through whose hands Allah will grant us victory.' This is an incident of the Campaign of Khaybar, which took place in the year 7 AH.

Al-Bukhaaree continues,

> The people spent the night wondering to which of them it would be given. When the morning came, they hastened to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, every one of them hoping that it would be given to him. Then the Prophet ﷺ said, 'Where is ʿAli ibn Abee Taalib?' They replied, 'Messenger of Allah, he is suffering from an eye disease.' (ʿAli suffered from ophthalmia, which forced him to remain in the rear of the army.) The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Send for him and bring him to me.' When he came, the Prophet ﷺ blew into his eyes and prayed for him, and he was cured as if he had never been ill. Then the Prophet ﷺ gave him the standard. ʿAli ﷺ said, 'I shall fight them until they are like us, Messenger of Allah.' The Prophet ﷺ then said, 'Advance warily until you reach their quarters. Then invite them to Islam and inform them what duties will be incumbent upon them towards Allah. For by Allah, if Allah guides through you one single man, this will be better for you than to possess the most precious of camels.'

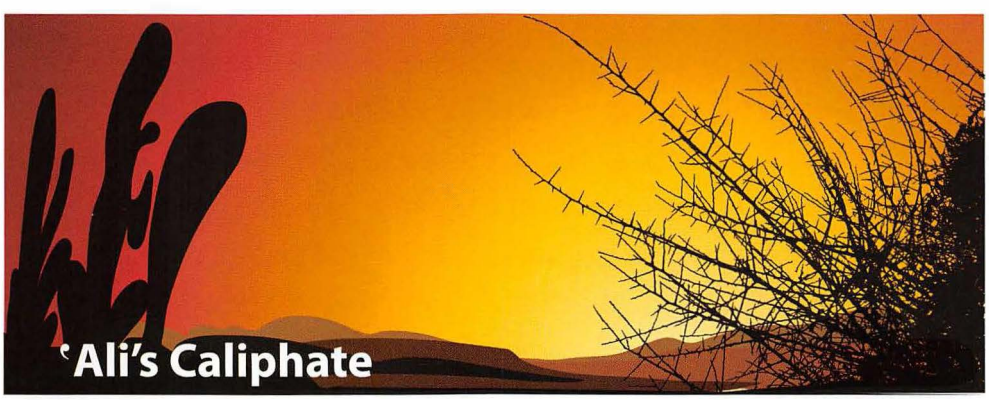
The expression used in al-Bukhaaree's above-mentioned *hadeeth* is *humr an-naʿam*, which literally means 'red camels'. The Arabs regard the camels of this colour as the best; hence, *humr an-naʿam* signifies

the high-bred or excellent of camels and is proverbially applied to anything highly prized, precious, valuable or excellent. The Prophet ﷺ wished to impress upon ʿAli ﷺ that the foremost duty of a person who strives in the cause of Allah (a *mujaahid*) consisted in the endeavour to bring the non-Muslim *enemy* into the fold of Islam before waging war upon him.

Once, Allah's Messenger ﷺ said to ʿAli ﷺ, 'You are of me and I am of you.' ʿUmar ﷺ also said, 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ remained pleased with him until his death.' (al-Bukhaaree)

After Faaṭimah's marriage to ʿAli ﷺ, she had no one in the house to help her. One day, she said to ʿAli, 'I have ground corn until my hands are blistered, and I have drawn water until I have pains in my chest.' ʿAli suggested, 'Allah has given your father a captive, so go and ask him to give you a servant.' She very reluctantly went to the Prophet ﷺ, but she did not find him at home. She only found ʿAa'shah ﷺ and told her of her desire. When the Prophet ﷺ returned, ʿAa'ishah ﷺ informed him of Faaṭimah's visit. Faaṭimah ﷺ returned home with some disappointment. However, when she and ʿAli went to bed that night, they heard the voice of the Prophet ﷺ seeking permission to enter. Giving him words of welcome, they both rose to their feet, but he said, 'Remain as you are,' and he sat down beside them. The Prophet ﷺ then said, 'Shall I tell you of something better than what you asked of me? When you lie down to sleep, say *Allaahu akbar* (Allah is the greatest) thirty-four times, *subḥaanallaah* (Allah is far removed every imperfection) thirty-three times, *al-ḥamdulillaah* (All thanks are due to Allah) thirty-three times.' ʿAli ﷺ used to say, 'I have never once failed to say them since the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught them to us.'

It was ʿAli ﷺ who advised ʿUmar ﷺ to adopt the *Hijrah* of the Prophet ﷺ as the starting point of the Islamic calendar.



ʿAli ﷺ was entrusted with the task of making representations to ʿUthmaan ﷺ on account of the complaints which came from the provinces. During the siege of ʿUthmaan's house, he supported him in every possible way. After ʿUthmaan's martyrdom, ʿAli ﷺ modestly refused to take power into his hands but he later accepted it; and on Friday 25th *Dhul-Ḥijjah* in the year 35 AH (656 CE) allegiance was paid to him in the Prophet's Mosque in Madeenah.

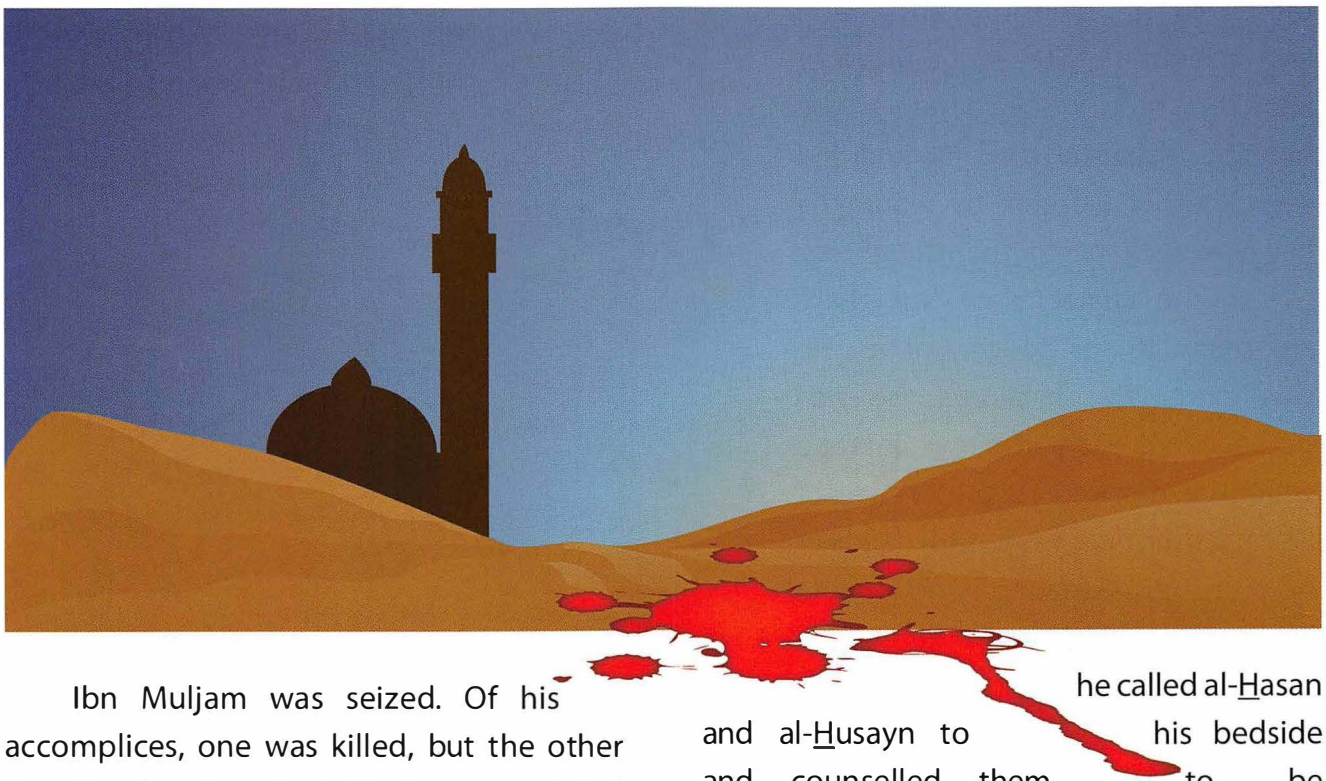
ʿAli was thus elected caliph at a time of unrest and mounting difficulties. Upon ʿUthmaan's assassination, the city was horror-struck, for people hardly expected the tragic end. For several days anarchy reigned in Madeenah, and the rebels and conspirators who had come from outside the city had the upperhand. No bed of roses was laid for ʿAli ﷺ. At home or abroad, difficult and demanding tasks lay before him. He was pressed to punish the men who had stained their hands with the blood of ʿUthmaan. Some people were extremely agitated at the killing of the aged and pious caliph that they demanded that the new caliph punish the killers immediately. Others wanted ʿAli to act more cautiously. They wanted him to address the problem of discontent first and then proceed to punish the killers of ʿUthmaan. ʿAli ﷺ had to decide which problem to address first. He wanted to punish the killers for taking the law into their own hands and killing the caliph, but he also wanted to strengthen his own position before taking such an action that was likely to weaken the caliphate.

However, before ʿAli could decide which course of action to follow, the situation worsened. He immediately had to face a rebellion led by Ṯalḥah ibn ʿUbaydullaah and az-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwaam, in which ʿAa'ishah ﷺ also took part. In the year 36 AH, ʿAli marched against Baṣrah, where Aa'ishah, Ṯalḥah and az-Zubayr refused to acknowledge him and he defeated them in the Battle of the Camel, which took place outside Baṣrah, in the north of Iraq. Many of ʿAa'ishah's supporters were killed and she herself was captured. But in accordance with her lofty station, ʿAa'ishah was shown proper respect and was escorted to her home in Madeenah. ʿAa'ishah ﷺ later felt a great remorse for waging the war. She repented to Allah and asked His forgiveness. In this battle, she rode in a litter on the back of a camel, hence the name of the battle between her and ʿAli.

In the year 36 AH, seven months after ʿUthmaan's martyrdom, ʿAli entered Koofah. He spent the first four months in Madeenah, the other three months in the Campaign of the Camel and briefly stayed in Baṣrah. It was now to be the seat of ʿAli's government. Then Muʿaawiyah, Governor of Damascus and a relative of ʿUthmaan rose against the caliphate of ʿAli, which resulted in the Battle of Ṣiffeen. When ʿAli was on the point of wining, he accepted the proposal of Muʿaawiyah to negotiate the conflict. This was because ʿAli wished to avoid further bloodshed. In any case, ʿAli could not conclude the struggle decisively. Nevertheless, he refused to surrender his authority and established himself at koofah in Iraq.

ʿAli's Assassination

In the year 40 AH, 661 CE, as ʿAli ﷺ was preparing to lead the *Fajr* prayer at the mosque of Koofah, he was stabbed by ʿAbdur-Rahmaan ibn Muljam, who carried out the evil deed at the demand of a woman who had made ʿAli's assassination a condition of marriage. Ibn Muljam, accompanied by two accomplices, waited for the caliph in a narrow passage and struck him on the forehead with a poisoned sword that penetrated to the brain.



Ibn Muljam was seized. Of his accomplices, one was killed, but the other fled in the tumult. ʿAli ﷺ was carried home with strength enough to question the assassin who was brought before him. Ibn Muljam declared boldly that the deed had been forty days in deliberation. ʿAli commanded his son al-Hasan to keep the assassin in close custody and said to him, 'If I die, his life is lost; but see that you do not mutilate him, for that is forbidden by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.'

During the day, one of the daughters of ʿAli, namely Umm Kulthoom, went into the assassin's cell and cursed him, adding, 'My father will crtrainly live.' The fanatic replied, 'Listen, I bought that sword for a thousand pieces, and thousand more it cost me to poison it. No one escapes its wound.' The wound was indeed mortal. The Companions asked the caliph whether it was his will that his son should succeed to the caliphate if he died. Still true to the elective principle, ʿAli ﷺ said, 'I do not commit it, neither do I forbid it, but I leave the matter to you to decide on it.' Then he called al-Hasan and al-Husayn to his bedside and counselled them to be steadfast in piety, resignation and kindness. After that he continued to repeat the Name of the Lord until he breathed his last. ʿAli ﷺ died three days after the attack at the age of sixty-three.

After the funeral rites, al-Hasan ﷺ summoned the assassin before him. Undaunted, Ibn Muljam said, 'I made a covenant with the Lord before the Holy

House at Makkah that I would kill both ʿAli and Muʿaawiyah. Now if you will, I shall go forth and kill the other or perish in the attempt.' Ibn Muljam was then put to death.

ʿAli's troubled and strife-torn reign lasted for four years and nine months. In his youth, he was one of the most distinguished heroes in the battles of Islam. For as long as he was alive, the Prophet's daughter, Faatimah ﵂, remained his only wife, by whom he had three sons (one of these, Muhsin, died in infancy), and two daughters, the progenitors or ancestors of the Sayyid race – the nobility. After she died, he married several other women, by whom he had eleven sons and fifteen daughters.

In the character of ʿAli, there are many things to commend. He was extremely chivalrous. He was gifted with extraordinary courage which he devoted to the service of Islam, performing wonderful deeds of heroism. He lived a simple and humble life, earning his living with manual labour. Faced with extreme poverty, he exhibited humanitarianism, charity, self-sacrifice and self-denial almost unparalleled in the history of Islam.

The sayings, letters and sermons of ʿAli ﵁ are collected in a book entitled *Nahj al-Balaaghah* (Peak of the Eloquence), which is considered to be the epitome of eloquence and one of the greatest masterpieces of Arabic literature.

Virtues of ʿAli ﵁

It was ʿAli ﵁ who first laid down the rules of formal Arabic grammar, notably describing language as being made up of nouns, verbs and particles. He had authority in Madeenah, and he was consulted on difficult questions. It was also ʿAli ﵁ who drafted the famous Treaty of al-Hudaybiyyah between the Muslims and the pagan Quraysh. ʿAli ﵁ was very pious and extremely generous. He often burdened his stomach with a heavy stone in order to diminish the pangs of hunger and gave away all he had in charity.

ʿAli ﵁ is reported to have transmitted 586 *ahaadeeth*, twenty of which were accepted unanimously by al-Bukhaaree alone and fifteen by Muslim. Not only was he a *haafidh* of the Qur'an, but he could also describe the exact occasion when any given *aayah* or verse was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ.

ʿAli's justice was enjoyed by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, the poor and the rich, the ruler and the ruled. Once, during his caliphate, he lost his armour, and a few days later he saw a Jew selling the same armour in the local bazaar. He accosted the Jew and told him that the armour was his. The Jew rejected his claim and insisted that he was the rightful owner of the armour. ʿAli took up the matter with Judge Shurayh who asked for witnesses in support of his claim. ʿAli produced two witnesses, his son al-Hasan and his freed slave Qanbar. Shurayh told ʿAli ﵁ that a son's testimony in support of his father's claim was not admissible in law and decreed that the Jew be allowed to retain the armour. Amazed and deeply touched by this exceptional display of justice, the Jew admitted that the armour indeed belonged to ʿAli ﵁ and embraced Islam.

It is not exactly known where the body of ʿAli ﵁ lies, but some believe that it is buried at the Great Mosque in Koofah.

A Word of Caution Concerning the Battles of the Camel and Siffeen

Concerning the battles ʿAli ﷺ fought against Talhah ibn ʿUbaydullaah, az-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwaam, ʿAa'ishah and Muʿaawiyah ibn Abu Sufyaan (May Allah be pleased with them all), we should adopt an attitude of strict neutrality towards these incidents, and indeed towards all the conflicts, contentions and controversies that flared up among the Prophet's Companions, because Allah Most High will remove this from their midst on the Day of Resurrection, as the Qur'an states,

> And We shall strip away whatever rancour may be in their breasts. As brothers they shall be, upon couches set face to face. (*Soorat al-Hijr*, 15:47)

Moreover, from his own perspective, ʿAli ﷺ was in the right in doing battle with them, because he was firmly convinced of the legitimate character of his leadership (*khilaafah*) to which he had been appointed by the general agreement of the group of Companions who had functioned as an Electoral College. Anyone who decided to back out at a later stage, and who actually took up arms against him, would of course be considered rebels, people in revolt against the duly appointed leader, so the leader would be quite justified in fighting them.

From the standpoint of those on the other side, notably Talhah, az-Zubayr, ʿAa'ishah, and Muʿaawiyah, the battle against ʿAli was fought because they believed that ʿAli ﷺ had been unsuccessful in finding ʿUthmaan's murderers and needed to avenge the death of ʿUthmaan, the rightful caliph who had been wrongfully killed as soon as possible. ʿAli ﷺ took his time to find the murderers of ʿUthmaan ﷺ as he was not really sure about them.

Thus everyone involved could come up with a plausible justification. As far as we are concerned, the best course for us is to adopt an attitude of strict neutrality towards this whole issue and to leave the verdict to their case to Allah ﷻ, for He is the best of judges (*Ahkam al-Haakimeen*). We should rather focus our attention on our own faults and concern ourselves with ways and means to purify our hearts from the root causes of sinful behaviour.

Coursework

1. **(a)** Why is the period leading up to the Prophet's birth in Arabia often described as *Jaahiliyyah* (period of ignorance)?
   (b) To what extent can this description be justified?

2. **(a)** Give an outline of the expansion of the Islamic empire in the period of the Rightly -Guided Caliphs.
   (b) Why did the Islamic empire expand so rapidly in this period?

3. **(a)** Examine the main religious beliefs and practices of the people of Makkah at the time of the Prophet's birth.
   (b) Explain how the Qur'anic teachings criticise any **two** of these beliefs and practices.

4. Discuss the significance of the event of the *Hijrah* to Madeenah in the development of Islam.

5. Give a critical assessment of the main events in the caliphates of:
   (a) Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq ﷺ
   (b) ʿUthmaan ibn ʿAffaan ﷺ
   (c) ʿAli ibn Abee Taalib. ﷺ

6. Explain how the Prophet's response to the main events during the early period of Islam in Makkah testifies that he was truly Allah's Messenger.

7. Explain how the policies followed by the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs:
   (a) continued, and
   (b) expanded the policies and teachings of the Prophet ﷺ.

8. **(a)** Describe in detail the main persecutions suffered by the Prophet ﷺ and his followers in Makkah.
   (b) Explain how the Prophet ﷺ reacted to these persecutions.

9. Give reasons why the following events are significant in the development of the early Muslim community:
   (a) the Battle of Badr
   (b) the Battle of Uhud
   (c) the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyyah
   (d) the Fall of Makkah.

10. Discuss the main reasons why the Prophet ﷺ faced fierce opposition in Makkah during the early days of his Prophethood.

Section B

The Glorious Qur'an

4. Its mode of Revelation, Compilation, Structure and Major Themes

4.1. Definition of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the Arabic Speech of Allah which He revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (47:2) through Angel Jibreel عليه السلام in its precise meaning and exact wording. It is the literal, uncreated Word of Allah. The word 'Qur'an' is frequently mentioned in the Glorious Book itself (See for instance 2:185, 10:37, 10:61 and 17:106).

The Qur'an clearly states to whom, when, in what language, how and why it was revealed: It was revealed in the month of *Ramadaan* (2:185) on the Night of Power or Decree '*Laylat-ul-Qadr*' (97:1): 'We revealed it on a blessed Night.' (44:3)

It was revealed in the Arabic language:

'Surely, We have made it in the Arabic language so that you may be able to understand it.' (43:3)

It was revealed in portions, each of which was written and committed to memory as soon as it was revealed, and its revelation was spread over twenty-three years of the Prophet's life, during which time he was occupied solely with the spread of its message:

> It is a Qur'an which We have divided [into parts from time to time] so that you may recite it to the people at intervals; and We have revealed it by stages. (17:106)

It is a divine message brought by Jibreel ﷺ who delivered it to the Prophet ﷺ who, in turn, delivered it to all mankind.

4.2. The Qur'an is the Highest Form of Revelation

Although the Gracious Qur'an was revealed piecemeal, the entire revelation is one whole. It is the Word of Allah revealed through Angel Jibreel ﷺ. Revelation takes place in three forms:

> It is not fitting for any human being that Allah should speak to him except by revelation, from behind a veil or by sending a messenger that reveals – by His permission – whatever Allah wills.' (*Soorat ash-Shooraa*, 42:51)

The first of these modes is called *wahy*, which is used here in its literal sense of *al-ishaarah as-saree'ah*, that is to say, a quick suggestion into the mind of man.

The Qur'an is unique. It is inimitable and is protected by Allah from all forms of corruption. The word Qur'an is a verbal noun which means 'the reading' or 'recitation'.

How did the Revelation come to the Prophet ﷺ?

Imaam al-Bukhaaree reports on the authority of 'Aa'ishah, the Mother of the Believers, ﵂ that Al-Haarith ibn Hishaam asked the Prophet ﷺ, 'Allah's Messenger, how does the revelation come to you?' The Prophet ﷺ replied, 'At times, it comes to me like the ringing of a bell, this form of revelation is the hardest of all upon me and then it stops from me and I have grasped from him (i.e. the angel) what he said. Sometimes the angel comes in the form of a man and talks to me and I grasp what he says.' 'Aa'ishah ﵂ said, 'Indeed I saw him when the revelation was coming down on him on a very cold day and noticed the sweat dripping from his forehead.' (Reported by al-Bulkhaaree)

The Qur'an is unique. It is inimitable and protected by Allah from corruption. The term Qur'an is a verbal noun which means the reading or recitation.

4.3. The Qur'an is Protected from Corruption

Previous revelations had been corrupted intentionally, but the Qur'an's final message to man is exactly the same in its present form as it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ more than 1400 years ago.

Islam teaches us that Allah created the entire universe, the angels, the *jinn* and then mankind in the persons of Adam and his wife. The history of humanity began with the disobedience of the first couple and their expulsion from Paradise, but Allah did not abandon them; rather, He promised to guide them by sending them prophets.

Adam ﵇ was the first prophet. Some of the prophets brought people Sacred Books from Allah: the best known were the Torah (*at-Tawraat*), which was given to Prophet Moosaa ﵇; the Psalms (*az-Zaboor*), which was given to Prophet Daawood ﵇; and the Gospel (*al-Injeel*) which was given to Prophet 'Eesaa ﵇. Many

additions and deletions had crept into these books, but the Qur'an has remained intact because Allah the Almighty has taken it upon Himself to protect it, as the Qur'an says,

> We have sent down the Reminder, and We will guard it [from corruption]. (*Soorat al-Hijr*, 15:9)

All the teachings contained in the former scriptures that were meant to be of lasting value and importance are included in the Qur'an. The Qur'an gives some specific accounts of what the pre-Qur'anic scriptures contained. The basic message of all the prophets of Allah, and hence all the scriptures they brought, was one and the same message from Allah to man:

> Indeed, We have sent forth among every community a messenger with the commandment: 'Worship Allah Alone and shun all false deities and objects of worship. (*Soorat an-Nahl*, 16:36)

Thus, the Qur'an not only preserves the essential teachings of the previous revelations but also sets out once and for all the eternal truth in its entirety. Indeed, it is a book that contains the essence of the revelations made to the prophets, preserving them so perfectly that the reader has no need to have recourse to other sacred scriptures which have undergone all forms of corruption.

The Qur'an, therefore, calls itself a '*muhaymin*' (guardian, watcher, trustworthy in highness and a witness over the old scriptures). (*Soorat al-Maa'idah*, 5:48) The adjective *muhaymin* literally means 'watching over', 'controlling', and 'dominating'. In this context, the Qur'an serves as the final, judging revelation. Thus it is the determinant factor in deciding what is genuine and what is false in the earlier scriptures.

Commenting on this word, 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali writes,

> After the corruption of the older revelations, the Qur'an comes with a two-fold purpose: **(1)** to confirm the True and Original Message, and **(2)** to guard it or act as a check to its interpretation. The Arabic word *muhaymin* is very comprehensive in meaning. It means one that safeguards, watches over, stands witness, preserves and upholds. The Qur'an safeguards 'the Book' for it has preserved within it the teachings of all the former Books. It watches over these Books in the sense that it will not let their true teachings be lost. It supports and upholds these Books in the sense that it corroborates the word of Allah, which has remained intact in them. It sorts out what is mixed with it by the people. What is confirmed by the Qur'an is the word of Allah and what is against it is that of the people. (Yusuf 'Ali, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary*)

All the essential points, in every respect, are given to us in the Qur'an. The Muslims, therefore, regard the Qur'an as the Most Sacred object on earth – Allah's Supreme Gift to mankind. It is an object of veneration and the foundation of human understanding of the universe and man's place in it:

> If all men and *jinn* were to collaborate, they could not produce its like. (*Soorat al*-Israa',17:88)

The Prophet ﷺ was authorized to challenge his critics and opponents to produce something comparable (*Soorat Yoonus*, 10:38). The challenge was taken up by more than one stylist in Arabic literature – with a predictable result. The style of the Qur'an is Allah's style – this is basically what forms the miraculous character of the Qur'an.

4.4. The Names of the Qur'an

Almighty Allah refers to the Qur'an by a number of names. These include "the Qur'an" (17:88), the Book "*al-Kitaab*" (*Soorat al-Baqarah*, 2:2), the Criterion "*al-Furqaan*" (*Soorat al-Furqaan*, 25:1), the Reminder "*ad-Dhikr*" (*Soorat al-Hijr*, 15:9) and the Revelation sent down "at-*Tanzeel*" (*Soorat ash-Shu'araa'*, 26:192).

Other references to the Qur'an are by such terms as an-*Noor* (the Light), *Hudaa* (Guidance), *Rahmah* (Mercy), *Majeed* (Glorious), *Mubaarak* (Blessed) and *Nadheer* (Warner), among other names.

The Qur'an: the Final Revelation

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was the Last Messenger ﷺ from Allah to mankind; he brought the final revelation – the Qur'an – from Allah to man. Therefore, the Qur'an is the last of the Holy Scriptures.

4.5. The Beginning of Revelation

The revelation of the Qur'an began in *Laylat-ul-Qadr* (the Night of Power) of *Ramadaan* (the twenty-seventh night or one of the odd nights of its third part) after Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had passed the fortieth year of his life, during his seclusion in the cave of Hiraa', on a mountain near Makkah, in the year 610 CE.

The first revelation he received constitutes the first five verses of *Soorat al-'Alaq* (the Clinging Clot):

> Read in the Name of your Lord, who created; created man from a clinging clot. Read! And your Lord is the Most Gracious One; He Who has taught by the pen; He has taught man that which he knew not. (*Soorat al-'Alaq*, 96:1-5)

The remainder part of this *soorah*, which consists of 19 verses, was revealed on some other occasion.

The Second Revelation

The second portion of the Glorious Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was the beginning of *Soorat Al-Muddath-thir* (74:1-5). The rest of the *soorah* was revealed later. This *soorah* consists of 56 verses.

4.6. The Last Revelation

Many Muslim Scholars are agreed that the last revelation was verse 281 of *Soorat al-Baqarah*:

> And fear the day when you shall be brought to Allah. Then each soul shall be paid in full what it has earned and none shall be dealt with unjustly.

The Prophet ﷺ passed away nine nights after the last revelation. Some scholars, however, hold that the following verse was the last verse to be revealed.

> This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. (*Soorat al-Maa'idah*, 5:3)

This opinion, however, is not sound according to many scholars who argue that this verse was actually revealed during the Farewell Pilgrimage.

4.7. Reasons why the Qur'an Was Revealed in Stages

The Gracious Qur'an was sent down in stages over a period of 23 years, and not as a complete book in one single act of revelation. There are several reasons for this, and the following are the most significant:

a) To strengthen the heart of Allah's Messenger ﷺ from time to time and whenever the need for guidance arose.

b) Out of consideration for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, since revelation was a very difficult experience for him.

c) To gradually implement the commands of Allah.

d) To make understanding, translation into action and memorization of the revelation easier for the believers.

It is established that the Qur'an had been memorized in its entirety by the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ during his lifetime. This tradition continued after the Prophet's death and later among all generations of Muslims that have followed, until today.

4.8. How Was the Qur'an Collected?

Although the Qur'an was revealed in portions, it did not remain long on that fragmentary condition. As its very name suggests, it was a book from the first; it could not be complete until its last verse was revealed; it was never without some form of arrangement. In fact, every single verse, part of a verse or *soorah* that was revealed had its own definite place in the Gracious Book. The arrangement of the Qur'an was thus a part of divine scheme. It has been established that the Qur'an had been written down in its entirety in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ but had not been brought together in one single place. However, the ordering of the Qur'an and the arrangement of the various *soorahs* was fixed by the Prophet ﷺ himself and safeguarded through oral transmission.

Whenever a *soorah* or verses of a *soorah* were revealed to the Prophet ﷺ, he would call one of his scribes[1] (those persons who used to write the Gracious Qur'an down) and say to him, 'Write such-and-such a verse in the *soorah* where such-and-such verses occur.' (Abu Daawood)

1- A scribe is a person who made copies of written documents before printing was invented.

In fact, if we keep in mind the use that was made of the Qur'an, we cannot for an instant entertain the idea that the Glorious Qur'an existed without arrangement of its verses and *soorahs* in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ. It was not only recited in the daily prayers but also committed to memory and regularly recited to keep it fresh in the mind. Therefore, if the arrangement of the verses and *soorahs* had not existed, it would have been impossible to recite it in the daily prayers, congregational or otherwise, or to commit it to memory. If the prayer leader (*imaam*) happens to make the slightest change in the place of a verse during the congregational prayer, he will immediately be corrected by those behind him!

The Glorious Qur'an thus existed in a complete and ordered form in the memories of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ during his lifetime, but no complete written copy of it existed at the time, nor could such a copy be made while the Prophet ﷺ was still alive and still receiving revelations. However, the entire Qur'an was safely preserved in the memories of his Companions who were called *Qurraa'* or reciters.

It so happened, however, that many of the reciters fell in the famous Battle of Yamaamah during the caliphate of Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq ﷺ, and it was then that 'Umar ibn Al-Khattaab ﷺ pointed out to Abu Bakr the necessity of compiling a standard written copy so that no portion of the Qur'an would be lost even if all the reciters died. This copy was compiled from the manuscripts written under the direction of the Prophet ﷺ himself, and the arrangement followed was that of the oral recitation as followed in the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Thus a standard written copy was prepared and entrusted to the care of Hafsah ﷺ, wife of the Prophet ﷺ and daughter of 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab. Later on, 'Uthmaan ibn 'Affaan, the fourth rightly-guided caliph ordered copies to be made from this standard copy. These copies were then sent to different parts of the Islamic state.

4.9. Divisions of the Glorious Qur'an

The Qur'an is divided into 114 *soorahs*. The term *soorah* (pl. *suwar*, generally written as *soorahs* here) literally means an enclosure or fencing, such as the walls around a city. It is also used to denote an elevated plain. When applied to the Qur'an, it signifies a specific group of verses, arranged in a specific manner. In technical language, *soorah* is the chapter-wise division of the Qur'anic text – a chapter or part set apart from the preceding and following text.

The Qur'an consists of 114 *soorahs* of unequal length, the shortest consisting of three and the longest of 286 verses, or *aayaat*.

The Arabic word *aayah* (pl. *aayaat*) means sign. It is the shortest division of the Qur'anic text, that is to say a phrase or sentence. The Revelation is Guidance from Allah to mankind. It is, therefore, not at all surprising to discover that its small divisions are called Signs (Signs of Guidance). The expression Verse is not accurate since the Qur'an is not poetry.

All *soorahs*, with the exception of *Soorah* 9, begin with the words *'Bismillaahir-Rahmaanir-Raheem'*. All 114 *soorahs* in the Qur'an have their names, which serve as a heading. Both the arrangement of the *soorahs* and the order of the *aayaat* within each *soorah* were determined by the Prophet ﷺ under the guidance of Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) عليه السلام.

Other Divisions of the Qur'anic Text

The Qur'an is divided into 30 portions of approximately equal length for easy recitation during the thirty days of a month. Each of these portions is called a *juz'* (pl. *ajzaa'*). *Juz'* literally means 'part' or 'portion'. Some copies of the Qur'an have the *soorahs* divided into *rukoo'* (sections or paragraphs). The *rukoo'* is usually accompanied by three numbers. The top number denotes the number of the *rukoo'* with respect to that particular *soorah*, the middle number indicates the number of verses in that *rukoo'* and the bottom number indicates the number of the *rukoo'* with respect to the *juz'* in which it occurs.

Copies of the Qur'an printed in Arab countries in particular have each *juz'* subdivided into four *ahzaab* (singular, *hizb*) indicated by the word *hizb*, printed in Arabic. Each *hizb* is subdivided into four quarters called *rub'*.

The Qur'anic text is also divided into seven parts of approximately equal lengths, each of which is called *manzil*, so that if a person wishes to complete the recitation of the Qur'an in one week, he may do so by reciting one *manzil* a day.

4.10. Makkan and Madinan *Soorahs*

An important division of the Gracious Qur'an relates to the Makkan and Madinan *soorahs*. After having received the first revelation, the Prophet ﷺ spent thirteen years in Makkah and then was forced to emigrate to Madeenah, where he spent the last ten years of his life. Hence, the *soorahs* of the Qur'an have also been classified, according to their origin, into Makkan and Madinan *soorahs*.

A *soorah* is said to be of Makkan origin when its beginning was revealed in the Makkan period even if it contains verses from Madeenah. Likewise, a *soorah* is said to be of Madinan origin when its beginning was revealed in the Madinan phase even if it has verses from the Makkan period in its text.

Out of the total of 114 *soorahs* into which the Glorious Qur'an is divided, 85 *soorahs* are, according to scholars, of Makkan origin. The Madinan *soorahs* are longer than the Makkan ones and, therefore, comprise a much larger part of the Qur'an.

4.11. Coherence in the Qur'an: *Nadhm*

Coherence (*nadhm*) denotes clear logical connection of ideas, arguments and sentences, among other things, so that together they make a whole. Every *soorah* in the Qur'an is a perfect unit with a central theme around which it revolves. The central theme is the unifying 'thread' in the *soorah*.

It is true that every *soorah* is a unit, but there also exists a logical link between all the *soorahs* as they follow one another. Between different *soorahs* there is also a logical unity and coherence.

With the exception of a few, all *soorahs* are found in the Qur'an in pairs that complement each other.

The concept of the pairing of the *soorahs* is original to Amin Ahsan Islahi (1904-1997). According to Islahi, the Qur'anic *soorahs* in their arrangement are, as a rule, paired. That is, just as, on one level, each *soorah* is an integrated whole and it is distinct from all the others, so on another level, all *soorahs* exist in the form of pairs, each of which is composed of two closely matched *soorahs* and distinct from other pairs. For a detailed and interesting discussion of this approach which is based on and evolves around the concept of order and coherence in the contents of the Qur'an, you may refer to *Coherence in the Qur'an* by Mustansir Mir, American Trust Publications, Indianapolis, USA, and also to *Pondering over the Qur'an* by Muhammad Saleem Kayani, al-Kitab Publications, London, UK.

4.12. What is the Qur'an about?

The Qur'an is the Word of Allah and a book of guidance. A question may arise here: Guidance to what? The answer is simply guidance to Allah, to His Most Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes, His Will and the way in which one may conduct oneself to attain His Good Pleasure.

The entire Qur'an, so to say, is the exposition of the Names and Attributes of Allah the Almighty. In other words, guiding the creation to understanding Allah's Oneness (*tawheed*) is the overriding objective of the Qur'an. Thus, one of the major objectives of the Qur'an is to teach the creation about Allah. The Qur'anic teachings about Allah's Names and Attributes are extremely essential for the strength and health of one's faith.

If one has knowledge and correct understanding of Allah's Names and Attributes, then one would never turn to anyone else or direct any form of worship to anyone other than to Allah. It is worth mentioning here that all that is in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ is also the exposition of the Qur'an. This guidance to Allah, the knowledge of His Names of Attributes and His Will and the guidance to right conduct, cannot be obtained by any means other than the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*: the sayings and the excellent practices of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

The Qur'an guides to the straight path that leads to Allah's pleasure and Paradise. It gives truth-seekers the proper concept of the truth as well as the willpower and the moral courage to produce a living model of that concept in real life. It helps them overcome the obstacles they might encounter from within or without. Thus the Qur'an is a book that is squarely aimed at man. Indeed, it is 'guidance for mankind' (*Soorat al-Baqarah*, 2:185), as Almighty Allah says about it.

It is in fact guidance for all the needs and benefits of the life of this world and that of the hereafter. It is first and foremost a Book of Guidance.

Allah also describes the Qur'an as light '*noor*' (*Soorat ash-Shooraa*, 42:52). Light shows us the path in front of us. In fact, it is through light that we can avoid the harmful things in our way and follow the safe path. However, this light is different from the light one senses in the physical world. It is a spiritual light whereby we recognize and understand what is of real benefit to us in this world and in the world to come. This light leads to the Straight Path and to Allah's Grace and Mercy. Nevertheless, this light is only beneficial to those who follow it.

The Qur'an speaks about the past, the present and the future. It also speaks about the unseen. The verses of the Qur'an may be classified into three categories:

(1) those related to the stories of the prophets and earlier communities,
(2) those related to commands and prohibitions, and
(3) those related to Allah and His Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes.

The Qur'an is Allah's speech. It is directly related to His noble attributes of greatness, mercy, forgiveness and knowledge. When we live our life according to the teachings of the Qur'an, we actually live it in a way that is pleasing to Allah – our Creator. Life in the shade of the Qur'an is, in reality, a life that brings one closer to Almighty Allah. Thus, there can be no doubt then that one of the major objectives of the Qur'an is to teach people about Allah – their Creator.

The Qur'an guides us in every aspect of our lives. It is undoubtedly one of the greatest blessings that Allah has given us. Among the most significant aspects to which the Qur'an guides mankind is good character and proper conduct. Speaking about the purpose for which he has been sent, Allah's Messenger ﷺ once said, 'I have only been sent to perfect good morals.' (al-Haakim, graded *saheeh* by *Sheikh* al-Albaanee)

When ʿAai'shah ﷺ was asked about the character of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, she replied, 'His character was the Qur'an.' (Muslim)

Thus, the Qur'an is not simply a book that makes people grow morally and spiritually. It is not just about imparting the human knowledge of what is right and correct. It also instils in their hearts and minds the feeling of heedfulness, fear, love and accountability to Allah that will make them do what is proper and correct. The Qur'an, therefore, vividly describes what will happen on the Day of Judgment to both those who are righteous and heedful of Allah and those who are evil.

Thus, once we realize this Qur'anic objective and sincerely strive hard to achieve it by reading and studying the Qur'an, Allah will certainly grant us knowledge and fill our hearts with heedfulness (*taqwaa*). In this way, we will become useful in our society as well as in the world at large. Our conduct and actions will change for the better, and we will call people to the way of Allah – the way of peace in the world.

Certainly, one of the objectives of the Qur'an is to show the believers how to protect themselves from all the forces of evil that are trying to distance them from their Creator. Allah cautions them concerning their own lower self (*an-nafs*, or soul) – an enemy concerning which most people would not be aware were not for the revelation of Allah and His guidance in this regard. Perhaps the clearest example of this class of teachings in the Qur'an deals with the devil, or Satan. The Qur'an vividly describes the ways and means of the devil. One such way is his appearing as a sincere advisor and well-wisher, as was the case in which he approached Adam and Eve although Allah had warned them about him, as He Warns the believers about in the Gracious Qur'an. (*Soorat al-Aʿraaf*, 7: 20-22)

4:13. Major Themes of the Glorious Qur'an

Oneness of Allah or the *tawheed* is the foundation stone of the Noble Qur'an. The principal purpose of the Qur'an is to teach mankind about Allah and His Oneness and Attributes. The Qur'an eloquently tells people about their Lord and provides answers to the basic human questions: who is my Creator and God? What is my relationship with Him? Why did he create me? In short, Allah tells people about Himself so they may get closer to Him and increase their love for Him and worship Him alone.

The Qur'an shows people the path and way of life that is pleasing to Almighty Allah. It teaches them what actions they must perform to please Him and what actions they must avoid in order not to earn His displeasure.

Thus the Qur'an is a book that develops and allows people to grow morally and spiritually.

Apart from the above-mentioned themes, some of the great themes developed in the Qur'an are: Prophethood and revelation, Satan and evil, people as individuals, people in society as a whole, the emergence of the Muslim Community, the People of the Book, life after death, the resurrection and Paradise and Hell.

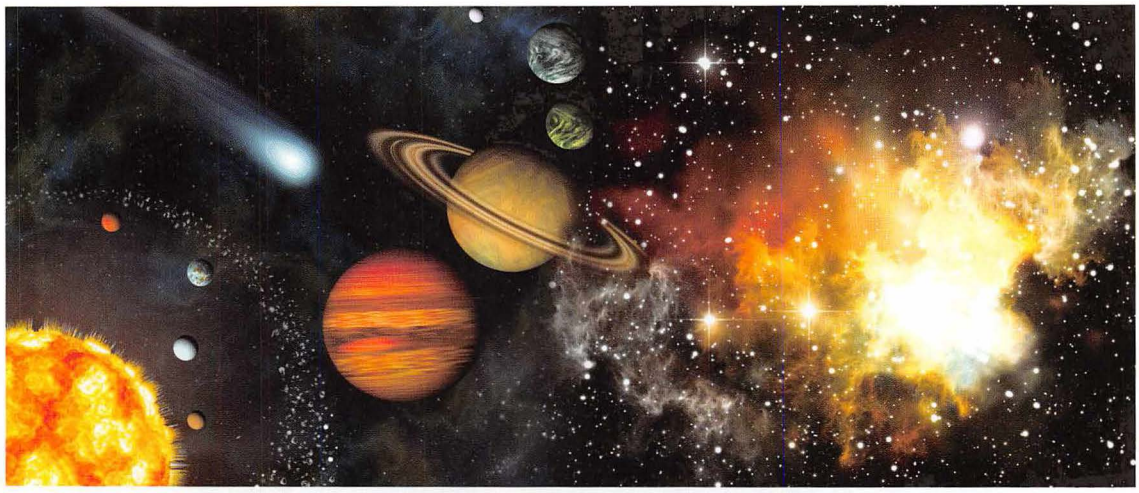
The Qur'an also describes the stories of several prophets. These stories contain very important lessons. After one of the longest stories in the Qur'an, the story of Joseph (Yoosuf) ﷺ and his brothers, Allah ﷻ makes a very important statement about the stories when He says:

> Indeed, in their stories there is a lesson for men of understanding.' (*Soorat Yoosuf*, 12: 111)

Thus, the Qur'anic verses explain in detail various meanings and discuss a variety of subjects. They expound Allah's Attributes, His mercy, His wisdom, the wonders in His creation such as the heavens, the earth, the stars, the alternation of the day and the night and the wonders in the creation of human beings and animals, among many other subjects. Some of them carry commandments addressing the heart, while others are meant for the limbs of the body to act upon. Some contain promises whereas others contain warnings or threats. Some speak of the ranks in Paradise, while others mention the levels in Hellfire. Some carry admonitions, while others help improve morals and spiritual

growth. Some deal with the history of past nations, while some others relate stories of the ancient nations.

In short, if you are honest about it, you will find that there is no book in men's hands that deal with so many subjects and themes and is as varied in its content as the Qur'an.



4.14. Scientific Miracles in the Qur'an

In fact, the Qur'an is not a book of science or technology. It is a book of guidance which principally aims at guiding people to the true God — Allah, helps them establish righteousness and create a virtuous society.

The Qur'an is the Word of Allah. Its matchless style and profound wisdom constitute some of its definite proofs. Furthermore, its miraculous attributes further prove that it is a revelation from Allah. One of these attributes is the fact that a number of scientific facts that have been discovered in recent years with the help of modern technology were stated in the Qur'an over 1400 years ago. These facts could not have been known at the time of the Qur'an's revelation. This conclusively provides further evidence that the Qur'an is the Word of Allah and categorically points to Islam's genuineness. In fact, many Western scientists have embraced Islam once they found out about some of these scientific facts in the Qur'an.

The Prophet ﷺ was not familiar with such scientific facts which were discovered only in recent decades. In fact, he was illiterate, which proves beyond doubt that only God must have revealed them to him. These scientific miracles relate to a number of matters including the following:

1. Embryology and human creation
2. Sensation of pain in the skin
3. Recent scientific discoveries concerning the intestines
4. The significance of the sense of hearing as compared with that of sight
5. The origin of creation
6. The miraculous nature of fingerprints
7. The miraculous healing honey provides
8. The detrimental effects of carrion, blood and pork
9. Health benefits of ablution, prayer and fasting
10. The Qur'an, a healing and mercy

Dr. Sharif Kaf al-Ghazal discusses these and many other scientific miracles in his brilliantly written book *Medical Miracles of the Qur'an*, which has been published by The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK.

The Glorious Qur'an

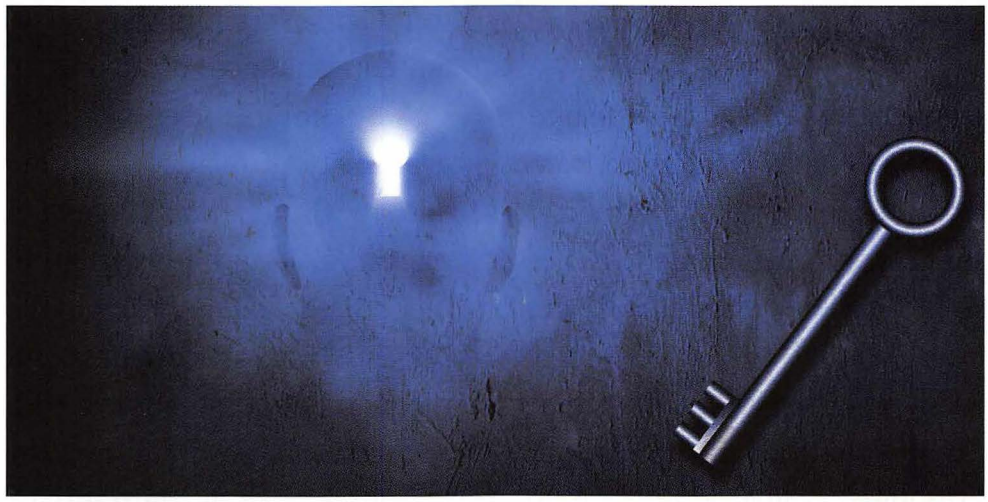
5. Detailed Study of Some *Soorahs* of the Qur'an

1. *Soorat Al-Faatihah* (The Opening) (1:1-7)

Translation of the Meanings of this *Soorah*

1. In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
2. All praise is for Allah, Lord of the worlds,
3. the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful,
4. Master of the Day of Judgment.
5. You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help.
6. Guide us to the straight path,
7. The path of those on whom You have bestowed favours, not of those who have earned Your anger, nor of those who have gone astray.

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾
ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾
ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾
مَٰلِكِ يَوْمِ ٱلدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾
إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾
ٱهْدِنَا ٱلصِّرَٰطَ ٱلْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾
صِرَٰطَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ
ٱلْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا ٱلضَّآلِّينَ ﴿٧﴾



Theme of this *Soorah*: Understanding the Key Concepts

This *soorah*, whose seven verses are the most often repeated verses of the Qur'an, introduces some of the most frequently used Names of Allah. The *soorah* expresses our heartfelt feeling of gratitude to Allah. The feeling overwhelms, or ought to overwhelm, all sensible people who are willing to ponder over Allah's providence and His limitless compassion, mercy and justice – visible in different forms and manners in life and in the universe around us. As Syed Iqbal Zaheer states:

> Any praise that is ever sung, whether for Allah Most High or for anyone else, in reality belongs to Allah. Who is it but He who makes the idea click in the mind of an inventor? Who is it but He who steers the brush-strokes of a painter? Who is it but He who flashes the right word in the mind of a writer? And whose creation it is but His, the material that they use, the laws they follow and the beauty that they imitate? In practice, therefore, when anything strikes us as good and beautiful, it is Allah Who must be remembered with gratitude, and it is He who must be praised.' (*Tafseer Ishraaq al Ma'aanee*, Vol. I, p. 7)

There is no god but Allah. Thanks belong to Him alone. He alone is the Owner and Sustainer of all creation. Thus, from the intense sense of gratitude, there springs a desire in the human being to worship and adore Allah alone, and to call upon Him alone for help and guidance. This *soorah* deals with the human quest and longing for guidance. It is in the form of a supplication. Its style is not didactic or instructional. It does not teach us how to supplicate. Rather, the supplication itself is made to flow on our tongue as a spontaneous hymn springing from the very core of our being.

Annotated Glossary of Key Concepts of this *Soorah*

Allah

The word Allah is used with the highest frequency in the Glorious Qur'an. It is the personal name of the Supreme Being who created the heavens and the earth and everything in this universe, and it is used exclusively for Him. The Oneness of Allah (*tawheed*) is the central theme of the Qur'an.

Ar-Rahmaan, ar-Raheem

Both terms, which are the most repeated attributes of Almighty Allah, are derived from the root *rahima*, meaning 'to show mercy'. Such attributes are often translated as 'the Most Merciful', 'Most Compassionate', 'the Beneficent', 'the Most Gracious' or 'Mercy giving'. However, these translations do not convey the full meaning of the terms, nor do they distinguish between the subtle differences in the meaning of *ar-Rahmaan* and *ar-Raheem*. It is important to realize that *ar-Rahmaan* denotes 'the exercise of mercy on the basis of free choice by one who is able to inflict severe punishment without fear of any consequences whatsoever.'

By contrast, *ar-Raheem* stresses the availability of Allah's mercy in all situations and to all creatures. People only need to appeal for it and it is certain to be granted. Indeed, it is given at all times without such appeals. There are countless aspects of Allah's mercy that people enjoy, and often without appreciation or gratitude. Thus the word *ar-Rahmaan* could be translated as 'Lord of Grace' and *ar-Raheem* as 'the Ever-Merciful'. The Name *ar-Rahmaan* is like a sky full of light; the Name *ar-Raheem* is like a warm ray coming from the sky and giving life to makind.

Rabb

This Arabic term literally means 'Sustainer', 'Master', 'Lord' or 'Nourisher'. The set of meanings attributed to the word *Rabb* can be summed up as follows:

1. Lord and Master
2. Sustainer and Nourisher
3. Ruler and Sovereign
4. Protector and Guider

Allah is the *Rabb* of the universe in all these meanings. Therefore, He should be thanked and praised for the favours that He has bestowed upon us.

Hamd

Hamd is generally translated as praise, but gratitude is also an integral part of its meaning. The more accurate translation would be grateful praise. Allah alone is the subject of *Hamd*.

Al-'Aalameen

The word *al-'aalameen* is the plural of the collective noun *al-'aalam*. *Al-'aalam* denotes this world and its plural refers to several other worlds. According to some scholars *al-'aalameen* refers to different species such as the angels, the jinn and human beings. Yusuf Ali states,

> There are many worlds: astronomical and physical worlds; worlds of thought; spiritual worlds; and so on. In every one of them Allah is all in all.' Finally, as we all know, everyone lives in a world of his own. The children, for example, live in a world of their own; and do the sportsmen; poets, and many others.

Deen

The word '*deen*', as used in the Qur'an, has several meanings:

1. Religion and law (*Soorat Aal-'Imraan*, 3:83);

2. The law of the land (*Soorat Yoosuf*, 12:76);
3. Obedience and submission (*Soorat an-Nahl*, 16:52);
4. Reward or Judgment (*Soorat ad-Daariyyaat*, 51: 6)

The term '*deen*' in the sense of reward covers both its negative and positive aspects: (a) reward for good, and (b) punishment for evil and wrongdoing.

The message contained in the words '*Maaliki yawmi-d-deen*' (Lord of the Day of Judgment) is clear: a day of reckoning or recompense is inevitable, and it will surely come to pass.

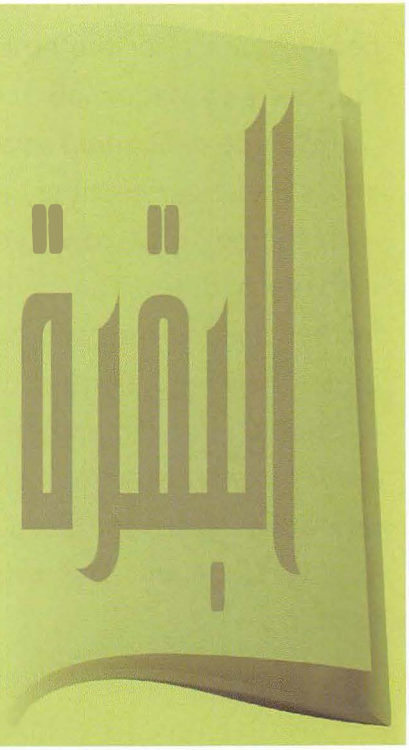
It is, however, important to note that this statement by no means implies that He is not the sole Lord of this world now. The Day of Judgment has been specifically mentioned here because His absolute lordship will be apparent to everyone that day when no one else will possess any authority besides Him to any degree whatsoever. He would proclaim: I am the king. Where are the kings of the earth? Where are the tyrants? Where are the arrogant?'

Allah is so just that He has appointed a day when people will be either punished or rewarded for their deeds. Allah is the Master of all the worlds and thus we should worship Him alone and seek refuge and protection with no one except Him.

We therefore pray to Him to guide us along His Straight Path, the way He guided those who received His favours and to save us from being misguided so that we do not deserve His anger.

2. *Soorat al-Baqarah* (The Cow, 2:1-193)

Due to small amount of space, it will not be possible for us to give here the complete Arabic text of the verses of the Qur'an under study as well as their translation. Many explanatory works are now available in English, which include the text of the Qur'an. You may consult them.



Soorat al-Baqarah: Central Theme

If we look closely at the end of *Soorat al-Faatihah* and the opening of *Soorat al-Baqarah*, we find that the relationship between these two *soorahs* is very much similar to a supplication and the response it evokes or the acceptance it receives. *Soorat al-Faatihah* ends with the words: 'The path of those on whom You have bestowed Your favour, not of those who have earned Your anger, nor of those who have gone

astray.' Immediately thereafter follows *Soorat al-Baqarah* with the opening words: '*Alif, laam, meem*. This is the Book about which there is no doubt, Guidance for the God-fearing.'

It is as if the divine guidance a person seeks in *Soorat al-Faatiḥah* is given to them straight away to abide by and follow in the next *soorah*. When a perceptive person of fine intellect and good taste sees such a sudden response to his supplication, they are naturally overwhelmed with a deep sense of gratitude and praise for Allah.

Structure of *Soorat al-Baqarah*

This *soorah* is entitled *al-Baqarah* (the cow) because it mentions at one point the story of the cow (see verses 67-73). The name of this *sooarh* does not, however, signify that the cow is its main theme. It simply marks it as the *soorah* in which the cow is mentioned. The greater part of this *soorah* was revealed in the earlier Madinan period, soon after the emigration of the Prophet ﷺ to Madeenah.

Soorat al-Baqarah may be divided into some clear sections, each of which with themes of its own yet interrelated with each other. The divisions may be further divided into sub-divisions which greatly help reflection and understanding. It should be remembered that such sections or sub-sections are not divinely laid down. Thus, the portion containing 193 verses could be divided into five sections.

Section 1, Verses 1-39 (39 verses): Fundamentals of divine guidance

Section 2, Verses 40-123 (84 verses): The Children of Israa'eel, the Muslim community in decline: the broken agreement and the diseases of the heart and character

Section 3, Verses 124-52 (29 verses): The handing over of the Prophetic mission to the Muslim Community (*Ummah*)

Section 4, Verses 153-77 (23 verses): Key personal qualities and attributes and the basic principles of *Deen* and *Shareeʿah*

Section 5, Verses 178-193 (16 verses): Legal aspects, criminal law and law of inheritance, a programme to develop *taqwaa* (heedfulness of Allah) in the believing community through fasting in the month of *Ramaḍaan*, fighting in the way of Allah in self-defence

Let us now take a closer look at these sections.

Section 1: Verses 1-39

Verses 1-19 describe the people who profit from the divine guidance (*hidaayah*) and those who do not. The *soorah* begins, highly significantly, by declaring its own divine origin and authority: 'This is the Book about which there is no doubt.' (Verse 1) In fact, this pronouncement is repeated quite often throughout the Glorious Qur'an, at the beginning of many *soorahs* and within the *soorahs*.

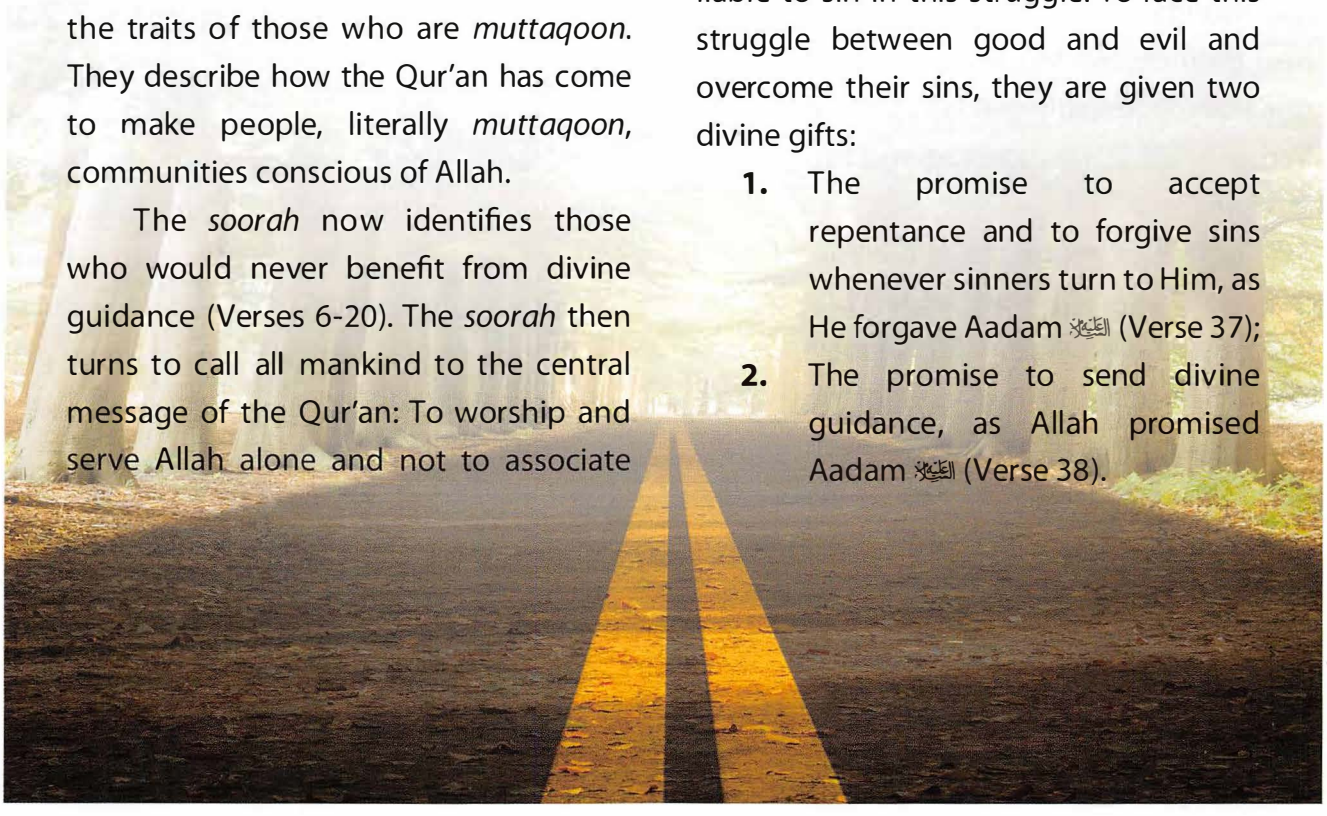
For what purpose has the Book been sent? To guide. Guide who and to what? To guide those who are *muttaqoon* (conscious of Allah), those who have the quality of righteousness, Allah-Consciousness, or *taqwaa*, to the path of Allah which leads to happiness in this world and eternal bliss in the hereafter.

Verses 2-5 lay out in some detail the traits of those who are *muttaqoon*. They describe how the Qur'an has come to make people, literally *muttaqoon*, communities conscious of Allah.

The *soorah* now identifies those who would never benefit from divine guidance (Verses 6-20). The *soorah* then turns to call all mankind to the central message of the Qur'an: To worship and serve Allah alone and not to associate any partners with Him in worship (Verses 21-2). To authenticate this message, it proceeds to establish the authenticity of the Qur'an, and hence that of the Messenger (Verses 23-5).

Verses 28-29 bring home the reality of life after death. Verses 21-29 offer a lucid summary of the entire Qur'anic message. Verses 30-39 take up the story of creation and thereby set forth detail by detail the Qur'anic worldview and its understanding of the nature of mankind. People are given knowledge and free will. Allah has established people on earth as successors (*khaleefah*), succeeding each other. People must, therefore, live within the limits and dictates set by Allah. While obeying the commands of Allah, people face a continuing battle to choose between good and evil. Since they are free and morally accountable, they are liable to sin in this struggle. To face this struggle between good and evil and overcome their sins, they are given two divine gifts:

1. The promise to accept repentance and to forgive sins whenever sinners turn to Him, as He forgave Aadam ﷺ (Verse 37);
2. The promise to send divine guidance, as Allah promised Aadam ﷺ (Verse 38).



Section Two: Verses 40-123

The discourse turns to Banu Israa'eel, the Jews of its time, for 84 long verses. It reminds them of Allah's blessings upon them and their thanklessness and violations of His commands—the major diseases of their heart, of attitude and behaviour, faith and practice. In short, it is a tale of their broken pledge with Allah.

The question arises: why does the Qur'an do so? Why does it deal with Banu Israa'eel in its very beginning, at such a vital point in its discourse and at such a length?

The primary objective of the Qur'an is to provide a mirror for the Muslims of all times, to hold up to themselves, to see a faithful reflection of their own condition and destiny. The Qur'an here delivers judgment upon Banu Israa'eel because of their failure to discharge their mission. Thus it provides the foundation to replace them with this new *Ummah*, the Muslim Community, raised under the leadership of Allah's last messenger, Muhammad ﷺ, to continue and fulfil Allah's mission.

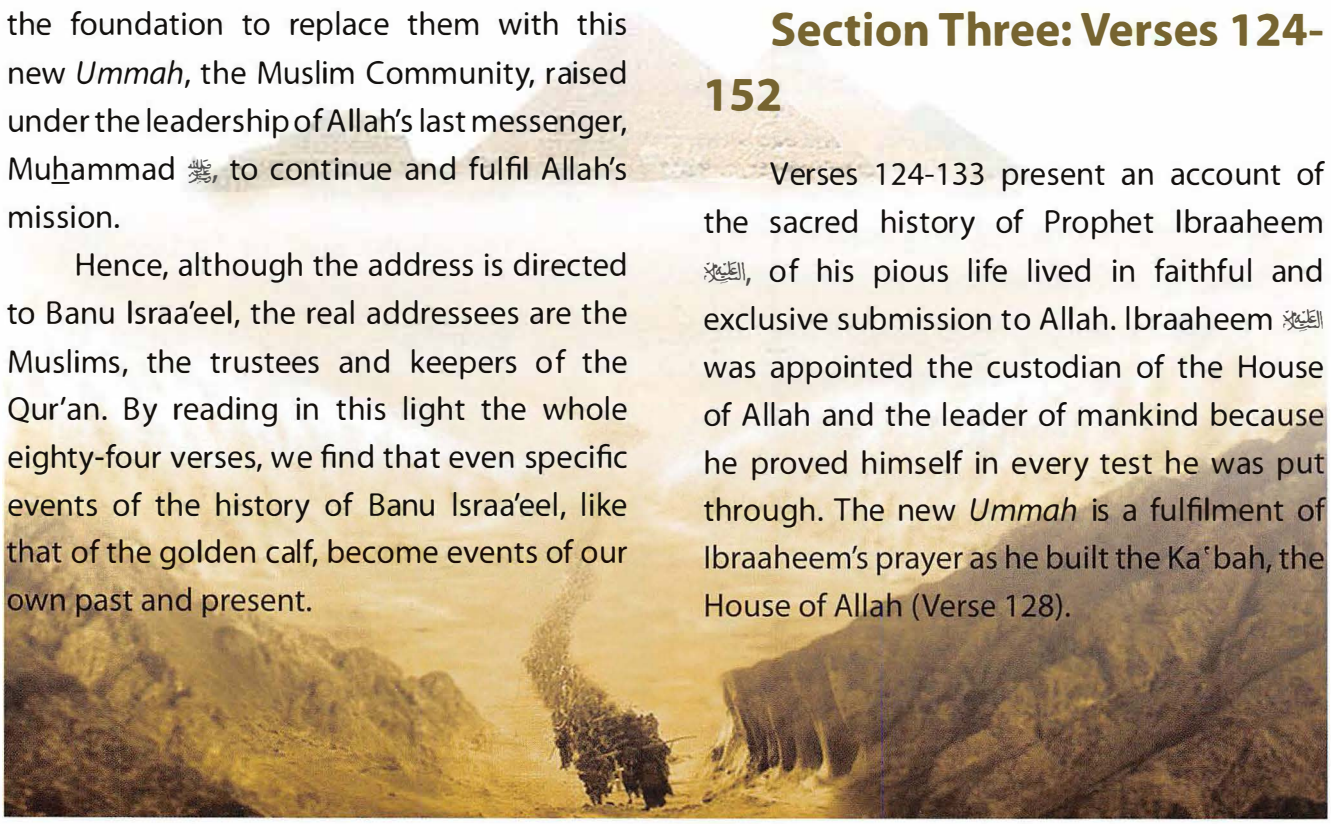
Hence, although the address is directed to Banu Israa'eel, the real addressees are the Muslims, the trustees and keepers of the Qur'an. By reading in this light the whole eighty-four verses, we find that even specific events of the history of Banu Israa'eel, like that of the golden calf, become events of our own past and present.

This section (40-123) also contains a general *da'wah* address to Banu Israa'eel. It provides invaluable guidance as to how *da'wah* to a declining Muslim community should be given and shows what wisdom should be adopted in *da'wah* and reformation.

Verses 47 to 74 remind Banu Israa'eel of various landmark events from their history and their corresponding behaviour. Each event offers a crucial lesson and deals with some central aspects of their life. Above all, all these events are arranged in a meaningful order. Verses 75 to 123 turn from the history of Banu Israa'eel to their current states of heart and mind, faith and conduct, attitudes and behaviour. Specially portrayed is their denial of and opposition to the last Prophet ﷺ. But, it is emphasized, that this is nothing new. It is only a continuation of a long history of such attitudes.

Section Three: Verses 124-152

Verses 124-133 present an account of the sacred history of Prophet Ibraaheem عليه السلام, of his pious life lived in faithful and exclusive submission to Allah. Ibraaheem عليه السلام was appointed the custodian of the House of Allah and the leader of mankind because he proved himself in every test he was put through. The new *Ummah* is a fulfilment of Ibraaheem's prayer as he built the Ka'bah, the House of Allah (Verse 128).



The description of the change of the *qiblah* – the direction of *salaah* – from Jerusalem to Makkah (Verses 144-50) signifies that transfer of the Prophetic mission to the Muslims.

Section Four: Verses 153-177

Verses 153-62 display the key personal resources needed to fulfil the pledge; for example *salaah*, fasting, pilgrimage and striving in the way of Allah.

The most essential resource is that one remains ever-mindful of Allah. One lives in His presence. One sees everything as being from Allah and because of Him and thus remains ever-conscious of meeting Him on the Day of Judgment. In short, one remembers Him as much and as often as one can, in every situation and every moment. The *salaah* has been prescribed for this very objective. That is why Verse 152 is immediately followed by the command to 'seek help with patience (*sabr*) and prayer (*salaah*)'. (Verse 153)

Sabr, or patience, is mentioned first. This is because *salaah* cannot be established and performed, individually or in congregation, without patience. Finally, the grave consequences of breaking the pledge with respect to the Qur'an are given: curse from Allah, from the angels, from all mankind, and abiding punishment in the hereafter (Verse 159-62).

Verses 163-77 speak of the important foundations of *Deen* and *Shareeʿah*.

Then come some of the most important principles of *Shareeʿah*. Firstly, all good things on earth are permissible except those things which are made prohibited (Verse 168). Secondly, the fact that the authority to make things forbidden rests only with Allah and with no one else (Verse 169). Thirdly, hence only a few things are declared forbidden by Almighty Allah, while everything else is allowed (Verse 173). Fourthly, the prohibitions can be relaxed in the face dire human needs (Verse 173). Fifthly, moral prohibitions are much more important.

However, the foundation of all obedience in life remains *taqwaa*, or heedfulness of Allah. Thus, Verse 177 gives a comprehensive definition of what *taqwaa* is.

Section Five: Verses 178-193: The Communal Life: Principles, Law and Institutions

Sanctity of life and property are the two foundations of unity and order in society. They are taken up in Verses 178-82. These are immediately followed by instructions about fasting (*sawm* or *siyaam*) during the month of *Ramadaan* in order to develop *taqwaa* or self-discipline to control oneself from overstepping and violating limits set by Allah in human relations (Verses 183-7). Hence, the command: 'Do not eat up one another's possessions by false means' (Verse 188).

3. *Soorat Aal-ʿImraan* (The Family of ʿImraan, 3:35-62)

Soorat Aal-ʿImraan is the third *soorah* following *Soorat al-Faatihah* and *Soorat al-Baqarah*. It is composed of 200 verses, and its central theme is very similar to that of *Soorat al-Baqarah*. It outlines the mission of the Muslim community that has been chosen to lead mankind. Thus the *soorah* helps to inspire them and to prepare them for this highly important task.

We would, however, focus our attention on Verses 35-62 (28 verses) only. The major theme of this section of *Soorat Aal-ʿImraan* is the family of ʿImraan which was chosen by Almighty Allah to serve His cause.

The family or house of ʿImraan was honoured by such luminaries as Prophet Zakariyyaa (Zachariah), Maryam (Mary), Yahyaa (John the Baptist) and Prophet ʿEesaa (peace be upon them all), just as Allah honoured the family of Ibraaheem ﷺ before them. Verses 35-47 narrate the story of Maryam ﷺ in great detail and explain how she came under the care of Prophet Zakariyyaa ﷺ.

The Qur'an informs us that the father of Maryam was named ʿImraan and the classical Muslim scholars unanimously accept that she was from the line of Prophet Daawood (David) ﷺ. Although the name of her mother is not supplied by the Qur'an, it is universally accepted as Hanna (Anne) the daughter of Faaqood. Again there were two Annas, the other being the sister of Prophets Moosaa ﷺ and Haaroon ﷺ. Hanna prayed to become pregnant with a male child, and then, when she became pregnant, she vowed that the child would be dedicated to the service of Allah at Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) (Verse 35). An additional event connected to the period of time during which Hanna was pregnant is the death of ʿImraan. Although the death of Maryam's father is not actually stated in the Qur'an, it can be logically deduced from Prophet Zakariyyaa's assumption of Maryam's guardianship, and thus generally accepted by scholars as a fact.

The vow made by ʿImraan's wife reveals to us the fact that she was a woman with a heart full of faith.

She, however, gave birth to a daughter (Maryam), not a son (Verse 36). She was hoping for a male child because only male children were devoted for service in temples, so that they may free themselves from any preoccupation with anything other than worship and prayer. According to the classical commentators, it was customary at that time to dedicate boys to the temple. They would stay at the temple, worshipping there and serving it until puberty, at which time they would choose to continue their service or not.

Hanna, however, made the offering with what she had and addressed her Lord in a sorrowful tone: 'My Lord, I have given birth to a female. The male is not like the female, and I have named her Maryam.' Qur'an commentators

record that even the name Maryam (Mary), which Hanna gave to the child is said to have had the meaning of 'The one who worships,' in their language *ʿaabidah*, a devout worshipper. This is a further indication of Hanna's dedication to her vow and of the nature of the future life of Maryam ﷺ. Subsequently, Prophet Zakariyyaa ﷺ became the guardian of this unique child, and thus Allah provided her with the best of spiritual guides.

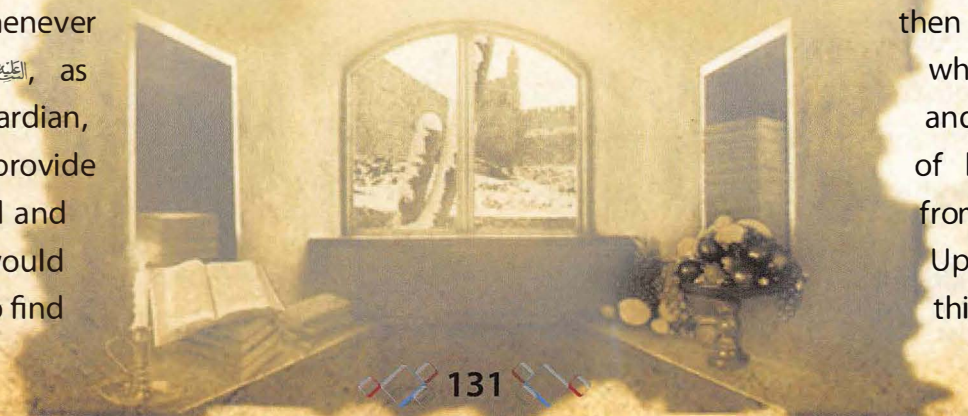
Zakariyyaa ﷺ then constructed a prayer sanctuary, a *mihraab*. It is interesting to note the word *mihraab* comes from the root *h – r - b* (*harb*), which primarily means 'to wage war' and signifies that corner of a house which is reserved for devotional acts – a place where one, so to say, fights the devil.

This is followed by the narration of the miraculous births of Prophets Yahyaa (John the Baptist) ﷺ and ʿEesaa (Jesus) ﷺ. The story of Prophet ʿEesaa ﷺ is also told in *Soorat Maryam* (*Soorah* 19), in which a lengthy account of his miraculous birth is narrated in detail, but not of his mother. It is significant to remember that the Qur'an describes itself as a 'warner', a 'guide' and a 'clarifier', not as a chronicle. Therefore, one should not expect to find a detailed biography of any of the great historical and Prophetic figures it mentions.

Zakariyyaa ﷺ alone used to enter Maryam's *mihraab*, locking the door behind him, when he departed. Whenever Zakariyyaa ﷺ, as Maryam's guardian, came to provide her with food and drink, he would be amazed to find that she had already been provided, not just with sustenance (*rizq*), but also with the best of sustenance, including the fruit of winter in summer, and that of summer in winter. Zakariyyaa ﷺ, observing those miraculous provisions and being aware that the door was always locked and that only he had the key, asked Maryam about who would possibly provide her with such food, and she replied, 'It is from Allah.' (Verse 37)

Upon seeing this recurring miracle, Zakariyyaa ﷺ was encouraged to pray to Allah that he and his barren wife would likewise be blessed with a son in their old age and, sure enough, the Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) ﷺ informed him that he would be granted Yahyaa (3:38-40). According to some scholars, Zakariyyaa ﷺ was 120 years old and his wife was 98 when Prophet Yahyaa ﷺ was conceived.

Meanwhile Maryam ﷺ continued her solitary worship in her sanctuary until she reached the age of puberty. When Maryam had withdrawn to the Eastern part of Jerusalem, the Angel Jibreel ﷺ appeared in the form of a perfect man in order not to shock her with his true angelic form, so that she would be able to accept what he was about to tell her. Nevertheless, Maryam ﷺ was frightened and prayed to her Lord for protection from this seeming mortal who was an apparent stranger. Jibreel ﷺ then explained who he was and the nature of his mission from Allah. Upon hearing this news,



Maryam ﷺ surrendered immediately to the will of her Lord, and Jibreel ﷺ breathed 'of the spirit of Allah', and at Allah's command: '*kun*' (Be!), and she conceived.

In keeping with the theme of the *soorah*, the story of the miraculous birth of ʿEesaa (Jesus) ﷺ is condensed here. But his message and the devotion of his disciples are described in more detail.

This account totally rejects the notion of Prophet ʿEesaa's divinity. In fact, it confirms his humanity (or the state of being a person) rather than a god and honours him as a Messenger of Allah. The House of ʿImraan was chosen by Allah from the Children of Israa'eel to convey His message to them. Thus, Prophet ʿEesaa (Jesus) was in the line of prophets sent to Banu Israa'eel, and His message to them, like all earlier messengers, was 'Be careful of your duty to Allah and obey me.' (3:50)

Prophet ʿEesaa ﷺ declares,

> I have indeed come to you with a sign from your Lord in that I form for you out of clay the like of a bird, and I blow into it, and so it becomes a bird – by Allah's permission. I heal those born blind and the leper; and bring to life the dead – by Allah's permission. I also disclose to you what you eat and what you store in your houses. Surely, in this, is a sign for you if you are believers. (Verse 49)

He also proclaims:

> Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him alone. That is a straight path. (Verse 51)

Thus Verses 48 to 63 provide the proof to his humanity, his prophethood as well as his miracles to convince Banu Israa'eel of the truth of his assignment from Allah. Yet they denied him and even plotted to kill him, but Allah ﷻ raised him to Him and saved him from their scheming. (3:55) The whole issue of attributing divinity to ʿEesaa ﷺ is resolved by the following verse:

> The likeness of ʿEesaa in Allah's sight is similar to that of Aadam whom He created out of dust and then said to him: 'Be' and he was. (3:59)

However, his followers lost his teachings and attributed divinity to him. They were challenged to a *mabaahalah* (mutual invocation of Allah's curse upon those who are telling a lie) to determine who was telling the truth. This takes place by praying humbly together to Allah and invoking His wrath and curse on those who lie. (3:61)

This was later proposed to a delegation of Christians who visited the Prophet ﷺ in Madeenah in 9 AH – 630 CE. However, the Christian delegation refused to take part in the joint prayer to establish the truth regarding ʿEesaa's divinity or his true nature.

According to all the reliable authorities, Verses 59-63 of this *soorah* were revealed in the year 9 AH on the occasion of a dialogue between the Prophet ﷺ and a deputation of the Christians of Najran who, like all other Christians, maintained that Jesus ﷺ was the 'son of God' and therefore, 'God Incarnate'. Although they refused the trial 'through prayer' (*mubaahalah*) the Prophet ﷺ proposed to them, he accorded to them a treaty promising all their civic rights and the free exercises of their religion.

4. *Soorat al-Anbiyaaa'* (The Prophets, 21:51-112)

This *soorah* was revealed towards the end of the Makkan period and takes its title from the fact that sixteen prophets are mentioned in it by name, with brief accounts of parts of their history. More space, however, is devoted to the story of Prophet Ibraaheem ﷺ (Verses 51-73). The *soorah* then talks of Prophet Loot (Verses 74-75). We also get a glimpse of Prophet Nooh ﷺ in Verses 76-77. The *soorah* then goes on to speak of Prophets Daawood, Sulaymaan, Ayyoob, Ismaa'eel, Idrees, Dhul-Kifl, Yoonus, Zakariyyaa and Yahyaa. We also find a brief mention of Maryam, the Mother of Prophet 'Eesaa (May Allah's peace and blessings be upon them)

All these prophets advocated and taught the same message which is now fully contained in the Qur'an. The *soorah* then proceeds forward to speak of Gog and Magog (Ya'jooj and Ma'jooj) (Verse 96). Having spoken about the happy people of Paradise and the wretched ones of Hellfire, the *soorah* states:

> On that Day We shall roll up the skies as written scrolls are being rolled up, and as We brought into being the first creation so We shall bring it forth anew – a promise which We have willed upon Ourselves. Indeed, We will do it.' (Verse 104)

The *soorah* closes with a call to people to uphold *tawheed* (Oneness of Allah), prepare for life in the hereafter and adhere to Allah's revelation: the Qur'an. It says,

> Say: It is indeed revealed to me that your God is One God; will you then submit? (Verse 108)

The Story of Prophet Ibraaheem ﷺ: Verses 51-73

The episode narrated here is that of Ibraaheem's message to his father and his community. He said to his father and his people: 'What are these images to which you are so devoted?' (Verse 52) The way he put this question is

indicative of his sharp sense of what is right and what is wrong. He gave those stones and forms their correct name 'images'. He did not call them deities, gods or goddesses, thus expressing his disapproval of their worship. Prophet Ibraaheem ﷺ was given a sense of what is right and considered the action of his people absolutely absurd.

His people defended their erroneous practices by saying, 'We found our forefathers worshipping them.' Their answer shows that they were in a stone-like inert state of mind that tied them to senseless traditions. They were far removed from freedom of reflection and thinking. They refused to use their reasoning with which Allah endowed them. Prophet Ibraaheem ﷺ said, 'Indeed, you and your forefathers have been in evident error.' The act of worship must be based only on certainty, not on unfounded myths.

Ibraaheem ﷺ enjoyed a state of deep faith and certainty. He knew his Lord, and his thoughts were full of the truth of His Oneness, or *tawheed*. He, therefore, says with certainty,

> Indeed, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth who has brought them into being, and I am the witness to this truth. (Verse 56)

He is the Lord of all mankind as well as the Lord of the heavens and the earth: a single Lord who alone is the Creator of everything.

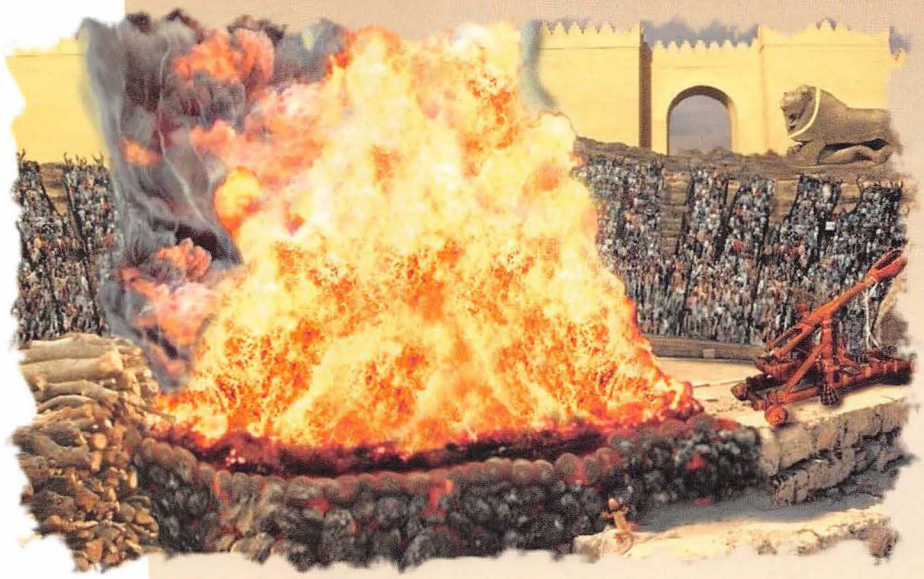
Ibraaheem ﷺ followed this with an announcement to his people that he was intent on doing something to their deities (Verse 57). But he left his intent unclear.

He, however, did what he had intended:

He broke the idols to pieces—all except for the biggest of them (Verse 58).' Thus, the idols which were the subject to worship were turned into a heap of small, broken pieces of wood and stones. But Ibraaheem ﷺ left the largest one untouched to see his people's reaction when they found out what had happened. Ibraaheem's people

came to the temple to find the utter destruction of their idols except the largest one. They were furious, and once they knew that it was Ibraaheem ﷺ who had done that, they ordered that he should be brought in sight of all people so that they might bear witness. (Verse 61)

When he was brought before them, they asked him, 'Was it you who did this to our gods, Ibraaheem?' (Verse 62) Ibraaheem ﷺ replied, 'No, it was this one, the biggest of them, who did it. Ask them if they can speak?' (Verse 63) Contempt was very clear in his answer. Hence, there is no need to describe it as a lie and try to find some justification for it, as commentators on the Qur'an have done.



Ibraaheem ﷺ simply wanted to say to his people: These idols do not know who broke them to pieces. All of them are inanimate, and they have no faculty of recognition. Hence, ask them, if they can speak!'

This shook them into some sort of reflection, but they soon sank back into lifelessness. At this point, they resorted to tyranny, which also prevails when tyrants are left speechless. They resorted to cruelty. They cried, 'Burn him and support your gods.' (Verse 68)

What sort of gods are these which need the support of their worshippers? They are indeed powerless and helpless.

This happened in a place known as Ur, on the lower reaches of Euphrates River, not a hundred miles from the Arabian Gulf. This was one of the cradles of human civilization. Their king was Nimrod whose capital was in Assyria, near modern Mosul.

The story goes that they dug a huge pit and filled it with fire which was so intense that a bird flying over it would definitely fall dead. Ibraaheem ﷺ was thrown into it, but he prayed to his Lord: '*Hasbiyyallaahu was ni'mal wakeel*' (Enough for me is Allah, an Excellent Trustee).

Almighty Allah ﷻ ordered that no harm would touch him at all: 'Fire, be cool

and a means of safety for Ibraaheem.' (21:69) And thus the fire was cool and a source of inner peace for Ibraaheem ﷺ to enjoy.

Those who compare Allah's actions to those of human beings are those who ask how this could happen. On the contrary, those who understand that the two are widely different in both their nature and the means they employ do not ask such questions. They do not try to find explanations, scientific or otherwise. Allah's actions cannot be subject to human standards and cannot be explained within the limit of human limited knowledge. This incident actually took place because Almighty Allah has power over everything. King Nimrod and his supporters were destroyed by some divine punishment Allah inflicted on them (Verse 70). Allah saved Ibraaheem ﷺ from the torture prepared for him while his opponents who schemed against him were the ones who suffered the loss. The Qur'an describes them as the 'absolute losers'.

It was the land of Palestine to which Ibraaheem ﷺ, his wife Sarah and his nephew Loot, emigrated. Allah gave him his son Ishaaq (Issac) and grandson Ya'qoob (Jacob) (Verses 72-73)

Prophet Loot (Lot) عليه السلام: Verses 74-75

The story of Prophet Loot (Lot) ﷺ is related in full detail elsewhere in the Qur'an. Here we have only a brief reference to it, as he emigrated from Iraq with his uncle, Ibraaheem. Loot ﷺ stayed in the township of Sodom where the people resorted to revolting practices. They were guilty of loathsome, perverted sexual indecency, men with men, openly, without any sense of shame or guilt. Allah poured his punishment on the township and its people (Verse 74). Allah saved Loot and his household with the exception of his wife. Prophet Loot ﷺ is mentioned in the Qur'an: *Soorat al-An'aam*, 6:86; *Soorat al-A'raaf*, 7:80; *Soorat Hood*, 11:77; *Soorat al-Hijr*, 15:61; *Soorat al-Anbiyyaa'*, 21:71; *Soorat*

al-Hajj, 22:43; *Soorat ash-Shu'araa'*, 26:161; *Soorat an-Naml*, 27:54; *Soorat al-'Ankaboot*, 29:28; *Soorat as-Saafaat*, 37:133 and *Soorat al-Qamar*, 54:33.

The Qur'an mentions that Loot ﷺ criticised his people for seeking women as their lawful wives and lusting after men, a hateful indecency never practised in communities before theirs. When it became clear that they were beyond convincing and that they conspired to banish him and his household from the city, Allah ﷻ rained upon them a rain of stones and turned their dwellings upside down. The Dead Sea is still called *Bahr Loot*. Verse 75 closes Loot's description declaring:

> And We admitted him to Our Mercy. Surely, he was of the righteous.

Prophet Nooh (Noah) ﷺ: Verses 76-77

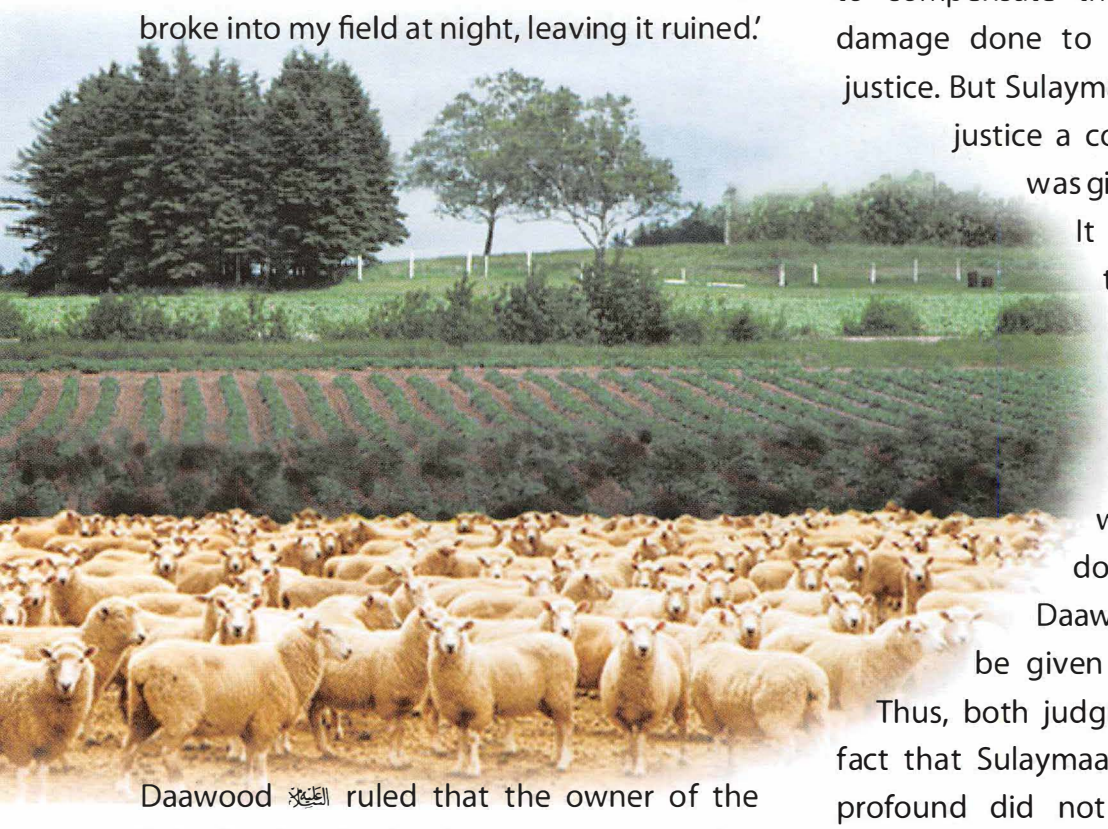
Now follows a similarly short reference to Nooh ﷺ and his protection.

Again the reference does not provide details. It simply confirms Allah's response to Nooh when he appealed to Him. Prophet Nooh ﷺ lived at an earlier time than Loot, hence the reference 'long before that'.

In Nooh's case, he and his household were also saved with the exception of his wife. As for his people, they were destroyed by the flood which is described here as 'the great calamity'. This flood is described in detail in *Soorat Hood* (*Soorah* 11).

The Story of Prophet Daawood (David) عليه السلام and Sulaymaan (Solomon) عليه السلام: Verses 78-82

The story of the field over which Prophets Daawood and Sulaymaan gave judgment is detailed in some reports that two men came to Daawood عليه السلام, one of them had a field, or a vineyard, according to some other reports, while the other had a flock of sheep. The field's owner said, 'This man's sheep broke into my field at night, leaving it ruined.'



Daawood عليه السلام ruled that the owner of the field should take the sheep in compensation for his wasted crops. The sheep's owner then passed by Sulaymaan عليه السلام and told him of Daawood's judgment. Sulaymaan عليه السلام went to his father and said, 'Prophet of Allah, you should have judged differently.' Daawood asked him, 'How should I judge?' Sulaymaan replied: 'Give the sheep to the field's owner to benefit by them and give the field to the sheep's owner to tend until it is returned to its original condition. Then each man returns to the other his property. Thus the field's owner will get his field and the sheep's owner his sheep.' Daawood عليه السلام confirmed that that was the right judgment and ordered it to be carried out.

In fact, both Daawood and Sulaymaan judged according to their own discretion, but Allah سبحانه وتعالى was observing their judgment. He inspired Sulaymaan عليه السلام to give the verdict that was fairer. Daawood's judgment aimed to compensate the field's owner for the damage done to him, which established justice. But Sulaymaan's judgment added to justice a constructive dimension. It was given by Allah's inspiration. It is significant to realize that although Sulaymaan عليه السلام has been praised here, Daawood is not censored. It is possible that the value of the flock was equal to the damage done to the crop and so Daawood عليه السلام judged that they be given away in compensation. Thus, both judgments were correct. The fact that Sulaymaan's judgment was more profound did not disprove the inherent justice of Daawood's original judgment or deprive it of its merit.

The *soorah* then moves on to display what was given specifically to each of these prophets (Verses 79-82).

Daawood عليه السلام was famous for his Psalms. The Psalms were actually hymns which he recited in his melodious voice. The words used here are *ma'a Daawood* (along with

Daawood). In other words, the mountains and the birds, along with Daawood, were made submissive and compliant. As a result, the mountains and the birds together with Daawood celebrated the glory of Allah.

The point which emerges from these verses is that when Prophet Daawood ﷺ was reciting his hymns, the mountains echoed with his loud, melodious voice, causing the birds to suspend their flight just as if his voice had cast a spell upon them. When a human being feels their bond with Allah alive in his heart, they feel that the entire universe responds to them. All barriers and impediments separating different kinds of creatures are thus removed.

Those who understand such praise are actually those who shed all barriers and separations. They are those who turn to Allah, their Creator. This notion is further borne out by the *hadeeth* reported by al-Bukhaaree which states that the Prophet ﷺ once heard Abu Moosaa al-Ash'aree ﷺ, who had an exceptionally melodious voice, reciting the Qur'an, and he said to him, 'You have been given a beautiful voice like the beautiful voices of the family of Daawood.' Thus, one can imagine the power and beauty of Daawood's melodies, if Abu Moosaa's was of such order that the Prophet ﷺ stood by to listen.

It is important to note here, however, that the word *mizmaar*, which literally means 'flute' and which the Prophet ﷺ used to refer to the voice of Prophet Daawood ﷺ when he recited the Zaboor simply means voice, and not a flute, for Islam makes musical instruments strictly forbidden, and Prophet Daawood ﷺ did not have a flute at all.

The Qur'an now proceeds to talk of yet another special gift Allah ﷻ gave Prophet Daawood ﷺ:

> And We taught him the fashioning of the coats of mail for your benefit to protect you from each other's violence. Will you be grateful?' (Verse 80)

This clearly shows that it was Daawood ﷺ who invented coats of mail, as Allah instructed him to do. Allah ﷻ reminds people of His favour in teaching Daawood ﷺ this skill so as to protect them in wartime. The case of Sulaymaan ﷺ was even greater (Verses 81-82). The Qur'anic text here states that winds in their stormy conditions were made subservient to Sulaymaan, moving at his bidding to the land which Allah ﷻ blessed, which was Palestine. This is obviously an allusion to the fleets of sailing ships which brought untold riches to Palestine (the land which Allah has blessed) and made Sulaymaan's wealth proverbial. The wind was directed, by Allah's will, to the blessed land in a cycle lasting each

way. How? It is Allah's will that controls the laws of nature and sets them in motion. What we know of the laws operating in the universe is very little. 'It is We who have knowledge of everything.' (Verse 81) It should be remembered that there is nothing difficult for Allah when He wills to have it done or put in place, regardless of whether or not it is familiar to mankind. Unlike human knowledge, Allah's knowledge is perfect and complete.

The same applies to making the *jinn* subservient to Sulaymaan such that they dived into the depths of the sea or deep into the earth to bring him some of its riches or to perform other tasks. The use of the word *shayaaṯeen* in place of *jinn* contains the hint that they were unbelieving *jinn*. It was from among these *jinn* that Allah ﷻ assigned some to Sulaymaan ﷺ to dive in the sea and obey him. Moreover, Allah ﷻ kept watch over them so that they would not escape or rebel (Verse 82). Allah ﷻ tested Daawood and Sulaymaan. Daawood was tested in connection with the administration of justice, while Sulaymaan's test involved vast wealth and kingdom. But they remained grateful to Allah for His favours.

A Test of Hardship for Prophet Ayyoob ﷺ: Verses 83-84

The *soorah* now provides us with the illustration of Prophet Ayyoob (Job) ﷺ whose story is one of the finest that centres on a test.

Qur'anic texts mentioning Ayyoob ﷺ only speak in general terms, giving few details. In this particular place (Verses 83-84), the *soorah* mentions Ayyoob's supplication and Allah's response. This is because the overall atmosphere of the *soorah* is one of grace bestowed from Allah on His Prophets and the care He took of them when He tested them. This applies in all test situations, including rejection by their peoples, as with Ibraaheem, Looṯ and Nooh; power and wealth as with Daawood and Sulaymaan; or affliction as with Ayyoob.

Ayyoob's supplication here does not go beyond describing his condition and emphasizing Allah's attributes of mercy (Verse 83).

He does not appeal for his condition to be changed because he wants to remain patient in hardship. Nor does he suggest anything to his Lord. His is an attitude of perfect humility before Him. Thus, He is Allah's ideal servant: neither panicking in a condition of affliction nor expressing frustration at the hardship he suffers. Although he undergoes a test of highest severity, he does not pray to Allah to remove his hardship. Thus, he leaves the matter entirely to the will of Allah ﷻ. He is fully aware that his Lord knows his condition and does not need his prayer. It is important to note that there are various reports about what happened to Ayyoob ﷺ, some of which are clearly exaggerated. Some indicate that he suffered an illness that made people run away from him, unable to look at him. This is indeed contrary to what a prophet of Allah is like. What the Qur'anic texts suggest, however, is that he suffered hardship within himself and within his family, and this is enough of a test for anyone.

There is also much controversy surrounding who Ayyoob ﷺ was, when he lived, and to which nation he belonged. Present-day researchers advance a variety of views. Some consider him to be an Israelite, some an Egyptian, while yet others regard him as an Arab. Some are of the opinion that he lived at a time which preceded that of Prophet Moosaa ﷺ, others that he was a contemporary of Prophets Daawood and Sulaymaan, and still others that he belonged to an even later period.

In short, Prophet Ayyoob ﷺ supplicated: 'Affliction has seized me, but You are the Most Merciful of the merciful.' (Verse 83) The supplication is marked by the unusual sublimity and refinement. He gives no vent to complaint, expresses no desire to be fulfilled, nor any demand to be met. However, the briefness of the expression renders the statement very powerful and very rich in meaning. The situation seems similar to that of a dignified self-respecting person who, long affected by starvation happens to meet someone who is generous, and to whom he merely says, 'I am extremely hungry, and you are kind and generous.'

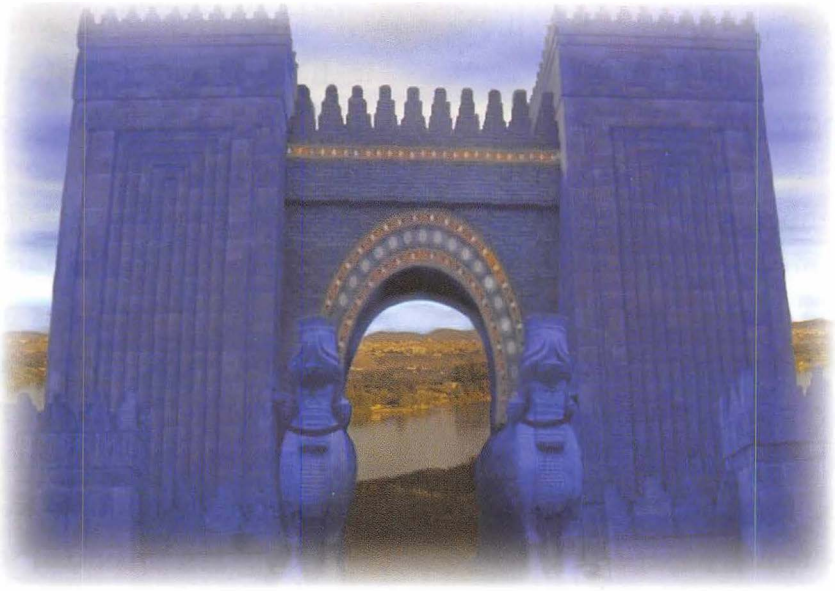
Ayyoob's supplication was instantly answered. His test was over. His personal affliction was lifted and his health was restored. He achieved complete recovery, leaving no trace of affliction. The affliction concerned his family was also lifted. Allah ﷻ blessed him with many children and restored to him his former prosperity. But all this was 'an act of grace from Allah', because every blessing is an act of Allah's grace anyway. The test to which Ayyoob ﷺ was put provides an example for all mankind, and his patient

endurance sets a model for all to follow. It is possible that some people might miss the subtlety of Ayyoob's supplication. An illustrative example from the early Muslims might help. A woman complained to Sa'd bin Mu'aadh ﷺ that her house had no mice. Sa'd immediately realized what sort of hardship the woman was undergoing, and so he ordered that she be supplied with good amount of bread, butter and meat.

The Three other Prophets: Verses 85-86

The *soorah* then refers very briefly to three other prophets, namely Ismaa'eel, Idrees and Dhul-Kifl. Again with all the three the quality of patience in hardship is highlighted. Ismaa'eel ﷺ displayed his patience when he was requested to submit himself for sacrifice at the hands of his father Ibraaheem ﷺ. As for Idrees ﷺ, we know nothing about his time or where he lived. He was a Prophet of Allah and he displayed patience that merited a record in Allah's Book – the Glorious Qur'an. Dhul-Kifl is also unknown. We cannot determine for sure where or when he lived. The Qur'anic text here is sufficient to credit him with being patient in adversity, a highly rewarding quality.

Prophet Yoonus (Jonah) عليه السلام: Verses 87-88



We have now a brief outline of the story of Prophet Yoonus (Jonah) عليه السلام. This story is, however, given in some more detail in *Soorat as-Saafaat*, (*Soorah* 37). Prophet Yoonus عليه السلام was called '*Dhun-Noon*, which literally means 'the man of the fish' because he was swallowed by a whale and then thrown out. He was sent to the people of Nineveh in Mosul, Iraq, and he called them to believe in Allah, but they rejected him and his message. By way of reaction to their obstinacy, he left that place in anger and found himself sometime later by the sea where he saw a laden ship which he boarded. However, the ship started jerking and swaying over the huge waves after it had sailed for some distance. It was about to sink and the crew and passengers consulted each other regarding what to do next. They eventually agreed to cast lots with all the travellers' names. Those whose name was drawn would be thrown into the sea in order to lighten the loads.

When they drew the lots, the name of Jonah appeared, so they did not want to throw him as they knew of his piety. They repeated the draw, and his name was again drawn the second time. He was to be thrown in the sea, as it was already decreed for him.

He was swallowed by a whale. In the depth of darkness, he cried to Allah and confessed his weakness, Allah سبحانه وتعالى forgave him and so he was cast ashore and was given shelter of a plant in the state of his mental and physical agony. He was refreshed and strengthened, and the work of his mission prospered. The forgiveness he asked was for the error in judgment and not for any sin.

Indeed, the story of Yoonus عليه السلام provides a good example to reflect upon. His returning to his Lord and admission of his error provide

a good lesson. Moreover, the mercy that Allah showed him by answering his supplication he addressed through the manifold darkness gives us great hope: 'Thus do We deliver those who have faith.' (Verse 88)

The *soorah* now gives a quick reference to Zaakariyyaa ﷺ and his son Yahyaa ﷺ, underlining how Allah ﷻ responded to Zaakariyyaa and answered his prayers (Verses 89-90). The story of Yahyaa's birth is given in detail in *Soorat Aal-'Imraan*, 3-38-41. Here it is given very briefly to fit the atmosphere of the *soorah*. It begins with Zaakariyyaa's supplication for a successor to take care of the sanctuary. He was in charge of the sanctuary where the Israelites offered their worship before Prophet 'Eesaa's birth. The answer to his prayer was swift and direct. His wife was barren. The *soorah* omits all details to give us the ultimate result of Allah's response to Zaakariyyaa's prayer.

Finally, Maryam ﷺ is mentioned along with her son (Verse 91). It is significant to note that Maryam ﷺ is not mentioned by name because the main reference in the chain of prophets is to her son. Reference is made to her main quality. She is the one 'who guarded her chastity'.

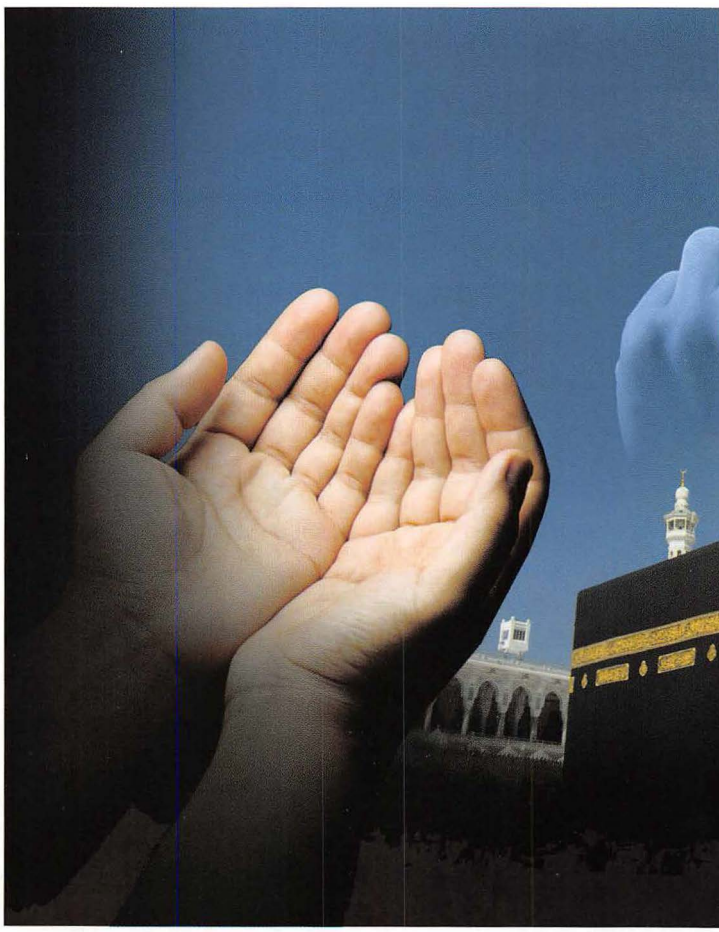
After making brief references to various prophets, the *soorah* ultimately gives a final comment:

> Surely, your religion is but one religion, and I am your only Lord, so worship Me alone. (Verse 90)

Thus all the prophets had the same religion and came with the same message, namely to call people to the worship of Allah alone without any partners. No one deserves to be worshipped except Him. All the prophets called people to one religion. The core of this religion is that the One True God, Almighty Allah, is the Lord of all mankind and He alone should be worshipped.

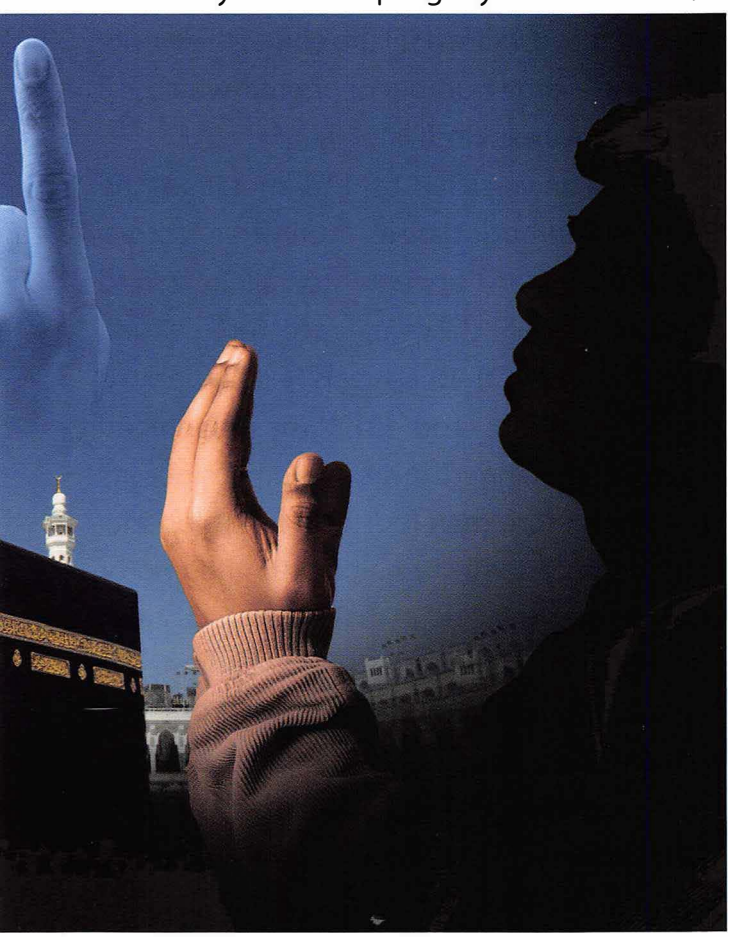
Those religions, which emerged later in history, are all distortions of this one, true original religion. Some elements of this original religion were taken over by a particular creed, while other elements were taken over by yet different creeds with a great many invocations added later. These distortions have given rise to a multiplicity of religions. The prophets were not the founders of these different religions. Allah's Prophets called people to embrace only the one, true religion and to serve only the One, True God—Allah. The *soorah* warns:

> So whoever does righteous deeds while he is a believer - no denial will there be for his effort, and indeed We record it in his book of deeds. (Verse 94)



All deeds based on faith are recorded with Allah ﷻ who never loses sight of anything. Thus, faith (*eemaan*) is the central basis of life. The Qur'an always associates faith with good deeds whenever it mentions deeds and their rewards. The Qur'an now sounds a general note: whenever Allah consigns a community to destruction, He does it not because of its people's occasional lapses, but only because their ways are too bad to be corrected or cured, showing conscious unwillingness to abandon their sinful ways (Verse 95). They will return to Allah for final Judgement.

The *soorah* now presents a scene of the Day of Resurrection. It begins with a sign that signals its approach. This sign is the opening of the gates for Gog and Magog. Who are they? They have not been identified, but they are the progeny of Aadam ﷺ.



Where are they now? This is also not certain. However, many scholars hold that they are somewhere behind the Caucasian region of Central Asia. They are behind a barrier which they are unable to break. According to some reports, they will be able to break the barrier only after the second coming of Prophet 'Eesaa ﷺ, towards the end of this world. The actual identity of Gog and Magog remains, however, a theme upon which the Qur'an does not elaborate.

The *soorah* then pronounces the eternal truth:

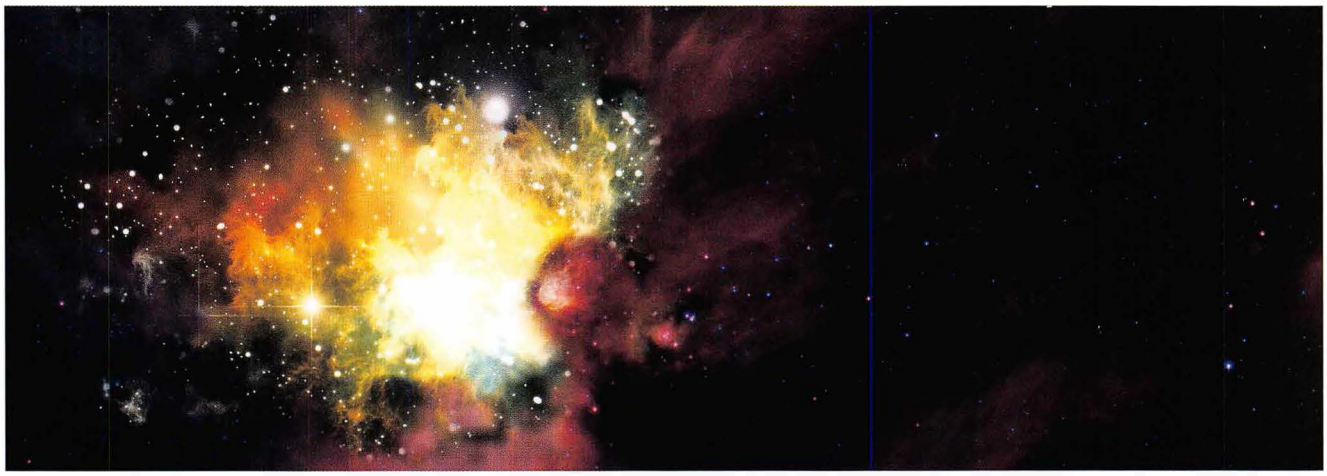
> Indeed, you [disbelievers] and what you worship other than Allah will be the fuel of Hellfire. (Verse 98)

The *soorah* then proceeds to describe them actually in Hell, depicting their abode and their condition in it. (Verses 99-100)

The sincere, devout believers, on the other hand, will be spared all this hardship because they have been promised an eternal blissful life in the hereafter (Verses 101-102). They will be warmly received by the angels (Verse 103). The scene now draws to a close. The heavens will be folded up and the judgment will be over. The universe known to people will have no further function to perform. (Verse 104).

Thus it can be noticed here that the Qur'anic description of the end of the world radically differs from what scientists suppose. They once believed and the great majority of people still hold the same opinion that the world began with the Big Bang and will end up with a Big Crunch or Grind.

The latest findings indicate that the expansion of the universe from all sides is not



slowing down, but in fact, it appears to be speeding up. This has put the scientists into confusion about how the world is likely to end.

Granted that the older theory is correct and that the world begins to contract backward, it is likely to end in a ball and not in the shape of a scroll – the kind that was used for writing purposes in ancient times. Thus, both ways, the scientific theories are at variance with the Qur'an.

The expression az-Zaboor, which literally means 'scripture' or 'book', denotes any book of wisdom (Verse 105). Hence, it refers to any and all the divine scriptures revealed by Allah to the prophets. In this, there is a message for people who worship Allah. (Verse 106)

'And We have not sent you [O Muhammad] but as mercy to the worlds.' (Verses 107): In what sense is Prophet Muhammad ﷺ a mercy to the worlds comprising of the believers as well as the unbelievers? One answer is that unbelieving nations previous to him were destroyed while their immediate destruction was upheld during his time because of him. Another answer is that the teachings of all the previous prophets gave a place of prominence to moral laws that helped the earlier nations organize their lives on those grounds. The Prophet ﷺ perfected the noble qualities of character. Since then the world has borrowed from its previous nations as well as this new source which was perfected by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Consequently, various nations of the world have been able to organize their lives better than the ignorant nations of the past although they would not like to admit it. Another aspect is the universality of the Prophet's message and the fact that it will last till the end of the world, affecting a large number of people, which is a mercy to all mankind.

The universality of the message the Prophet ﷺ brought arises from three factors: **(1)** the Qur'an appeals to all mankind irrespective of descent, race or cultural environment; **(2)** it appeals exclusively to people's reason; and **(3)** it has remained entirely unchanged in its wording since its revelation more than fourteen centuries ago, and it will certainly remain so till the end of the world, as the Qur'an makes it crystal clear.

Having highlighted the aspect of mercy, the *soorah* states a command given by Allah ﷻ to His Messenger ﷺ: the command to worship the One, true God—Allah. (Verse 108) This is the most essential element of mercy in the message of Islam.

5. Soorat al-Qaṣaṣ (the Stories, 28: 1-44)

The story of Prophet Moosaa (Moses) عليه السلام

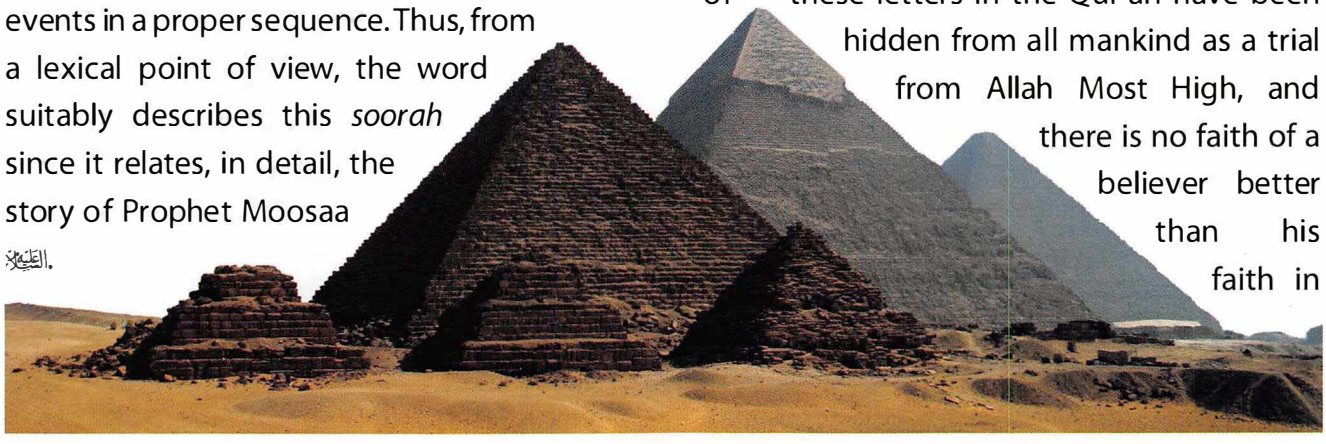
Soorat al-Qaṣaṣ (the Stories) consists of 88 verses. About one-half of the *soorah* is devoted to the story of Prophet Moosaa عليه السلام. It is remarkable to note that most of this story depicts the purely human side of his life, that is to say, impulses, perplexities and errors which are part of the human condition as such. In fact, the Qur'an stresses these aspects in order to negate any possible tendency on the part of the pious to attribute 'superhuman' or, as a last resort, semi-divine qualities to Allah's Prophets.

The presentation of Moosaa's story in this *soorah* begins with his birth. Nowhere else in the Qur'an has his story started from this point, although his stories are spread over several *soorahs* in the Qur'an.

The *soorah* takes its title from verse 25 where the phrase '*wa qaṣṣa ʿalayhil-qaṣaṣa*' occurs. Literally, the verb *qaṣṣa* means to relate events in a proper sequence. Thus, from a lexical point of view, the word suitably describes this *soorah* since it relates, in detail, the story of Prophet Moosaa عليه السلام.

The *soorah* opens with the disjointed letters. They are referred to as *al-muqaṭṭaʿaat*, or occasionally *al-fawaatiḥ* (the openings), because they appear at the beginning of the relevant *soorahs*. About one quarter of the Qur'anic *soorahs* are preceded by mysterious letter-symbols called *al-muqaṭṭaʿaat*. Out of twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet, exactly one-half – that is, fourteen, occur in this position, either singly or in varying combinations of two, three or five letters. They are always pronounced singly, by their names and not as mere sounds – thus: *alif*, *laam*, *meem*, *ṭaa*, *seen*, *meem*, etc.

The significance of these letter-symbols has perplexed the Qur'an commentators from the earliest times. There is no evidence of the Prophet ﷺ having ever referred to them in any of his recorded statements, nor of any of his Companions having ever asked him for an explanation regarding them. Hence, the meanings of these letters are known to Allah alone. This makes it clear that the meanings of these letters in the Qur'an have been hidden from all mankind as a trial from Allah Most High, and there is no faith of a believer better than his faith in



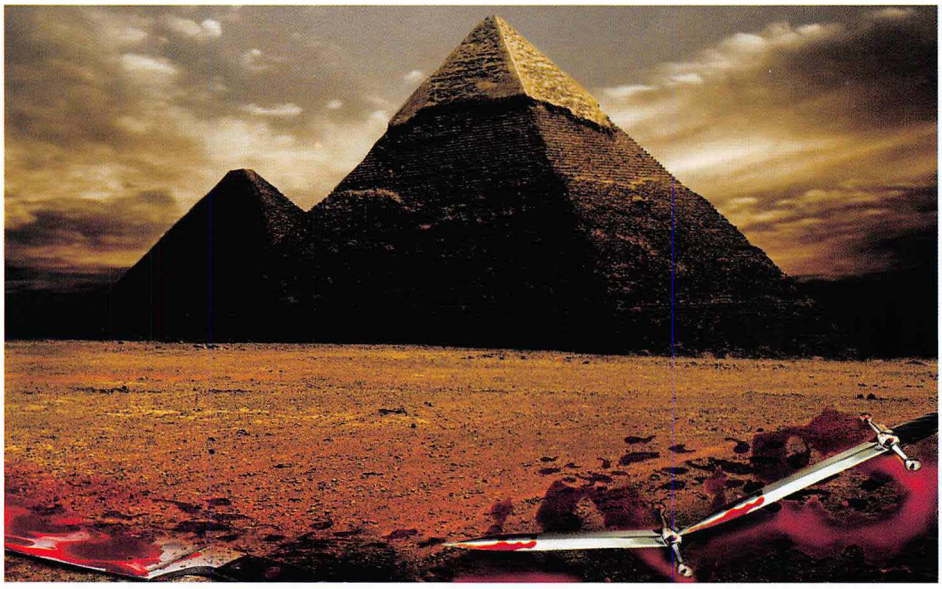
the Unseen. For a detailed discussion on the topic of the disjointed letters, refer to *Towards Understanding Our Religion* by Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo.

This *soorah* was revealed in Makkah, at a time when the Muslims were a small minority without power, while the idolaters were in full control of power, wealth, position and authority. In that context, the *soorah* established the true standard of power and values. It clearly stated that there is only One True Power in the universe that is Allah's, and that there is only one true value, that is faith (*eemaan*). Whoever enjoys Allah's support does not need to fear anyone or anything even though they may be lacking material power.

The *soorah* begins with three disjointed letters, namely *ṭaa, seen, meem* and declares that 'these are verses of the Book that makes things clear' (Verses 1-2). Its verses are of greatly superior quality and are of much finer import, for no one can produce something similar to them.

The *soorah* then relates the story of Moosaa ﷺ and Fir'awn (Pharaoh), right from its very first moment, when Moosaa ﷺ was born. Although Moosaa's story is narrated in many other *soorahs*, it is never told from the very beginning anywhere else. It is this very beginning, detailing the different conditions in which Moosaa ﷺ was born, helpless among a people who had long been persecuted and humiliated by Pharaoh, that serves as the main theme of the *soorah*. It reveals divine will working openly, strikes directly at the root of cruelty and injustice and lends support and power to the oppressed. This is a thought that the small and powerless Muslim Community in Makkah needed to fully understand. It was equally important that the powerful majority of Makkah be made well aware of it too. Every story narrated in the Qur'an is told in the way that best serves its objective of the *soorah* in which it occurs. It is a means to educate people.

The episodes of Moosaa's story that are described here are those of his birth in unusual difficult conditions and how Allah ﷻ took care of him. It also depicts his youth and the wisdom and knowledge with which Allah endowed him and covers the events that took place: how he killed an Egyptian, left Egypt after learning about a plot against his life, his marriage in the land of Madyan (Median) and the time he spent there. It then moves on to talk about his being called by Allah and given His message; the encounter with Pharaoh and his courtiers



and how they rejected both Moosaa ﷺ and Haaroon (Aaron); and ultimately a brief reference to Pharaoh's end.

Following the Qur'anic style, the story is actually narrated in a series of scenes. In fact, the reader does not miss anything of the events and images that are not shown between scenes. When the Pharaoh of this story took authority, he divided the people of Egypt into castes or sects. This refers to the division of people into high and low-born: a division which the Qur'an utterly condemns. The Pharaoh gave more rights and powers to some while he enslaved, crushed and exploited others.

The Children of Israa'eel were the most oppressed group during his rule. They had been placed on the lowest rung of the Egyptian social scale and were deprived of almost all human rights. (Verse 4)

'Children of Israa'eel' is the national designation of the Jews. Israa'eel was the name borne by their ancestor Ya'qoob (Jacob), the father of the 'twelve tribes', a son of Ishaaq (Isaac) and a grandson of Prophet Ibraaheem as well as the father of Prophet Yoosuf. They had come to Egypt during the time of Prophet Yoosuf. It was Yoosuf ﷺ who brought his father Ya'qoob (Israa'eel) and his brothers to Egypt where they lived for several generations and, thus, had become a large community.

They followed a different religion, different from the one the Pharaoh and his people followed. Despite all the distortions that had crept into their faith, they still retained their belief in One God—Allah and rejected Pharaoh's claim to be a god. In fact, they rejected Pharaoh's polytheism altogether. Pharaoh and the Egyptians believed that they were the people of the land and that Egypt belonged to them. Some of them considered Yoosuf ﷺ a foreigner who had come from Palestine. When he was purchased by the 'Azeez of Egypt, they thought it was not right for a foreigner to have ruled Egypt. The pharaohs came to the throne of Egypt, and they bore a deep hatred towards the Israelites. Then a particular tyrannical man became the king. He thought that his people, the Copts, were one race and the Israelites another. The Copts were a kingly race, created to rule, while the Israelites were a race of slaves, created to serve.

He was an arrogant tyrant who believed that no one was higher than him. He did not believe in Allah. He used to say: 'I am your lord Most High.' (*Soorat an-naazi'aat*, 79:24) He called on people to worship him and prostrate themselves before him.

In the meantime a Coptic priest went to Pharaoh and informed him: 'A child will be born among the Israelites, at whose hands your kingdom will be destroyed.'

Pharaoh became mad with rage. He ordered his guards to kill every newborn boy of the Israelites. The tyrant felt that the presence of this

community posed a threat to his throne. They were in large numbers, amounting to hundreds of thousands. He, therefore, hit upon a devilish plan to forestall the danger he faced from such a community which did not recognize him as their god. His plan involved putting them to do the hardest and most dangerous of works, thereby making sure their suffering continued. Above all, he killed their male children at birth but spared their female offspring. He even appointed birth attendants to inform him of what children were born to the Israelites, in this way making sure of the killing of all newborn males. It was in such conditions that Moosaa عليه السلام was born (Verse 4).

Allah ﷻ wanted what Pharaoh feared and had been warned about to take place. The child that Allah ﷻ had destined to destroy Pharaoh's kingdom and to bring people out of darkness into light, out of idol-worship into the worship of Allah, was born. The *soorah* asserts:

> It was Our will to favour those who were oppressed in the land to make them leaders, to bestow on them a noble heritage and to give them power in the land (Verses 5-6).

Haamaan, who is mentioned several times in the Qur'an, was Pharaoh's chief adviser. We can assume that he occupied a position equivalent to that of a Prime Minister. We are shown here how Allah's will comes to pass and that whatever he decrees definitely takes place. Moosaa عليه السلام was born under very difficult circumstances. We almost see the sword being taken out of its sheath to cut his throat. His mother was worried. She feared that the news of his birth might reach the cruel Pharaoh.

At his point Allah's assistance came to the worried mother and Allah ﷻ inspired her as to what to do (Verse 7). A caring mother suckling her child was told to cast him into the river if she feared his life. She was, however, told not to grieve for him, as he would be under the care of the One who provides all security and drives away all fear. The term used in Verse 7 is *awḥaynaa*. The revelation was not the kind which is sent to Allah's Messengers.

It was rather inspiration placed in the heart. In this short verse, Allah ﷻ mentioned two commands, two prohibitions and two promises; two commands: suckle him and cast him into the river; two prohibitions: fear not and grieve not; and two promises: We shall restore him and make him a messenger.

These words constitute a great consolation for the early Muslims who were being hounded and persecuted by the Makkan pagans, giving them confidence and hope in the future. 'Pharaoh's household picked him up.' (Verse 8) The allusion by the

words 'Pharaoh's household' is to the slave-girls of Pharaoh's wife who were bathing in the Nile. Another opinion is that Pharaoh and his courtiers used to assemble in the evenings at the bank of the River Nile with Aasiyah (Fir'awn's wife) at his side. It is his courtiers who had picked up the casket. The objective behind delivering the child to Pharaoh is also clearly stated: so in time he would become an enemy to them and a source of grief.' (Verse 8)

It is important to note that in keeping with the practice of killing off all male infants of the Israelites, Pharaoh wished to do away with Moosaa ﷺ too, having recognized him as of Israelite origin. But his wife argued him out of his intention. The turn of events proved her words true. Moosaa ﷺ benefited from Aasiyah who believed in him when he returned from Madyan as a messenger. But Pharaoh refused to believe in him and was ultimately drowned. What about his mother though? She did as she was told and threw her child into the river. The *soorah* portrays a telling picture of a distressed mother's anxious heart. The heart of Moosaa's mother became 'void' and 'empty of all else'. Anyone who lost a dear one knows well what it feels like in the heart for the first few days: it is as if there is a void where the heart used to be, or, as if within the heart there is a place that is vacant (Verse 10). Her heart became empty of everything except Moosaa's remembrance. She could not think of anything except him. But Allah strengthened her heart and gave her added strength to deal with this very difficult situation.

She asked her daughter to follow the child in his casket floating along the river. The girl did as instructed, seeking to establish what happened to her baby brother. 'She saw him from a distance, while they were unaware.' (Verse 11) She spotted Moosaa ﷺ from a distance while he was being picked up though they did not perceive her at all.

Here we observe the working of Allah's will completing its scheme to defeat Pharaoh. It brought the baby to them, and they picked him up from the river. Above all, they were made to love him from the very first moment. Allah's scheme then caused Moosaa ﷺ to refuse all nurses' breasts, and thus they looked for a suckling mother for him. His sister carefully approached them and said: 'Shall I direct you to a family who might take care of him with utter sincerity?' (Verse 12)

This shows that after her brother entered the palace, she did not go home but remained close by. Moreover, as soon as she found out that the child was not suckling from anyone and that the Queen was in search of a nurse, she went straight into the palace and told them that she knew a nurse who would bring up the child with care and utter sincerity. They were delighted with what she said and the baby was restored to his mother.

The result of Allah's scheme was that Moosaa ﷺ was brought up by his own mother, in his own house, among his own relatives. This upbringing made him grow into an Israelite, rather than a member of the Pharaoh's nation. It should be remembered that in ancient times the nobles did not raise their children themselves but gave them over to nurses who would take them to their own homes and raise them. The Prophet ﷺ was himself raised by Haleemah as-Sa'diyyah outside the city, in the open expanse of the desert. The same custom prevailed in Egypt. Why did Moosaa's sister not say that she would bring a good nurse but simply said that she could direct them to a competent nurse who would do a good job of looking after the child, and would thus bring him up with care and tenderness? Indeed, Allah's plans are wonderful.

The *soorah* does not tell us anything about the many years that separate its first two events, namely, Moosaa's birth and rescue and the second showing him as a mature adult in his prime. We do not know what happened after he was restored to his mother for suckling, how he was brought up in Pharaoh's palace, what sort of relation he had with his real mother after he was weaned and what position he had in the palace or outside it as he grew up. The *soorah* is silent on all these points.

The *soorah* now presents Moosaa ﷺ as a fully mature man endowed with wisdom and knowledge (Verse 14). This piece of information is followed by the remark: 'Thus do we reward those who do good.' This suggests that he did well, and Allah rewarded him with superior knowledge and wisdom.

We are told: 'Once he entered the city at a time when its people were inattentive.' (Verse 15) The words 'entered the city' seem to suggest that the royal palaces were outside the city. Since Moosaa ﷺ lived in one of these palaces, it was quite appropriate to say that he 'entered the city'. It was perhaps midday. The markets were closed and so there were not any people around in the streets.

Anyway, however, 'he found there two men fighting.' One of these two was an Egyptian, said to belong to Pharaoh's staff, the other was an Israelite who appealed to him for help against their Egyptian enemy whom Moosaa ﷺ struck with his fist.' (Verse 15) The Arabic verb '*wakaza*' indicates a punch delivered with full strength of one's arm. But that caused his death. Moosaa ﷺ, however, did not want to kill the Egyptian. His action was the result of anger, and anger is a devil or part of what Satan plots. That is why Moosaa ﷺ said, 'This is Satan's doing. Indeed, he is a plain, misleading enemy.' Moosaa ﷺ was filled with regret and turned to Allah in repentance. That is the way of all the prophets. Allah ﷻ turned to Moosaa ﷺ because he had not meant to kill the Copt. 'So Allah forgave him. He is indeed the Forgiving, the Merciful.' (Verse 16)

The dead Egyptian was one of Pharaoh's servants, and his death became the talk of the town and so the guards started searching for the killer. Moosaa ﷺ was fearful and watchful. He feared being caught and taken before the tyrant.

The next day, Moosaa ﷺ saw the same Israelite in a fight with another Copt. The Israelite again cried to Moosaa ﷺ to help him, but this time Moosaa ﷺ said to him, 'Indeed, you are clearly a quarrelsome fellow.' (Verse 18) The man was apparently involved in endless quarrels. After scolding him, Moosaa ﷺ turned to restrain the Copt, and the Israelite. The Israelite thinking that he was going to hit him, cried out and thus foolishly let out the secret: 'Moosaa, do you intend to kill me as you killed a person yesterday? You simply want to live in the land as a tyrant, and you do not want to set things right.' (Verse 19)

The intervening events are left out, namely reports carried to Pharaoh that Moosaa ﷺ was the person who had killed the Copt the previous day, and the discussions among the courtiers as to what action was to be taken against Moosaa ﷺ, the majority insisting that he be put to death in retaliation, among other suggestions. Their decision also implies that although Moosaa ﷺ was brought up among the royals, he was never accepted as one of the royalty or as one of the Copts whose life was to be spared for accidentally killing one of them.

The next thing we are told about concerns a man hurrying from the farthest end of the city to warn Moosaa ﷺ of a plot to do away with him. He further advised Moosaa ﷺ that he should leave the city to save his life. (Verse 20) This was evidently the work of Allah. Something intervenes, at the right moment, to carry out His will.

Once more we see Moosaa's natural and passionate personality, as he reacted to different situations. He was in fear, but he was cautious. He directly appealed to Allah ﷻ for help and protection. He sought His refuge and prayed for His help: 'My Lord, save me from the wrongdoing people!' (Verse 21) Moosaa ﷺ accepted the advice and instantly left the city.

The *soorah* follows him as he quietly leaves the city, keeping on the alert, alone with absolutely no support, except what he hopes to receive from Allah Most High. But where could Moosaa ﷺ go when all of Egypt was Pharaoh's Kingdom and Pharaoh's guards were everywhere? The Qur'an states: 'When he turned his face towards Madyan, he said: I hope that my Lord will guide me to the right path.' (Verse 22)

In those days, Madyan (called Median in the Bible) was not a part of Pharaoh's kingdom. In fact, Egypt did not have control over the entire Sinai Peninsula, but only over its western and southern parts. That is why Moosaa ﷺ headed towards Madyan, which was the nearest territory, independent of Egyptian control. But to get there he had to pass through the Egyptian territory and cross various military check posts. He, therefore, prayed to Allah to lead him to the path which would safely take him to Madyan.

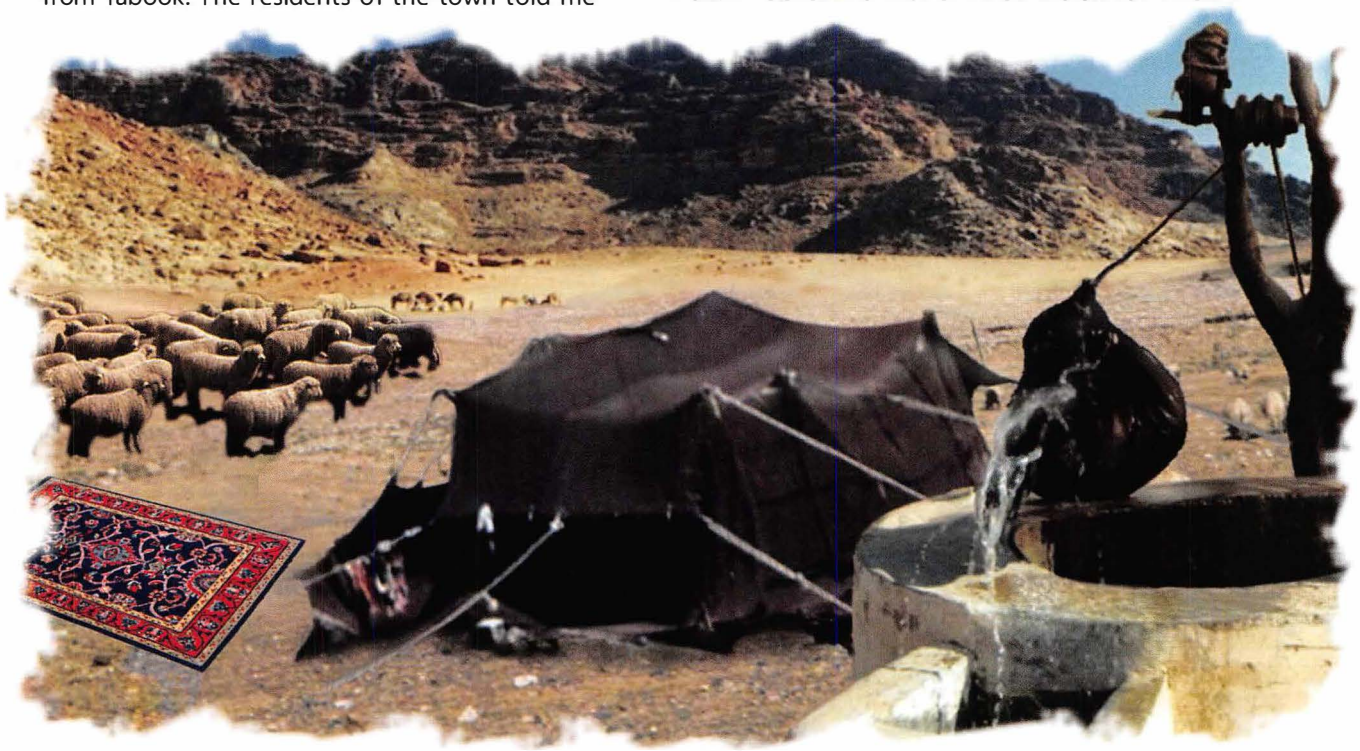
We find Moosaa ﷺ then at the centre of a distressing situation; after having lived a life of ease, plenty and utmost security, he was now alone and lacked all apparent means of security. He was chased everywhere by Pharaoh and his troops and did not know the way to Madyan. He, therefore, prayed: 'I do hope that my Lord will guide me to the right path.' (Verse 22) Almighty Allah again provided him with the assistance and protection He needed.

Ultimately, his long and lonely trek took him to Madyan. He was tired and exhausted, for he must have covered a distance of about 300 miles, as suggested by the Qur'an Commentator ʿAbdullah Yusuf ʿAli.

> Sayyid Abul-Aʿlaa al-Mawdoodee states: According to the Arab traditions, the place where Moses (peace be upon him) arrived was a few miles to the south of Maqna on the western coast of the Gulf of ʿAqabah. It is presently called al-Bad, which is a small town (in the present day Saudi Arabia). I visited it in December 1959 on my way to ʿAqabah from Tabook. The residents of the town told me that they had heard from their elders that this was where ancient Median was located. About a mile and a half away. There are ruins among which we saw two dry wells. The locals told us, though not with certainty, that one of the two wells was located at the spot where Moses (peace be upon him) had watered the goats.' (*Towards Understanding the Qur'an* Vol. VII, The Islamic Foundation, UK, p. 209)

When he arrived at the wells of Madyan, he found there a large crowd of people drawing water for their herds. At some distance from them he spotted two women who were trying to keep their flock. Moosaa ﷺ approached them and asked: 'What is the matter with you two?' They said, 'We cannot water our animals until the shepherds drive home theirs, and our father is a very old man.' (Verse 23)

As women, they could not fend for themselves in the midst of so many men. Moosaa's sense of fairness could not bear it, so he stepped forward to put things right and volunteered to water their flock for them.



Moosaa ﷺ then withdrew to the shade and fervently prayed, 'O my Lord! Truly, am in in dire need of any good which You may send down for me.' (Verse 24) He sought the physical shade to rest his tired limbs as well as the great shade spread by Allah ﷻ whose generosity is boundless to comfort his heart and soul. This widespread emotional supplication reflects the warmth of Moosaa's heart and his deep faith in Allah's kindness. No human mind could ever conceive of expressing in such a brief sentence, in such a perfect sense, the extreme hardship that Moosaa ﷺ was undergoing.

The *soorah* now quickly moves on to the next scene that leads to an end of his troubles. Almighty Allah immediately answered Moosaa's supplication. It was a quick relief granted by Almighty Allah in the form of an invitation sent by the old man, the two women's father, who wanted to duly reward Moosaa ﷺ and extend his hospitality to him for his noble action (Verse 25).

The invitation is delivered by 'one of the two' who came 'walking shyly', as a virtuous young woman should walk. In his commentary of the Qur'an, Syed Iqbal Zaheer states:

> The Qur'an has no romantic tales. But a little phrase *tamshee 'alastiḥyaa'* throws open several avenues of thought to those who have had the experience of watching simple men and women of the countryside living out their lives in complete innocence and supreme natural joy. Gone into oblivion are those days and those scenes that Wordsworth drew in his pastoral poems, perhaps never to return. Among the Commentators, Yusuf 'Ali stands alone in courage and imagination to fill the colours in the Qur'anic sketches. The reader is advised to read all the notes of this context in his work.' (*Tafseer Ishraaq al-Ma'anee*, Vol. 9, p. 208)

The next scene shows Moosaa ﷺ narrating his story to the old man whose name is withheld. Some commentators have identified this old man with Prophet Shu'ayb ﷺ, but this is simply not true because Prophet Shu'ayb ﷺ appeared some 400 years before Moosaa ﷺ. Thus, he was not Prophet Shu'ayb, but rather an old man of Madyan. When Moosaa ﷺ went to him, he told him his story. Moosaa ﷺ was hungry and needed something to eat and drink. Above all, he was in need of security. That is why the first words the old man said in comment to Moosaa's story are 'Have no fear'. He wanted him to feel at ease by removing his fear. He then explained, 'You are now safe from those wrongdoing people.' (Verse 25) They have no authority over Madyan.

A little time passed. A guest, after all, cannot stay forever. They all felt that it would be good to have him with them permanently. One of the two girls asked their father, 'Why not employ him to tend the flock?' The father was old and a young man was needed to look after the flocks, and there could be no other possibilities! (Verse 26)

A little time elapsed, and at length the father broached the subject of marriage. The father asked if he would marry one of the daughters and stay with them for at least eight years, or if he liked ten years, but the longer term was at his option. (Verse 27) He stated this without any embarrassment, for the offer was one of marriage. There is, after all, nothing to be embarrassed about when the objective is to build a home and establish a family.

During the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ, fathers used to offer their daughters to good men in marriage. Indeed, women offered themselves to the Prophet ﷺ or to whomever he wished them to marry. With such an open and simple approach, the Islamic society used to build its homes. This is exactly what the old man did with regard to Moosaa ﷺ. He told him:

> I do not wish to impose any hardship on you. You will find me, if Allah so wills, an upright man.' (Verse 27)

Moosaa ﷺ accepted the offer. The contract was made; clear and precise, with Allah as a witness. Moosaa ﷺ replied,

> This is agreed between me and you, whichever of the two terms I fulfil, I trust I shall not be wronged. Allah is the witness to all we say. (Verse 28)

Moosaa ﷺ spent 'the longer and the better of the two terms', as related by al-Bukhaaree. Thus, Moosaa ﷺ found a place of security in his father-in-law's home and had no fear of Pharaoh and his designs. This was most certainly for a specific purpose Allah wanted to accomplish.

The term agreed between the two men passed; the term which was more agreeable to Moosaa's father-in-law. We see Moosaa ﷺ again journeying, but this time with his family. He was returning to Egypt where the dangers lurking for him must have vanished during the long period of his absence. Indeed, it is quite possible that he might have heard that the Pharaoh who had brought him up was dead, and that another had taken his place.

The situation on this second journey was entirely different. He was about to receive, on the way, something that he could never have ever imagined. His Lord was to call him and assign to him the mission for which He had prepared him. The night was cold and dark. While they were travelling, he observed a fire on the slope of Mount Sinai. So he said to his family:

> Wait here, for I perceive a fire. Perhaps I may bring you from there some information, or a burning brand from the fire, so that you may warm yourselves. (Verse 29)

It was dark and he had lost his way. It was also cold, which made him happy at the sight of the fire in the distance. He walked forth in that direction to obtain some information or a firebrand. When he came close to it, he was addressed from the right bank of the valley, in the blessed spot of the tree: 'Moosaa! Truly, I am Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.' (Verse 30) We do not exactly know how,

or with which faculty or sense he received this call, but he surely received it with his whole being.

Allah then commanded him to throw down his staff (Verse 31), and Moosaa ﷺ obeyed the command. When he threw down his staff, it was now no longer his staff, for it turned into a writhing snake which was large in size but moved very fast. Moosaa ﷺ was totally unprepared for such an event. He was taken aback. He turned back and set to flight. He did not even consider going back to find out what had happened to the staff, which was a natural reaction. He then listened to his Lord's address: 'Come forward and have no fear! You are certainly secure.' (Verse 31)

Almighty Allah then commanded:

> Now place your hand inside your garment, and it will come out shining white without blemish.' (Verse 32)

Again Moosaa ﷺ did as he was commanded. He placed his hand inside his garment's top opening. When he drew it out, it was shining white, though clearly very healthy. He was struck with awe. Soon another instruction came so as to calm him down: 'Then draw your hand close to your side to still your fear.' (Verse 32) This act would serve to strengthen his heart and release him from fear. These were the two proofs from Allah for Pharaoh and his chiefs who were a defiantly disobedient people.' (Verse 32)

Moosaa ﷺ was so commanded because he was being sent against a tyrant with neither an army nor any material resources to support his case. Allah ﷻ instructed Moosaa ﷺ to have recourse to this action (drawing his hand close) on such fearful occasions. In this way Pharaoh would not be able to weaken his heart, not even with all his power.

Moosaa ﷺ now must go to Pharaoh with these miraculous proofs and to present himself as the Messenger of Allah. He was to call Pharaoh and his nobles to the service and obedience of the Lord of the worlds. Moosaa ﷺ then recalled that he had killed one of Pharaoh's men and that he had to leave Egypt to save himself: 'I fear that they will kill me.' (Verse 33) This does not mean that Moosaa ﷺ was hesitant out of fear. Rather, this means that he asked Allah to make the necessary arrangements so that Pharaoh and his nobles would not arrest him on a murder charge immediately upon his arrival and before he had spoken to them about the fact that he was Allah's Messenger. He further said:

> And my brother Haaroon (Aaron) is more eloquent in speech than I am, so send him with me as an aid to confirm my truthfulness, for I fear that they will reject me as a liar.' (Verse 34)

Moosaa ﷺ is reassured and his request is granted. (Verse 35) This encounter between Prophet Moosaa ﷺ and Allah is described in greater detail in *Soorat Ṯaa Haa* (20, 9-48). 'We shall surely strengthen your cause with your brother.' That was done by making Haaroon ﷺ a Prophet, for which Moosaa ﷺ had prayed. Hence some scholars have said that no one did a brother greater good than Moosaa ﷺ did to Haaroon, for whose Prophethood he supplicated.

As a matter of fact, Allah ﷻ not only granted Moosaa's request, but also gave him a greatly reassuring promise. He endowed both brothers with power: 'They will not be able to touch you.' (Verse 35) No tyrant possessed the means to harm them.

This wonderful scene is closed. Time passed and the location changed; Moosaa and Haaroon were then confronting Pharaoh. They stood in his Council, calling him to Allah. When they showed him Allah's clear signs, he said, 'This is nothing but forged sorcery.' It would mean that in Pharaoh's view the staff's changing into a snake and the shining hand were not real transformations but mere illusions, which Moosaa ﷺ tried to pass off as miracles or proofs. In other words, according to Pharaoh, all that Moosaa ﷺ had done was to contrive some magical tricks, which he then presented as signs from Allah. He argued, 'Never did we hear of the like of this among our forefathers of old.' (Verse 36) Pharaoh's words were exactly the same as those employed by the Quraysh idolaters in Makkah when Prophet Muhammad ﷺ called on them to believe in One God—Allah.

Moosaa ﷺ gave a very polite answer. He countered Pharaoh's accusation of his being a sorcerer and of forging lies. He pointed out that if he was a liar, he would meet an evil end and that if Pharaoh was lying then his end would also be an evil one. One thing, however, was absolutely clear: a wicked person never meets with true success. A man who is not a Messenger of Allah, but who pretends to be so in order to gain material profits, is surrounded in injustice and wickedness and will never meet with true success.

In like manner, whoever accuses a true Messenger of Allah of being a liar or rejects him and calls him a magician is also guilty of injustice and wickedness and will never meet with true success. Moosaa ﷺ, like every prophet, put this very clearly to Pharaoh and his courtiers (Verse 37).

But Pharaoh's reply was evasive, boastful and sarcastic. What a brazen lie Pharaoh uttered: 'I know of no other deity that you could have other than myself.' (Verse 38) He sarcastically said, 'Moosaa says his God is in heaven, so I would go up into the sky and look at him even though I am convinced that he is a liar.' (Verse 38) What this implied on Pharaoh's part is that he had no evidence that God exists and, according to him, that which lacks proof does not exist, an error commonly committed by many people.

This trend is most common among the atheists, and surprisingly, among the scientists who know it as the first scientific principle that what they do not have evidence for can neither be rejected nor accepted. But most often they take sides against self-evident truths. Sayyid Abul-A'laa al-Mawdoodee remarks,

> This mindset is similar to that of the Communists of the former Soviet Union. They launched sputniks and then glibly claimed that their spaceships had found no god up there in the sky… This shows that the reasoning of ignorant people has not changed over the last 3500 years.' (*Towards Understanding the Qur'an*, Vol. VII, p. 221)

By April of 1961, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to travel into space aboard Vostok 1. Peering through the window of his spacecraft, Gagarin was reported to have made the silly comment, 'I don't see any God up here.' Long before him,

Pharaoh ordered his chief advisor, Haamaan, to raise a high structure so that he could mount up and be able to observe the god of Moosaa ﷺ. (Verse 38) The Qur'an does not say that Pharaoh had constructed such a tower and he climbed it to see Allah. The Qur'an simply quotes what Pharaoh said, whereby it would appear that he was merely trying to fool people by such deceptive talk.

The *soorah* now proceeds straight to display how Pharaoh and his hosts met their end. They thought that they were not answerable to anyone. Acting upon this assumption, they behaved as though they were absolutely free, believing that they would never have to return to Allah.' (Verses 39-41)

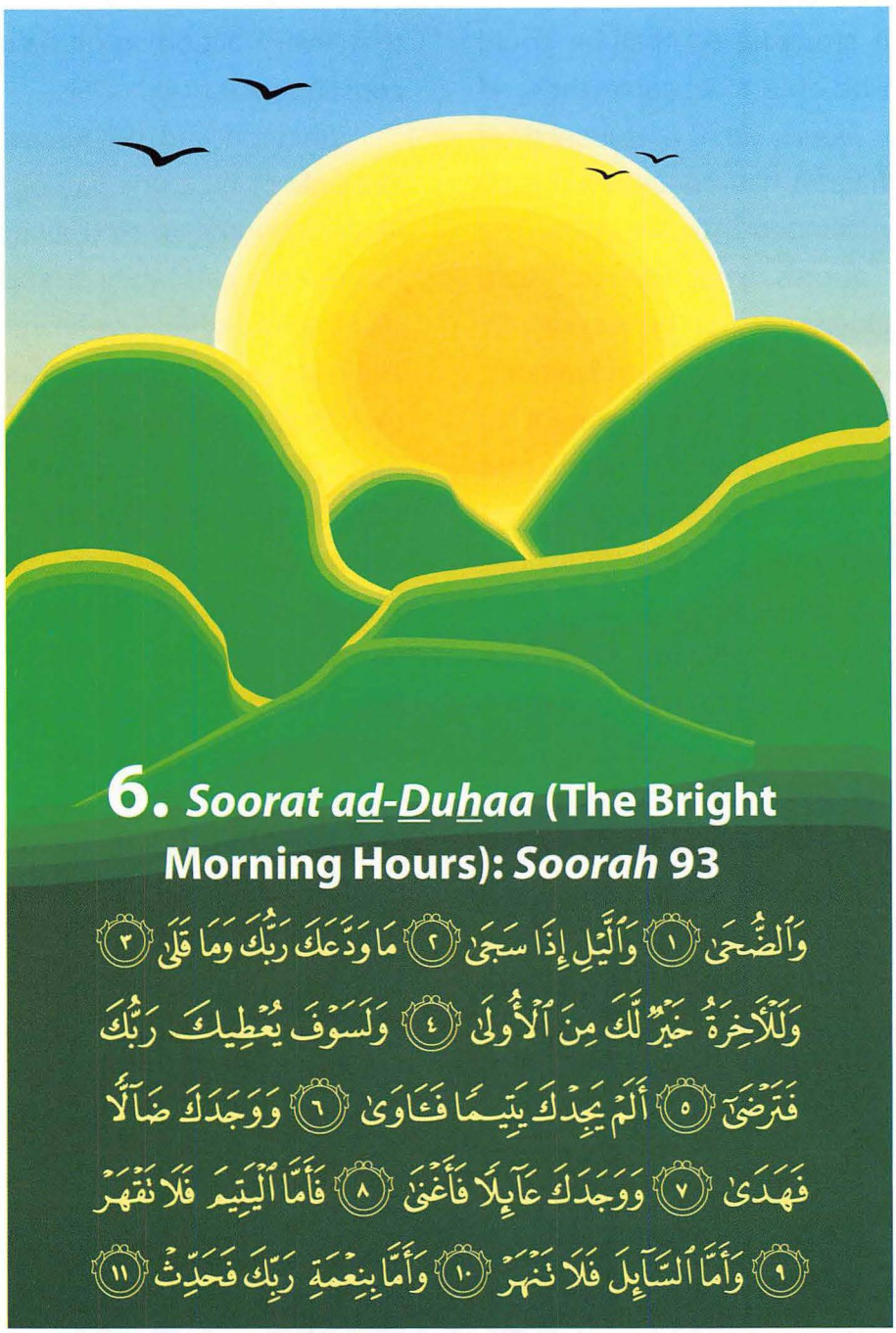
They denied Allah's signs and warnings, and Allah's punishment was quick. Almighty Allah seized him and his hosts with force and cast them into the sea as if he was no more than a dead lizard. Hence, 'See what happened in the end to the wrongdoers.' (Verse 40)

This is a lesson and a warning for all those who deny Allah's messages, do not believe in the hereafter and do not understand that every action must have its inevitable consequence, good or evil.

Pharaoh and his forces left behind an example of how one can obstinately persist in denying the truth. Having led others to this terrible path, they disappeared from the scene to face their woeful end in the Hellfire. Their successors, however, still followed in their footsteps, speedily heading towards the same evil end. The words of the text (Verse 42) state that they will be on the Day of Judgment among the '*maqbooheen*'. This word contains several meanings: **(1)** that they will stand rejected and disowned, **(2)** that they will be deprived of Allah's mercy, and **(3)** that they will be reduced to a weird shape, their faces becoming severely distorted.

Almighty Allah then granted Moosaa ﷺ the *Tawraah*, which inaugurated a new phase in mankind's religious history:

> And so after We destroyed those earlier generations, We gave Moosaa the Book providing insight for mankind, as a guidance and grace, so that they may reflect.' (Verse 43)



An Overview of the *soorah*

Soorat ad-Duhaa is a Makkan *soorah*, that is, it was revealed in Makkah. It is composed of 11 verses and it is *soorah* 93 according to the arrangement of the Glorious Qur'an. The *soorah* emphasizes Allah's generosity to His Messenger ﷺ and how He honoured him and commanded him to be good to the weak and the poor.

The *soorah*, in theme, provides a touch of tenderness and mercy. It is a message of affection and the touch of a gracious hand to soothe pain and remove hardship.

The *soorah* is entirely dedicated to the Prophet ﷺ. It is a message from his Lord which touched his heart with pleasure, joy and tranquillity. All in all, it offers mercy and tenderness to his restless soul and suffering heart.

Several accounts mention that the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet ﷺ came, at one stage, to a halt and the Angel Jibreel عليه السلام stopped coming to him for a while. This period is called 'the break in the revelation' (*fatrat al-wahiy*). Thus, some time elapsed during which the Prophet ﷺ did not receive any revelation. It was a time of deepest distress for the Prophet ﷺ. His opponents in Makkah taunted him on this score, saying, 'Muhammad has been abandoned by his Lord.' Revelation, Jibreel's visits and the link with Allah were the Prophet's only solace in the face of hard rejection and his sole comfort against outright denial. They were the source from which he derived strength to stand firm against the unbelievers who were bent upon rejecting the truth and ridiculing the messenger who brought it. They were intent on directing a wicked, vile attack against the Prophet's message. So when the revelation was withheld, the source of strength for the Prophet ﷺ was cut off.

How long did the pause last? It is generally stated that al-Bayhaqee's opinion of six months 'break' sounds weighty. It is also said that nearest to being correct, the opinion of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Abbaas رضي الله عنهما is that it lasted forty days. In fact, some have even stated that it was not more than a few days. Accordingly, this *soorah* was revealed and it came as a spring of mercy, hope, comfort and reassurance. The *soorah* refuted the unbelievers' false claims and exposed the falsehood they followed.

In the first two verses (Verse 1 and 2), Allah swears by the two great natural signs: **(1)** The forenoon, the time when the sun rises and is bright, which is the time of activity and movement, energy and work, and **(2)** the night when it becomes still and tranquil. This is an oath by the night, which is the time when movement begins to pause. People begin to take shelter and bring an end to their activity. Then follows a clear and emphatic assurance: 'Your Lord has neither forsaken you, nor does He hate you.' (Verse 3) The Prophet's enemies were absolutely false, for Allah is not displeased with him. Nor did He forsake him. Night overtakes a bright day. It does not indicate any displeasure on Allah's part, nor does

it signify perpetual darkness. By the same token, a temporary pause in revelation cannot be taken as indicative of Allah's displeasure towards His Messenger ﷺ. Allah ﷻ swears by the natural scenes that He is going to send down revelation to His Prophet, and that his mission shall continue. It is the rejection of the polytheists who tried to create doubts by claiming that Allah ﷻ had shunned and renounced His Prophet.

'Your Lord has neither forsaken you, nor does He hate you.' He has not abandoned you; nor has He been harsh to you as is alleged by those who want to hurt your heart and soul. For He is your Lord and Protector and you belong to Him. Allah's favours on you have neither run out nor have they been stopped. You are to get much more and better favours in the hereafter than you are getting in this life.

'Surely, the life to come will be better for you than this present life.' (Verse 4) Here Almighty Allah is giving His Messenger ﷺ the good news that He will continue to send down revelations to him and that He has prepared for him such lofty stations in the hereafter that He has not prepared for anyone else. Moreover, what He will give him in the hereafter is far greater and more sublime than what He has bestowed upon him in the present life: the good of this life and the good of the hereafter, all of that which will please him, such as victory, power in the land and the elevation of Allah's Word by means of calling to Him and striving for His sake. He will also multiply his followers and bestow His favours upon him as well as upon his followers. The verse may also mean that each succeeding moment will be better for him than the one preceding it: 'And surely, your Lord shall give you, and you shall be satisfied.' (Verse 5)

The *soorah* then goes on to remind the Prophet ﷺ of his Lord's attitude towards him from the very beginning so that he could reflect on how favourably Allah treated him. Allah ﷻ mentions three immense, lofty blessings, among countless others He bestowed upon him in order to strengthen his heart. 'Did He not find you an orphan and sheltered you? Did He not find you unaware [of the Qur'an, its laws prophethood] and guided you? Did He not find you needy and enriched you?' (Verses 6-8)

Verse 6 alludes to the death of his father before the Prophet's birth, the death of his mother when he was six, and the death of his guardian grandfather ʿAbdul-Muttalib when he was eight. Then Allah ﷻ made his uncle Abu Taalib his guardian. Thus, the *soorah* emphasizes that the Prophet ﷺ was born an orphan, but Allah ﷻ protected him and made so many people kind to him, especially his uncle Abu Taalib despite the fact that he was a polytheist.

The Prophet ﷺ was brought up in an ignorant society which was full of confused beliefs and erroneous practices. He did not like those wrong beliefs and practices but could not find a clear and right way out. Almighty Allah, however, guided him through the revelations and laid down for him the straight way of life. He guided him to the landmarks of the Divine Law or *Sharee'ah* and its path through the Qur'an which He revealed to him and taught him that which he did not know before.

The Qur'an uses the term *daallan* in Verse 7. It comes from the root *d–l-l*, which means 'deviation, loss, deviation from the right way or course, losing the way, missing something, being unable to locate something, becoming untraceable'. *Daallan* could also mean 'unaware', as is used in another derivative of the word in Verse 52 of *Soorat Taa Haa* (*Soorah* 20). Al-Qurtubee (d. 671 AH – 1273 CE) argues, however, that when the Arabs found a solitary tree in a tract of land, without a companion tree, they named it '*Daallan*', and used it as a landmark. Allah called Muhammad ﷺ '*daallan*' in that sense. He found him a solitary figure, without anyone with him in his search for the truth, and to choose him for humankind to be guided to Him through him.' (*Tafseer Ishraaq al-Ma'aanee*, Vol. XIV, p. 151)

'Did He not find you needy and enriched you?' (Verse 8) This is probably an allusion to the fact that the Prophet ﷺ became Khadeejah's trade partner and earned rich profits. Then she married him and placed all her wealth at his disposal. This points to his apparent plentifulness. As for his inner and spiritual richness, Allah alone knows it best. The Prophet ﷺ once said, 'Wealth is not determined by abundance of possessions, but wealth is the richness of the soul.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

After elaborating on the favours of Allah, the *soorah* now moves on to giving three commands to the Prophet ﷺ and all Muslims:

Command 1

'So do not oppress the orphan.' (Verse 9) The Arabic verb *qahara* used in this verse means 'to subjugate, to compel, to subdue and to treat people who are less powerful in an unfair and cruel way.' As a result, Allah's Messenger ﷺ emphasized that the orphan be treated kindly and gently. He forbade any attitude towards them which is bound to hurt their feelings. The Prophet ﷺ said,

> The best home among the Muslims is the one that treats an orphan well. The worst home among the Muslims is the one that treats an orphan poorly. I and the one who cares for an orphan will be like these two in Paradise. The Prophet ﷺ indicated his two fingers. (*Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, *h*adeeth no. 137;it is also reported by Muslim)

The Prophet ﷺ pointed with his two fingers, which are close to each other, meaning that the person who brings up an orphan will be with him in Paradise.

Command 2

'And as for the beggar, do not repel him.' (Verse 10) The term *saa'il* literally denotes 'someone who asks', which signifies not only a 'beggar' but also anyone who asks for help in a difficult situation, be it physical or moral, or even for intellectual enlightenment. The original term *saa'il* can also be translated as 'seeker of knowledge'. The Prophet ﷺ has forbidden repulsing either of them. The best course of action is to give the beggar something. If one is unable to give a beggar anything, one should at least apologize to them politely so as not to give them further grief. Likewise, one should not respond harshly and unkindly to someone who is searching for knowledge and asks questions. The word *tanhar* is derived from the verb *nahara*, which means 'to repulse, rebuke, chase away or drive away'.

Command 3

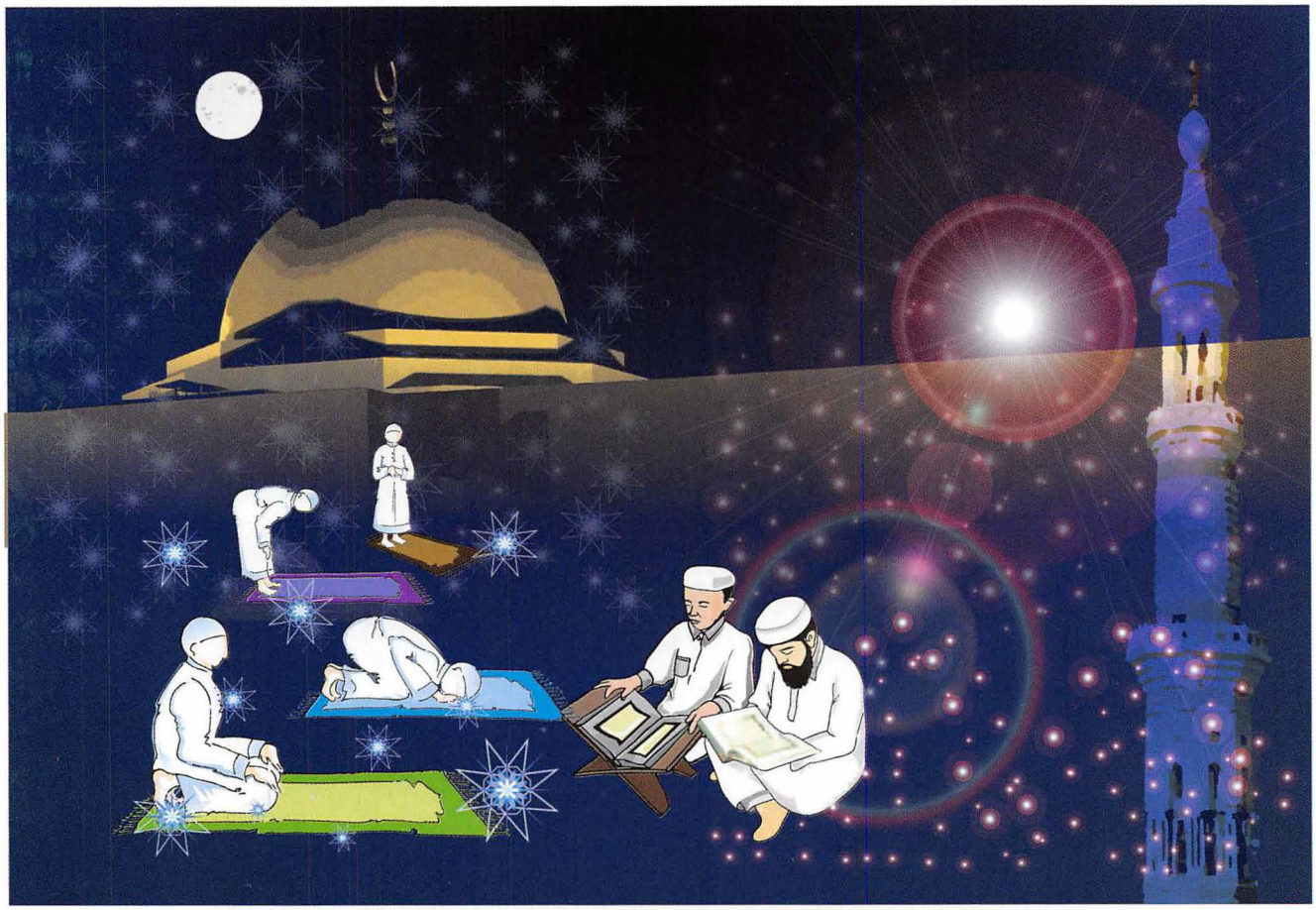
'And as for your Lord's blessing, declare it.' (Verse 11) Declaring or speaking about divine blessings to people is one way of thanking Allah ﷻ. If a person has done something good to another, they should be thanked. The Prophet ﷺ once said,

> He who does not thank people does not thank Allah.' (Reported by A*h*mad and at-Tirmidhee)

It is obligatory to offer gratitude to Allah on every favour He has bestowed upon us. The way of offering thankfulness, however, may be different. If Allah grants a person wealth, a part of that wealth may be spent with sincerity in Allah's way. If Allah grants a person knowledge, they should impart it to others! These instructions reflect the need of the day, in that greedy and materialistic society in which the weak who could not defend their own rights were not catered for. Islam came to reform that society with Allah's laws which establish equity, justice and good will.

Soorat al-Qadr, which consists of 5 verses, undoubtedly belongs to a very early part of the Makkan period. It is *soorah* 97 according to the arrangement of the Glorious Qur'an. Its subject is the revelation of the Qur'an on the Night of Decree (*Laylat al-Qadr*). It displays the great status this night has in the sight of Allah and states that it is better than a thousand months.

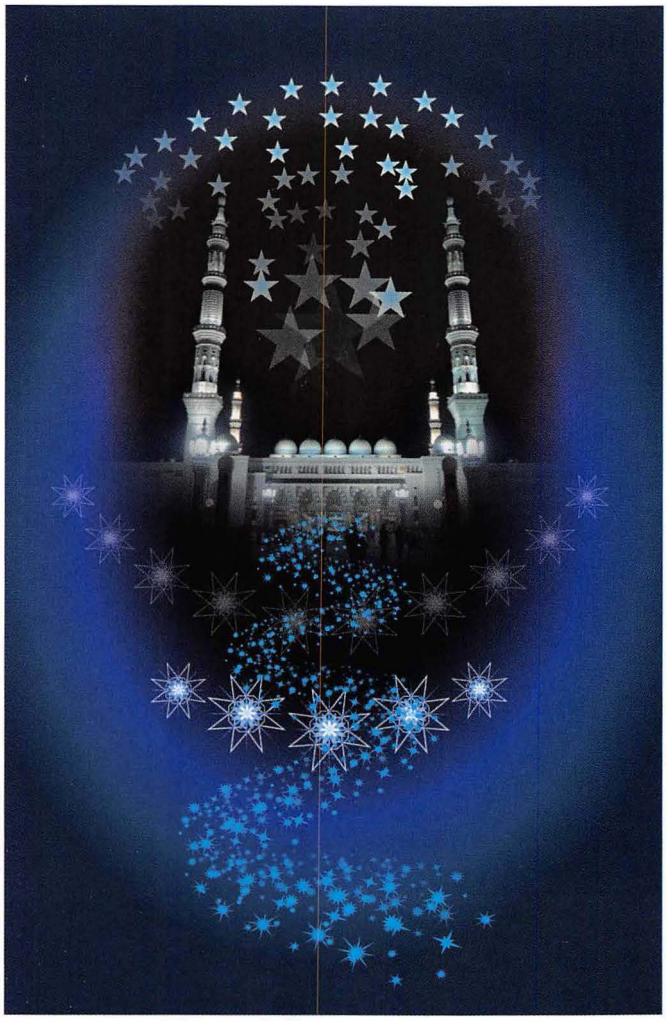
Allah begins this *soorah* with the royal 'We', which He alone is worthy of using. He states: 'We sent the Qur'an down [to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ] on the Night of Decree (*al-Qadr*).' According to the sound opinion in this respect, it occurs in the last ten odd nights of the month of *Ramadaan*. After this night, the Qur'an continued to



be sent down for a period of roughly twenty-three years, according to the course of events.

The *soorah* then asks the Prophet ﷺ, as well as every listener or reader: What will explain to you what the Night of Decree is? In other words, unless Allah informs you about it, you will not know its great status. Then Allah ﷻ informs us about its status: 'The Night of decree is better than a thousand months.' That is, this night is more meritorious and great in blessings, and worshipping Allah in this night is better than worshipping Him for a thousand months, (i.e. 83 years and 4 months); for it was during this night that the revelation of the Qur'an began. What would the value of the existence of this Qur'an be were it not sent down?

Part of the greatness of *Laylat al-Qadr* is that the angels descend during this night, from the beginning of the night until its end, led by the Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) – and he is the one this verse refers to as the Spirit: *ar-Rooh* (Verse 4). They come down in groups, filling the space between the heavens and the earth, covering the horizons because of their great numbers which are known to Allah alone. They come down with every good and blessed matter upon every believer who is engaged in the remembrance of Allah, whether standing or sitting, worshipping Allah and showing gratitude for His greatest blessing: the Qur'an, the commission of the Messenger ﷺ and being guided to faith (*eemaan*). The night is nothing but peace (*salaam*) from Allah to the people who obey Him, and peace from the angels upon the believers who pray, recite the Qur'an, remember Allah and seek His forgiveness. This continues until the appearance of dawn.



The Qur'an clarifies that this night falls in the month of *Ramaḍaan* (*Soorat al-Baqarah*, 2:185). It is stated further in authentic traditions of the Prophet ﷺ that this night should be sought out in the last ten odd nights of the month of *Ramaḍaan*.

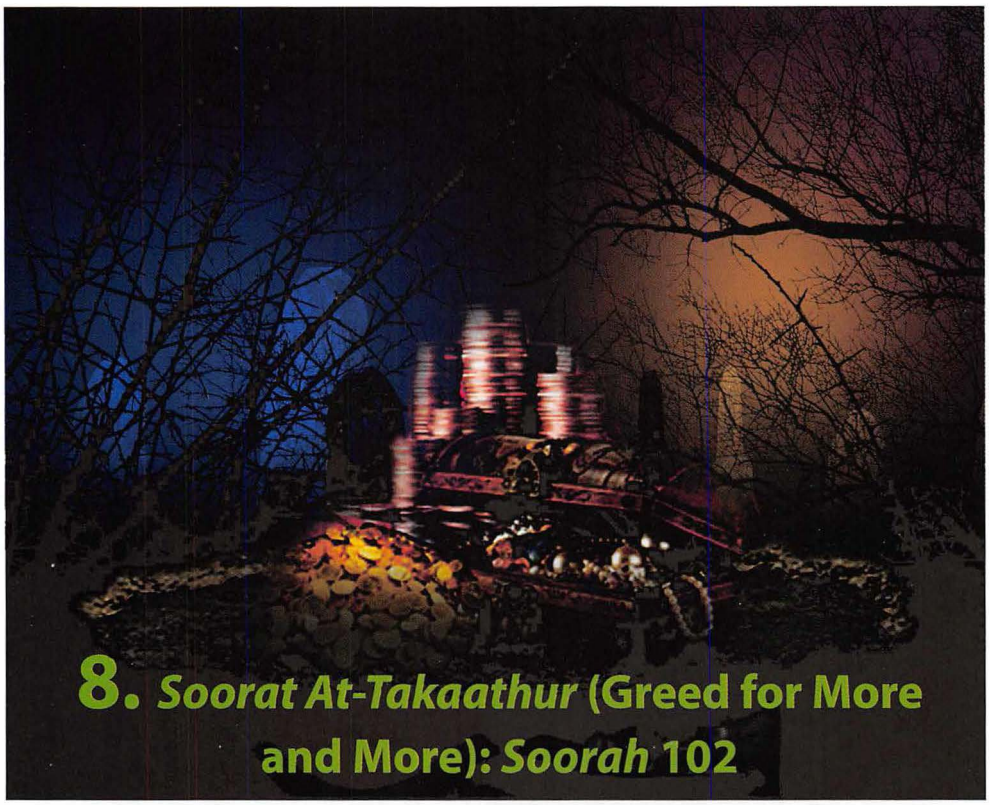
The great merit of this night is mentioned in the *soorah* itself, that is, the acts of worship performed in this single night is better than worship done in one thousand months, which amounts to eighty-three years and four months. The figure here and elsewhere in the Qur'an does not signify its precise number but simply denotes a very large number. One of the meanings of the word '*qadr*' is greatness, honour and divinity. Thus, the night is called as such because it is a night of honour, greatness, majesty and dignity.

Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim reported on the authority of Abu Hurayrah ﷺ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

> Whoever stands [in prayer] during the Night of *al-Qadr* with faith and expecting a reward [from Allah] will be forgiven for his previous sins.

On account of geographical positions, the time will obviously vary from place to place. As a result, the Night of Decree will not occur in all the regions of the world simultaneously. This is not a problem because people of each location should calculate and consecrate the night and receive its blessings according to their geographical locations. Some Qur'an commentators state that we know that when it is night in one place of the globe it is day in another place. In fact, it could well be in Allah's scheme that were this blessed night to be in a particular area of the globe, He would give full rewards to those that might happen to be living in the day-zone and making their own efforts towards seeking it. *Imaam* ar-Raazee (d.604 AH 1207 CE) has a few interesting points to offer:

> Allah ﷻ concealed this night like He has done with many things: He has concealed His pleasure with acts of obedience so one will strive towards them all; He has concealed the answer to supplications so one will work towards making every supplication matter; He has hidden His greatest name so people will magnify all of His names; He has hidden His acceptance of repentance so one will repent for every sin; He has concealed the time of one's death so one will use his entire life for worship and He has hidden this night so people will worship Him every night [from the last 10 nights of *Ramaḍaan*]. (*at-Tafseer al-Kabeer*)



8. *Soorat At-Takaathur* (Greed for More and More): *Soorah* 102

أَلْهَىٰكُمُ ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ ﴿١﴾ حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ ٱلْمَقَابِرَ ﴿٢﴾ كَلَّا سَوْفَ
تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣﴾ ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤﴾ كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ
عِلْمَ ٱلْيَقِينِ ﴿٥﴾ لَتَرَوُنَّ ٱلْجَحِيمَ ﴿٦﴾ ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا
عَيْنَ ٱلْيَقِينِ ﴿٧﴾ ثُمَّ لَتُسْـَٔلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ ٱلنَّعِيمِ ﴿٨﴾

1. The mutual rivalry [for piling up of worldly things] diverts you,
2. Until you visit the graves (i.e. till you die).
3. Nay! You shall come to know!
4. Again nay! You shall come to know!
5. Nay! if you knew with a sure knowledge [the end result of piling up, you would not have been occupied yourselves in worldly things].
6. Verily, you shall see the blazing Fire [Hell]!
7. And again, you shall it with certainty of sight!
8. Then on that Day you shall be asked about the worldy delights [in which you indulged]

Soorat at-Takaathur is a Makkan *soorah* which consists of eight verses. It is *soorah* 102 according to the arrangement of the Glorious Qur'an. The *soorah* is one of the most powerful passages of the Qur'an and illuminates people's unbound greed for more and more in general, and more specifically, the tendencies which have come to dominate all human societies in our technological age. The *soorah* is a warning to those who are occupied in this life with multiplying wealth so much so that worldly pursuits deprive them of thinking of the hereafter and doing good deeds.

The word *at-takaathur* (Verse 1) bears the meaning of 'greedily striving for an increase'; that is to say, in benefits, be they tangible or intangible, real or illusory. It denotes the act of seeking to increase to obtain more and vying to gather more. 'The drive to accumulate [worldly riches] continues to distract you' (Verse 1). 'You are obsessed by greed for more and more': it denotes people's obsessive striving for more and more comforts, more material goods, greater power over other people or over nature, and unending technological progress. An eager pursuit of such endeavours, to the exclusion of everything else, is bound to deprive them of all spiritual insight and bar them from the acceptance of any restrictions and self-consciousness based on purely moral values. The result is that not only individuals but whole societies gradually lose all inner stability and thus all chances of happiness.

The central theme of this *soorah* is the resurrection. Thus, the *soorah* is addressed to everyone charmed by the worldly goods and pays no attention at all to the life of the hereafter. These people are driven by greed and live for the moment. They devote all their energies and resources to material comfort and enjoyment, and their entire life is a struggle for accumulation of wealth until they are laid to rest in their graves (Verse 2).

The Qur'an warns that through unending accumulation and competition, human beings attempt to ignore their mortality and the reason behind which they are in this world, namely to worship Allah. These people are in for a rude shock:

> Nay! You shall come to know! Again, nay! You shall come to know! Nay! If you knew with a sure knowledge! Surely, you shall see the Blazing fire (*al-Jaheem*)! And again, you shall see it with certainty of sight! Then, on that day you will most surely be asked about the delight [in which you indulged in this worldly life].' (Verses 3-8)

People take delight and indulge in

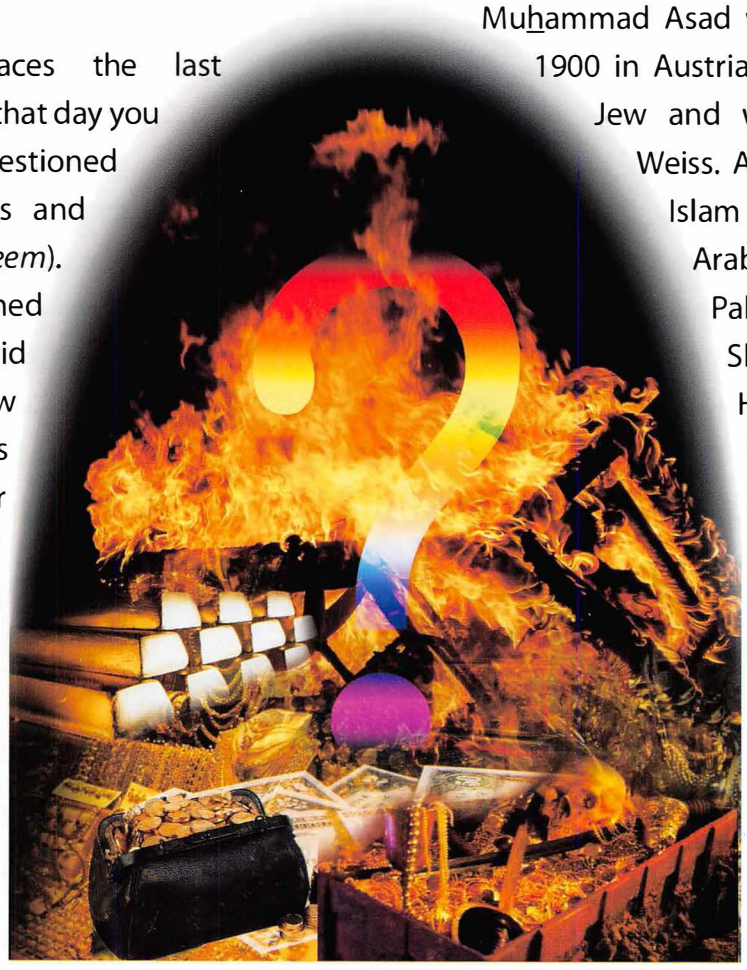
rivalry for wealth, children and the pleasure of this life from which they are sure to depart! They are unaware of what is going to come thereafter. With a deep and grave rhythm, the *soorah* strikes the hearts of such people with the terror awaiting them after they are left alone in their graves. Nay! You shall come to know!

Then it repeats the same note and employs the same words and the same firm terrifying note: 'If you knew with a sure knowledge.' (Verse 5) This means had they known what they ought to know for sure, they would not have indulged in such rivalry for petty gains. The *soorah* then uncovers the fearful fact which has been withheld: 'Surely, you shall see the Blazing Fire.' It then stresses the fact and raises its impact: Again, you will most certainly see it with your very eyes.' (Verse 7)

Finally, it places the last statement: 'Then on that day you will certainly be questioned about your delights and comforts (*an-na'eem*). You will be questioned about all this: How did you acquire it? How did you utilize it? Was it obtained lawfully or unlawfully? Or was it grabbed unlawfully and used in a sinful manner? You will be questioned! Did you praise and offer gratitude to its real Giver? Did you give the poor their share? Now you think little of it. But beyond lie heavy responsibilities. The *soorah* sounds a wake-up call and portrays the life of this world as being a fleeting life. In a wink, this life will be over. Its small leaf will be turned. A moment of reckoning will come now! The goods one has grasped will be of no worth!

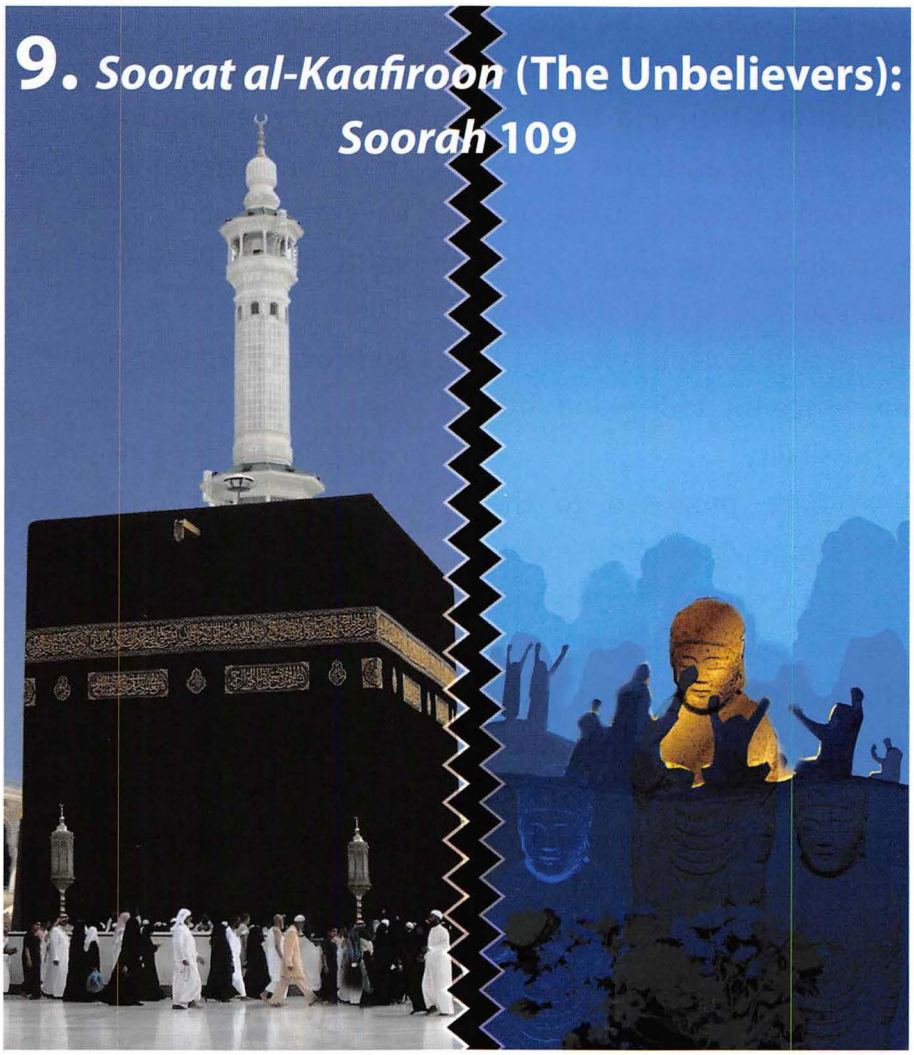
The Arabic word *an-na'eem* (translated here as pleasure) means blessings or delights which include all that life affords of good things, such as good health, security and other comforts.

It is important to note that it was this very *soorah* which led Muhammad Asad, the most famous twentieth century scholar of Islam, to embrace Islam. He has narrated this faith-deepening experience in his autobiographical work *The Road to Mecca*, pp. 308-10, 1981 Edition)



Muhammad Asad was born on July 2, 1900 in Austria. He was formerly a Jew and was called Leopold Weiss. After his reversion to Islam in 1926, he lived in Arabia, India and later Pakistan, New York, Sharjah and Spain. He died in Spain on February 20, 1992. His other works include *Islam at the Crossroad*, *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree: Early Years of Islam* and *The Message of the Qur'an, a Commentary on the Glorious Qur'an.*

9. *Soorat al-Kaafiroon* (The Unbelievers): *Soorah* 109



Soorat al-Kaafiroon is a Makkan *soorah* which consists of six verses. It is *Soorah* 109 according to the arrangement of the Qur'an. This *soorah* is a total rejection of polytheism and unbelief and an affirmation of the sincere worship of the true One God—Allah.

قُلْ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْكَٰفِرُونَ ﴿١﴾ لَآ أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَلَآ أَنتُمْ
عَٰبِدُونَ مَآ أَعْبُدُ ﴿٣﴾ وَلَآ أَنَا۠ عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدتُّمْ ﴿٤﴾ وَلَآ أَنتُمْ عَٰبِدُونَ
مَآ أَعْبُدُ ﴿٥﴾ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِىَ دِينِ ﴿٦﴾

1. Say: O unbelievers,
2. I do not worship what you worship,
3. Nor do you worship what I worship,
4. Nor am I going to worship what you worship,
5. Neither are you going to worship what I worship,
6. To you your religion and to me my religion.

According to most scholars, the second and third verses are to be understood in the past tense and the fourth and the fifth verses should be understood in the future tense. This is the opinion of al-Bukhaaree. But according to some, they have been repeated for emphasis. A third opinion is that the second and the third verses express the existing situation, while the fourth and fifth deny any future possibility.

The Quraysh once proposed to the Prophet ﷺ that he should worship their idols for a year, and in return, they would worship his God for a year. He refused this offer and then this *soorah* was revealed, instructing him how to respond to them. The *soorah* contains this response. The *soorah* expresses one single theme, namely that no one or thing may be worshipped besides Allah.

A Word about *Kufr* (Unbelief)

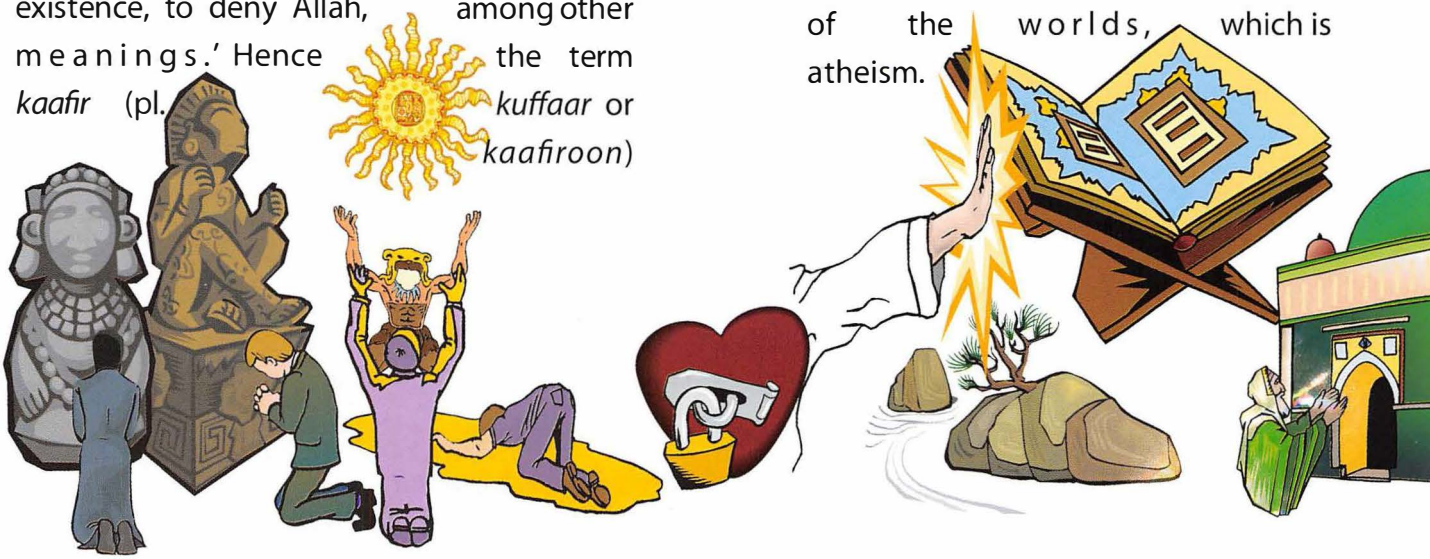
The word *kufr* is a noun which is derived from the root word *k – f – r* which means 'to cover, to hide, to cover seed in the soil, to plant seeds, to be ungrateful, to hide Allah's existence, to deny Allah, among other meanings.' Hence the term *kaafir* (pl. *kuffaar* or *kaafiroon*) means one who is an unbeliever. It is important to note that the word *kaafir* or *kuffaar* is not a derogatory expression. Rather, it is a name for those who reject faith. Some commentators have mentioned that the literal meaning of word *kuffaar* in *Soorat al-Hadeed* (57:20) is 'tillers or farmers' because they sow the seed and cover it up with soil. The word *kaffaarah* means penance or atonement, because it conceals and removes sins.

The root of *kufr*, as pointed out above, is *k – f - r*, which means 'to cover or hide'. Hence, it also contains the denial of something, which has the underlying meaning of unbelief that is concealing the truth or denying it. Thus, *kufr* is used as the opposite of *eemaan*, which means affirmation and belief. Hence, *kufr* denotes unbelief and rejection. *Kufr* is also used as the opposite of *shukr* (thankfulness). In this case, it signifies ungratefulness or thanklessness.

Various forms of *Kufr*

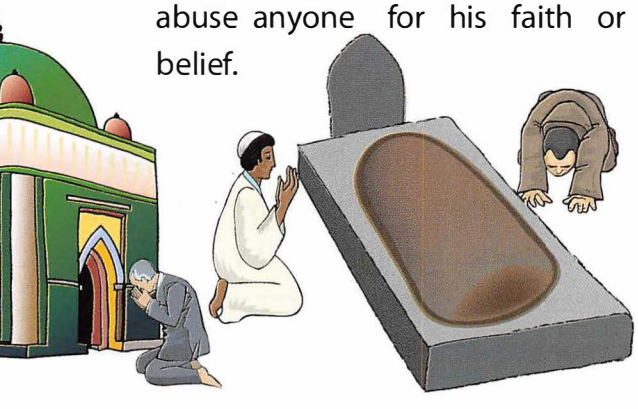
Kufr may take different forms:

1. One may completely deny the existence of Allah and reject that God is the Supreme Being and the Lord of the worlds, which is atheism.



2. A person who does not believe that Allah (or God) is the one true deity (object of worship) and is to be worshipped exclusively is a polytheist, or *mushrik*.
3. One may believe in Allah but refuse to accept His guidance and laws and reject that these are the sources of knowledge and guidance.
4. One may accept that one should follow Allah's guidance but refuse to believe in His Messengers.
5. A person, while believing in some of the Messengers, may make a distinction between them.
6. Despite believing in Allah, His Messengers and His Books, a person may refuse to follow their teachings.

All these represent different forms of *kufr*. The *soorah* defines the right attitude to those who reject faith; in matters of truth we can make no compromise, but there is no need to persecute or abuse anyone for his faith or belief.



10. *Soorat al-Ikhlaas* (Purity of Faith or Pure Sincerity): *Soorah* 112

Soorat al-Ikhlaas is a Makkan *soorah* and consists of four verses. It is *Soorah* 112, according to the arrangement of the Noble Qur'an. The *soorah* discusses the subject of Allah's Oneness (*at-Tawheed*), that He is the One sought out at all times, and that He is completely Self-sufficient.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿١﴾ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ﴿٢﴾
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ﴿٣﴾ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ
كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴿٤﴾

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

1. Say: He is Allah, [Who is] One,
2. Allah, the Everlasting Refuge.
3. He does not beget, Nor is He begotten,
4. And there is none comparable to Him.

The nature of Allah is here indicated to us in a few words such as we can understand: The qualities of Allah are described in numerous places

elsewhere in the Qur'an. Here we are specially taught to avoid the pitfalls into which people and nations have fallen at various times in trying to understand Allah ﷻ.

The first thing we have to note is that His nature is sublime, so far beyond our limited conceptions that the best way in which we can realize Him is to feel that He is a Personality: He is near to us. We owe our existence to Him alone. He is the One and Only God—Allah. He is the Only One to whom worship is due. All other things or beings that we can think of are His creatures and in no way comparable to Him. He is Eternal, without beginning or end. He is Absolute, not limited by time or place or circumstance. He does not have a son or father. He is not like any other person or thing that we know or can imagine. His qualities and nature are unique.

The word *aṣ-Ṣamad* is difficult to translate by using one single word. Literally the word *aṣ-Ṣamad* is applied to one who has no stomach and therefore does not eat or drink. In other words, He is one who is not dependent on anything or anybody. The word also denotes one whose attributes have reached the highest point of their development and perfection so that they cannot be bettered.

Eternal: 'One without a beginning and without an end', is another interpretation. According to some scholars, the term *aṣ-Ṣamad* has been actually explained by what follows: He does not beget, nor is He begotten. Literally, *aṣ-Ṣamad* would also imply One who stands in no one's need, while everyone else stands in need of Him. In other words, One before whom people put forward their needs: the Everlasting Refuge.

The word *Aḥad* (Verse 1) has the added meaning of absolute and continuous oneness and absence of equals. *Aṣ-Ṣamad* is the Master whose control is complete.

The *soorah* may be regarded as the creed of Islam. It contains a negation of *shirk* (association of other things or beings with Allah) in all its kinds.

The *soorah* is one of the most beloved portions of the Glorious Qur'an. A number of prophetic traditions tell us that whoever loves this *soorah*, Allah would love them and would admit them into Paradise. Once the Prophet ﷺ once appointed a man in command of a brigade and this man was leading his men in prayer and he used to conclude his prayers by reciting *Soorat al-Ikhlaaṣ*. Upon their return, the soldiers mentioned this fact to the prophet ﷺ and he said: 'Ask him why he did that.'

they asked the man and he replied, 'I do so because it contains the attributes of the Most Compassionate and so I love to recite it.' The prophet ﷺ then said, 'Tell him that Allah loves him.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim on the authority of ʿAa'ishah ﵂)

Abu Hurayrah ﵁ also narrated that he once went out with the Prophet ﷺ and he heard a man reciting *Soorat al-Ikhlaas*, and the Prophet ﷺ said, 'It has become confirmed [for him].' Abu Hurayrah ﵁ asked him, 'What has become confirmed?' 'Paradise,' he replied. (Reported by at-Tirmidhee and classified as *saheeh* by *Shaykh* al-Albaanee)

Anas ibn Maalik ﵁ also narrated that once a man said to the Prophet ﷺ, 'I really love this *soorah*, Messenger of Allah.' The Prophet ﷺ said to him, 'Your love for it will admit you into Paradise.' (Reported by at-Tirmidhee and classified as *saheeh* by *Shaykh* al-Albaanee)

The Glorious Qur'an

6. The Glorious Qur'an's Authority and Place in Islamic Beliefs, and its Relationship with Other Sources of Knowledge

The Qur'an is the Sacred Scripture of the religion of Islam. It is referred to as the 'Glorious Qur'an', the 'Noble Qur'an' and the 'Illustrious Qur'an', among other names. It is in Arabic, and it is the literal, uncreated word of Allah. Since the Qur'an is the uncreated word of Allah, all its words without exception are necessarily Allah's. The Prophet ﷺ was only the mouthpiece, so that it is Allah who is speaking in the Qur'an from beginning to end.

The Qur'an may be defined as 'the Book containing the Speech of Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Arabic and transmitted to us by the continuous testimony.' It is the clear proof of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, the most authoritative guide for Muslims, and the first source of the *Shareeʿah*, or the Islamic Law. Muslim scholars are unanimous on this, and some even hold that it is the only source and that all other sources are explanatory of the Qur'an.

The revelation of the Qur'an began with *Soorat al-ʿalaq* (96:1-5), starting with the words 'Read in the Name of your Lord' and ending with the *aayah* in *Soorat al-Baqarah*, 2:281): 'And fear the day when you will be returned to Allah. Then everyone will be paid what they have earned, and they will not be

dealt with unjustly.' Al-Bukhaaree reported on the authority of 'Abdullaah ibn 'Abbaas ﷺ that this (i.e. 2:281) was the last verse revealed to the Prophet ﷺ. 'Abdullaah ibn'Abbaas ﷺ added, 'The Prophet ﷺ lived nine nights after this verse was revealed, then he passed away.'

There are 114 *soorahs* (sing. *soorah*) and 6236 *aayaat* (sing. *aayah*) of unequal length in the Qur'an. The shortest of these *soorahs* consists of three verses and the longest one consists of 286 verses. The longer *soorahs* appear first and the *soorahs* become shorter as the text proceeds. Both the order of the *aayaat* within each *soorah* and the sequence of the *soorahs* were finally determined by the Prophet ﷺ himself. According to this arrangement, the Qur'an begins with *Soorat al-Faatihah* and ends with *Soorat an-Naas*.

6.1. A Word about *Soorah* and *Aayah*

The Qur'an is divided into *suwar*[1] (sing. *soorah*), and the *suwar* into *aayaat* (sing. *aayah*). They contain a sum of 77,497 words or *kalimaat* (sing. *kalimah*). The term *soorah* as a division of the Qur'an is coined by the Qur'an for itself. It is sometimes translated into English as Chapter, though this is actually inaccurate.

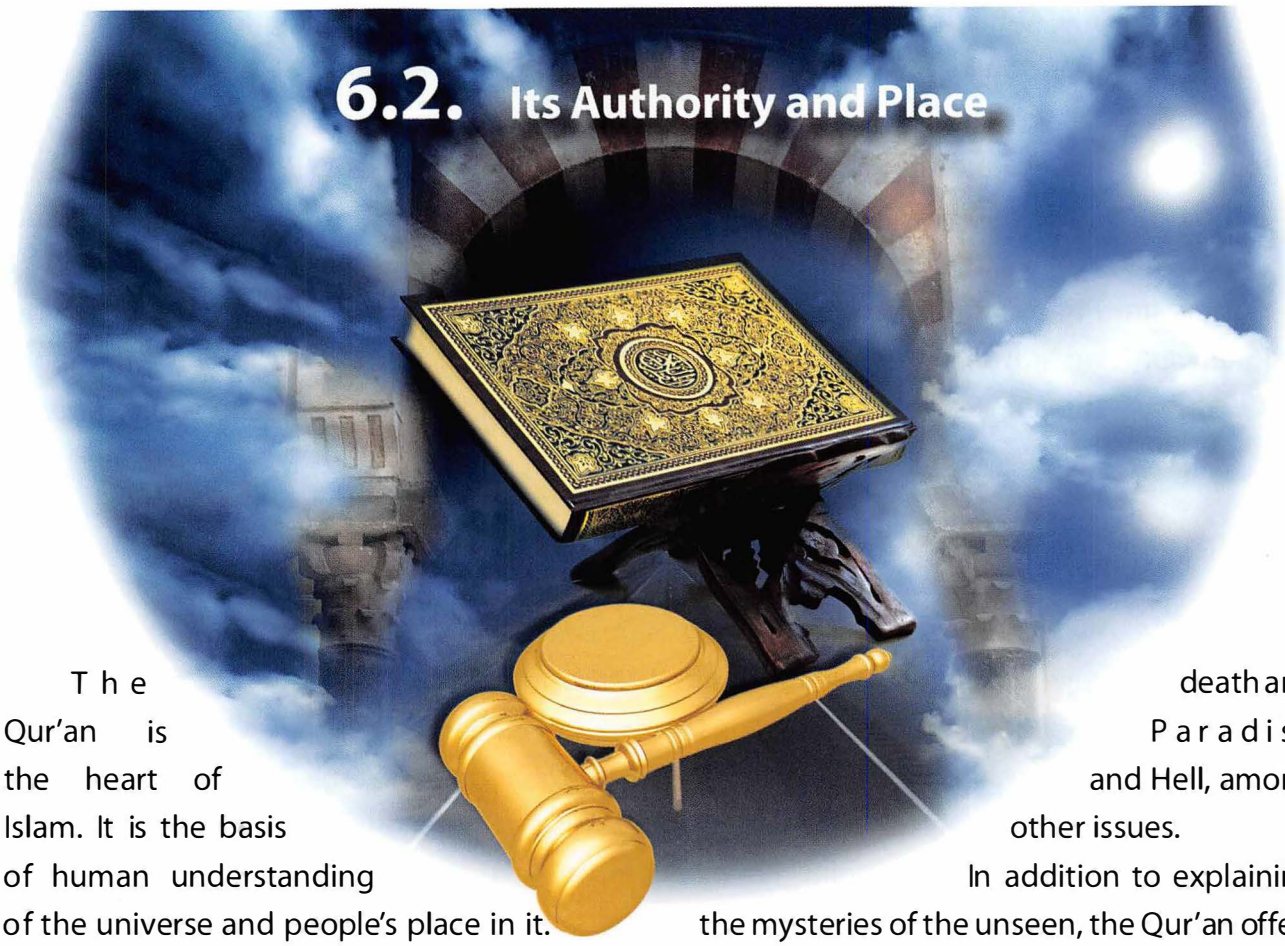
The term *soorah*, according to word history (etymology), denotes any lofty position or high point. From this meaning the Arabs have the phrase *soor al-Madeenah* or 'the city wall'. The word also came to be used for a 'wall' surrounding the house. It is in this sense that the Gracious Qur'an uses the term for itself, without literary precedent in Arabic, to indicate a Qur'anic division. It contains within its perimeter a set of well-defined 'signs' (literally *aayaat*), just as a fence marks off and encircles distinct properties. Simply stated, a *soorah* is an independent piece of divine revelation specific to the Qur'an. It is made up of signs (*aayaat*), which have a beginning and an end. The term verse, for the Arabic *aayah*, has gained acceptance though it does not convey the real meaning of the Qur'anic term *aayah*.

The Arabic term *aayah* (pl. *aayaat*) has many meanings, such as sign, token, mark, miracle, wonder, marvel, model, example and paragon. Its wide usage in the Qur'an can be evaluated by the fact that *aayah* and its derivatives occur 385 times in the Qur'an. Each *aayah* is a sign from Allah that establishes the Qur'anic divine origin. People are urged to reflect on the Qur'anic *aayaat* to attain insight.

The Qur'an is the Book of Allah. It resembles no human literary work, either structurally or in the matter of style. Its literary style is a rhymed prose. It is not poetry, for it follows no metre; rather it is rhythmical and is in rhymed prose.

1- *Suwar* is the actual plural form of the Arabic word *soorah*, which has been transliterated throughout this and other books in the series as *soorahs*, as this form has been widely accepted.

6.2. Its Authority and Place



The Qur'an is the heart of Islam. It is the basis of human understanding of the universe and people's place in it. It is Allah's final message to mankind and is exactly the same in its present version as it was in the time of the Prophet ﷺ. The Qur'an is a book of *hidaayah*, guidance for mankind, and as such its authority is final. It contains knowledge imparted by Allah ﷻ for the guidance for humankind.

The Glorious Qur'an occupies a place of eminence: the place so occupied has not been attained at any time by any book anywhere. There are countless considerations which entitle the Noble Qur'an to a place of eminence to which no other book can aspire. One of these considerations is that it throws light on all the fundamentals of religion, all Islamic beliefs, the existence and Oneness of Almighty Allah, His messengers and prophets, the angels, the revealed scriptures, the reward for good and punishment for evil, life after death and Paradise and Hell, among other issues.

In addition to explaining the mysteries of the unseen, the Qur'an offers solutions to the most difficult problems of this life, such as the distribution of wealth, marriage and divorce, the creation of mankind, the creation of the sun and the moon, and all other questions on which people's happiness and advancement depend in any degree. The value of these ideas and beliefs is further increased when it is seen that it does not confront people with dogmas (blind assertions of opinions and beliefs) but gives reasons for every assertion made, whether relating to the physical or the spiritual life. There are hundreds of topics on which the Qur'an has enriched the literature of the world. Whether it is discussing questions relating to spiritual existence or to physical life on earth, the Qur'an follows an argumentative course and convinces by argument and not by dogma.

However, the contents of the Qur'an are not classified subject wise. The *aayaat* on various topics appear in unexpected places. To give just a few examples, consider the reference concerning the angels in the second *soorah* in the midst of other *aayaat* which relate to the subject of creation of mankind (*al-Baqarah*, 2:30-34). Explaining the topic, Dr. Muhammad Hashim Kamali observes:

> The Command concerning *salaah* appears in the second *soorah*, in the midst of other *aayaat* which relate to the subject of divorce (*al-Baqarah*, 2:228-237). In the same *soorah*, we find rules which relate to wine-drinking, apostasy and war, followed by passages concerning the treatment of orphans and marriage to unbelieving women (*al-Baqarah*, 2: 216-221). Similarly, the *aayaat* relating to the pilgrimage or *hajj* occur both in *Soorat al-Baqarah* (2:196-203) and *Soorat al-Hajj* (22:26-28). Rules on marriage, divorce and revocation (*rij'ah*) are found in *Soorat al-Baqarah*, *Soorat at-Talaaq* and *Soorat an-Nisaa'*. From this a conclusion has been drawn that the Qur'an is an indivisible whole and a guide for belief and action, which must be accepted and followed in its entirety. Hence, any attempt to follow some parts of the Qur'an and abandon others will be totally invalid. (*Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, p.15)

The Qur'an is not a legal or a constitutional document. Legal material occupies only a small portion of the bulk of its text. The Qur'an calls itself *hudaa*, or guidance, not a code of law. Out of over 6200 *aayaat*, less than one-tenth relate to law and jurisprudence, while the remainder are largely concerned with matters of belief and morality, the five pillars of the faith and a variety of other subjects. Its idea of economic and social justice, including the legal contents, is on the whole subsidiary to its religious call.

The legal or practical contents of the Qur'an constitute the basis of what is known as *fiqh al-Qur'an*, or the *corpus juris* of the Qur'an. There are close to 350 legal *aataat* in the Qur'an, most of which were revealed in response to problems that were actually encountered. There are an estimated 140 *aayaat* in the Qur'an on devotional matters, such as *salaah* (prayer), *zakaat* (the purifying dues), *siyaam* (fasting), *hajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah), charities, the taking of oaths and penances, among other things. Dr. Kamali, however, warns:

> It will be noted, however, that the *fuqahaa'* (jurists) are not in agreement over these figures, as calculations of this nature tend to differ according to one's understanding of, and approach to, the contents of the Qur'an.' (*Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, pp. 19-20)

In relation to other sources, the Glorious Qur'an is the first and the most authoritative source of the *Sharee'ah*. It is the standard to which Muslims refer in evaluating worldly and otherworldly matters.

For Further Reading and Research

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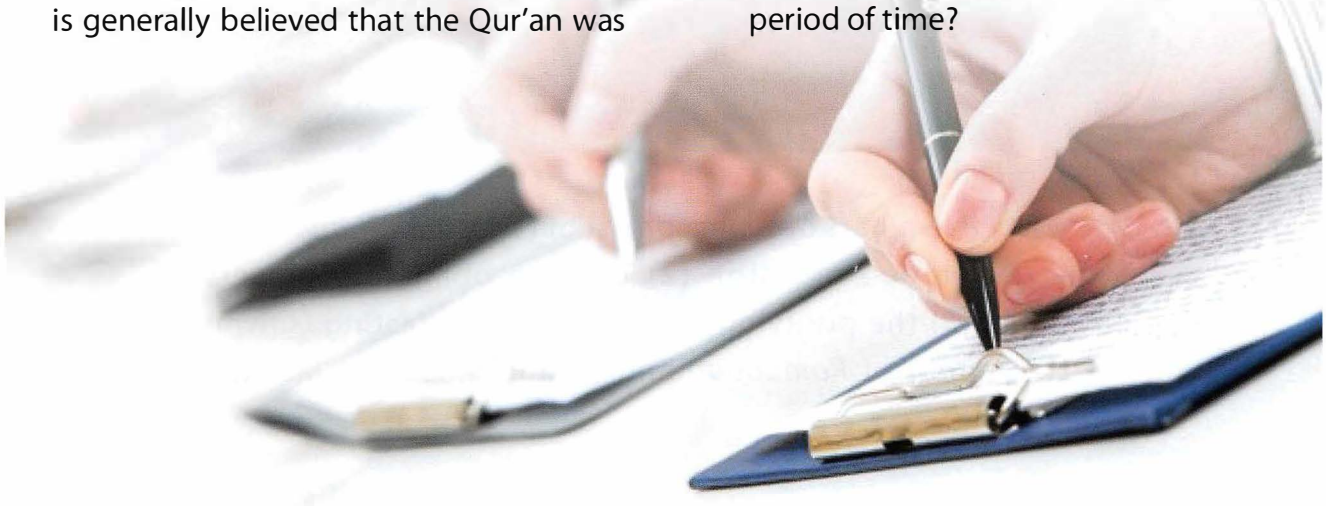
Coursework

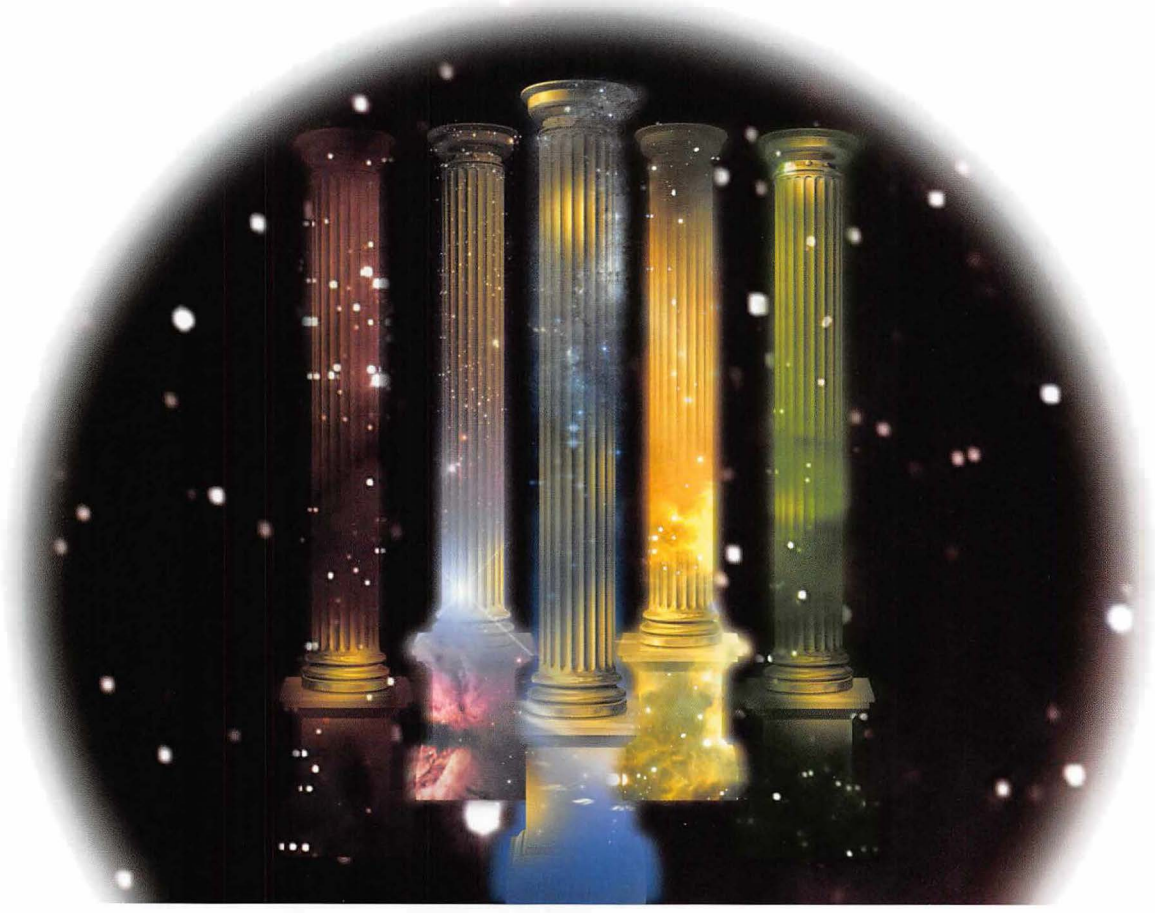
1. 'The compilers of the Qur'an followed a very clear, systematic and careful method'. Give reasons to either agree or disagree with this statement.
2. **(a)** What are the main teachings of *Surat al-Faatihah*?
   (b) How do these teachings explain the relationship between human beings and God?
3. In what different ways is *Surat al-Faatihah* used in the religious life of Muslims?
4. **(a)** Describe the main teachings of the Qur'an about the line of messengers sent by God.
   (b) Assess the value of the books revealed to these messengers.
5. Discuss the significance of the Qur'an in the beliefs and practices of the Muslim community today.
6. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that *Surat al-Ikhlaas* (Surah 112) is equivalent in value to one third of the whole Qur'an. Explain why this is so.
7. Explain *Surat ad-Duhaa* with special reference to the life of the Prophet ﷺ.
8. Give an account of the process by which it is generally believed that the Qur'an was compiled in its present form, between the time of the death of the Prophet ﷺ and the end of the caliphate of 'Uthmaan رضي الله عنه.
9. **(a)** Explain why the early Muslims thought it important to collect the Qur'an in a written form.
   (b) Describe how this was done in the period of the early caliphs.
10. **(a)** How did the Prophet ﷺ describe the different ways in which he received the revelations?
    (b) What do Muslims mean when they call the Qur'an *Kalam-u-Ilaah*?
11. Present and explain the main themes of *Surat al-Qadr*.
12. With reference to parts of the Qur'an you have studied, explain why *tawheed* is often thought to be the main theme of the Qur'an.
13. Referring to the *surahs* (*suwar*) you have especially studied, outline and discuss the main teachings of the Qur'an about God.
14. Why, according to general belief, was the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet ﷺ over a period of time?



Section C

Beliefs and Practices of Islam

7. The Five Pillars of Islam



The five pillars of Islam consist of **(1)** *ash-Shahaadataan* (the declaration of faith), **(2)** the five obligatory prayers (*salaah*), **(3)** the purifying dues (*zakaat*), **(4)** fasting (*sawm*) in the month of *Ramadaan* and **(5)** pilgrimage to Makkah (*hajj*).

Islam

The word Islam is derived from the Arabic root *s – l - m*, which means 'safety, calm, being safe, and sound, or to remain unharmed, being free from obstacles, to hand over, to submit to, to surrender to'. The word *salaam*, which comes from the same root, means 'peace'. Thus, Islam means a total willing submission (*Soorat Aal-'Imraan*, 3:19). Hence, Islam is an act of a total willing surrender to Allah's will and following His commands. The term Islam occurs eight times in the Qur'an.

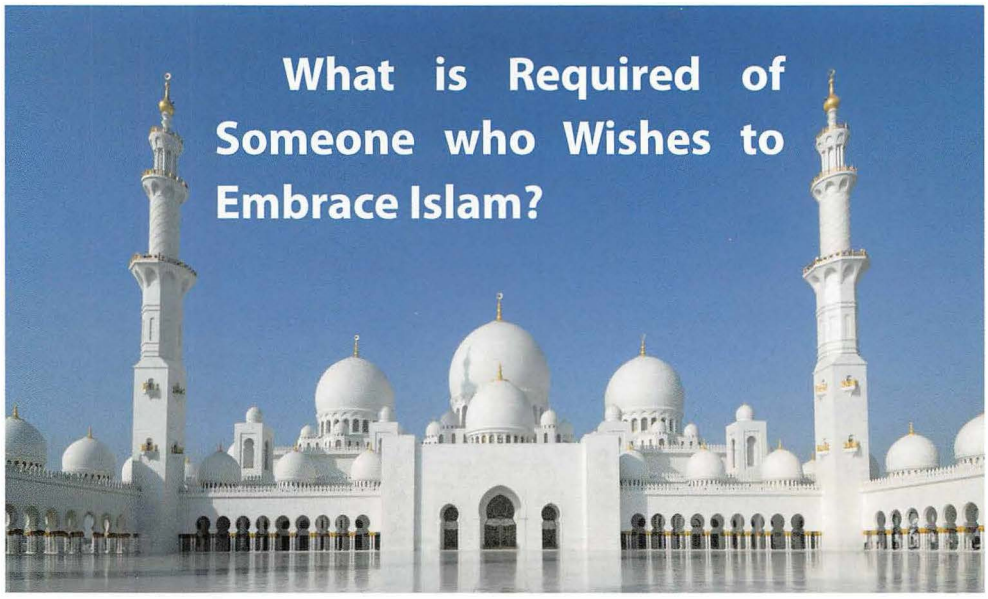
The religion sent down by Allah and brought into the world by His prophets has been called Islam for the simple reason that, in it, the servant surrenders completely to the power and control of the Lord and obeys Him whole-heartedly. The Qur'an speaks of Aadam ﷺ as the first man and the first prophet. Prophethood began with Aadam ﷺ and came to a close with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Prophet Aadam ﷺ was the first Muslim. The religion of all the prophets and messengers was Islam. This is the vital point which should be kept in mind in trying to understand Islam.

The Word Muslim

Muslim means one who submits to Allah, (2:131) one who professes the faith of Islam, (*Soorat al-Hajj*, 22:78) hence, a 'submitter'. The term in its singular form occurs twice in the Qur'an (*Soorat Aal-'Imraan*, 3:67 and *Soorat Yoosuf*, 12:101). Discussing the term Muslim, Hasan Gai Eaton states,

> The term 'Muslim' (with a capital letter) is properly applied only to those who follow the Message of the Qur'an, but when it takes the lower case, it has a far more universal meaning. In the first place, everyone and everything is *muslim*, in the sense that all, knowingly or unknowingly, are subject to the Divine Will and cannot escape from it. The rock that falls by the force of gravity is *muslim*, so are the birds and beasts of the field, so too is the humankind as a whole. All submit to the will of their Creator. (*Remembering God*, p. 5)

Since everything in this universe functions in accordance with its ingrained laws, they automatically obey the command of Allah. The whole universe is, therefore, *muslim*, surrendering to the will of Allah. Man is the only exception in this universal law. This is because he is endowed with the free choice of obeying or disobeying the commands of Allah.



First of all, they must pronounce the two declarations of faith (*ash-Shahaadataan*):

- There is no god but Allah — *Laa ilaaha illallaah*
- Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah — *Muḥammad-ur-Rasoolullaah*.

They must firmly and sincerely believe in the Oneness of Allah. They must be detached from every other religion, since religion in the sight of Allah is Islam (*Soorat Aal-ʿImraan*, 2:19). Thus, by simply sincerely reciting *ash-shahaadataan* a non-Muslim enters the fold of Islam and joins the community of Muslims.

Islam as *ad-Deen*

The Arabic word *deen* is usually translated as religion. But this does not provide its true meaning. *Deen*, in fact, denotes a system of beliefs, a code of life. It does not merely signify the spiritual fulfilment of the individual. It means all matters pertaining to a way of life for it encompasses religion, law, trade, commerce, morality, politics, justice, foods and drinks, clothing: in fact, all aspects of life relating to people's thoughts or actions. This is the most fundamental point that should be grasped in trying to understand Islam, because, in this comprehensive sense, religion is a Muslim's life. All prophets and messengers brought the same *deen*. Any other religion besides Islam is unacceptable to Allah (*Soorat Aal-ʿImraan*, 3:85). Thus, it would appear that it is not possible to translate the term in a single word in any other language.

5 The Five Pillars of Islam

The basic obligatory duties of a Muslim towards Allah are known as the Five Pillars of Islam. The Prophet ﷺ said,

> Islam is built upon five pillars[1]: Testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the [obligatory] prayers, giving the *zakaat*, making the pilgrimage to the [Sacred] House, and fasting in *Ramadaan*.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

Importance of this *Hadeeth*

This *hadeeth* is of great significance. It lays down the fundamental aspects of one's outward surrender to Allah. This self-surrender is based on certain foundations, in a way similar to a building. If a person carries all these aspects, he lays down a solid foundation for his religion as a whole. If a person lacks in any of these pillars, then the entire building will be exposed to danger. If any of the pillars is missing, the house will stand but it will have a deficiency. It is important to realize that the main pillar is the testimony of faith. The first pillar leads to the fulfilment of the remaining pillars. The firmer the first pillar, the stronger the remaining pillars!

1- The word pillars does not appear in Arabic, but it has been supplied for clarity of meaning: An-Nawawee's Forty *Hadeeth*. Tr. Ezzeddin Ibrahim-Denys Johnson Davies, p. 34. The testimony of Faith is: I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. By reciting this two-fold testimony of faith, one comes into the fold of Islam. Although this is a verbal affirmation, it requires conviction in one's heart and then its manifestation by actions.

7.1. The First Pillar: The Two Statements of Faith (*ash-Shahaadataan*)

The Arabic word *shahida* means 'to witness, to experience personally, to be present'. From this root *shahaadah* means testimony, evidence or witness.

Being a Muslim is outwardly established by one's saying the two statements of faith. One's submission is perfected through performing the other obligatory duties mentioned in the *hadeeth* above. Neglecting them suggests that one has dissolved or weakened the terms of one's obedience. The testimony of faith is a statement or *kalimah*. The Qur'an calls it *kalimatan-tayyibatan* – a good word (*Soorat Ibraaheem*, 14:24), which is like a good tree firmly rooted, its branches reaching out towards the sky. This testimony is so important and significant that Allah Himself, His angels and those endowed with knowledge bear witness and make this declaration. (*Soorat Aal-'Imraan*, 3:18)

There Is No god but Allah: The Qur'anic Conception of the Oneness of Allah – The *Tawheed*

The word Allah is used with the highest frequency in the Qur'an. It is the personal name of the Creator of the universe. The word Allah is unique. It cannot be translated into any other language. Thus, there cannot be any plural of this word in the way 'God' becomes 'gods', nor has it a feminine form as 'goddess or goddesses'.

The Oneness of Allah (*tawheed*) is the central theme of the Qur'an. The name Allah is used exclusively for the One who created the heavens and the earth and everything in the universe. According to a *hadeeth* of the Prophet ﷺ, there are ninety-nine names of Allah. These names are collectively known as *al-Asmaa' al-Husnaa* (the most beautiful names), and many of them are mentioned in the Qur'an. However, the most repeated names of Allah are *ar-Raheem* and *ar-Rahmaan*, which express the immensity of Divine Mercy for everything that is in the universe. They lead us to the proper understanding of our relationship with our Creator. (Abdur Rashid Siddiqui, *Qur'anic Keywords*)

Muhammad-ur-Rasool-ullaah: Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah

This is the second part of the *Shahaadah* or the testimony of faith. Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah. This means he was chosen by Allah to be His Messenger in order to convey His message. He is the final prophet sent by Allah. He has been sent to all mankind

until the Day of Judgment. The Qur'an says, 'He is Allah's Messenger and the Seal of the Prophets.' (*Soorat al-Ahzaab*, 33:40)

Allah's Messenger ﷺ is described as the Seal of the Prophets – *Khaatam an-Nabiyyeen* – in this verse. he was the last in the line of prophets and messengers, and there will be no other prophet after him.

7.2. The Second Pillar: Establishing the Prayers (*Salaah*)

Salaah is an Arabic word which means 'to turn towards something or to pay attention, to pray, to praise and to pay respect'. It is a Qur'anic keyword. Establishing the prayers means the prescribed Islamic prayers: the five daily prayers. (*Soorat al-Baqarah*, 2:238) The structure and timings of *salaah* as well as its contents are all very well explained in both the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. It is not only for this nation (*Ummah*) that *salaah* was made obligatory. The Qur'an declares that Allah enjoined the performance of *salaah* on the communities of all the earlier prophets. However the form of *salaah* prescribed was different from the one prescribed for this community. But *qiyyaam*, *rukoo'* and *sujood* were always parts of *salaah*. The word *salaah* occurs 78 times in the Qur'an.

Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, 'Pray in the manner that you have seen me praying.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

The objective of *salaah* is to establish an intimate relationship between the servant and his Creator. This is renewed five times a day. It continues throughout one's life until death. *Salaah* is the most important obligation for a Muslim. After pronouncing the *shahaadah* by which one enters the fold of Islam, the very first obligation testing one's sincerity of faith is *salaah*.

It is important to realize that the believers are commanded to establish the five daily prayers. This means that these prayers must be performed at their proper timings in congregation and in a mosque according to its rules and regulations taught by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The structure and timing of each of the five prescribed daily prayers is recorded and fully explained in the traditions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. It is important to note that *salaah* will not be valid without preceding it with *wudoo'* (ritual ablution).

The five obligatory daily prayers are:

- *Salaat-ul-Fajr*: the dawn prayer
- *Salaat-udh- Dhuhr*: the noon prayer
- *Salaat-ul-'Asr*: the mid-afternoon prayer
- *Salaat-ul-Maghrib*: the sunset prayer
- *Salaat-ul-'Ishaa'*: the nightfall prayer

The prayer times vary a little each day with the season and the year, and from one town to another through the effects of latitude and longitude. *Salaah* can be performed individually or in congregation, but men must perform it in a mosque in congregation. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, 'The merit of the congregational prayer (*salaat-ul-jamaa'ah*) surpasses that of individual prayer by twenty-seven degrees.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

The Prophet ﷺ also said, 'To perform the late evening prayer ('*Ishaa*') in congregation is equivalent to spending half the night in prayer, while to perform the dawn prayer (*Fajr*) in congregation is like praying the whole night.' (Reported by Muslim)

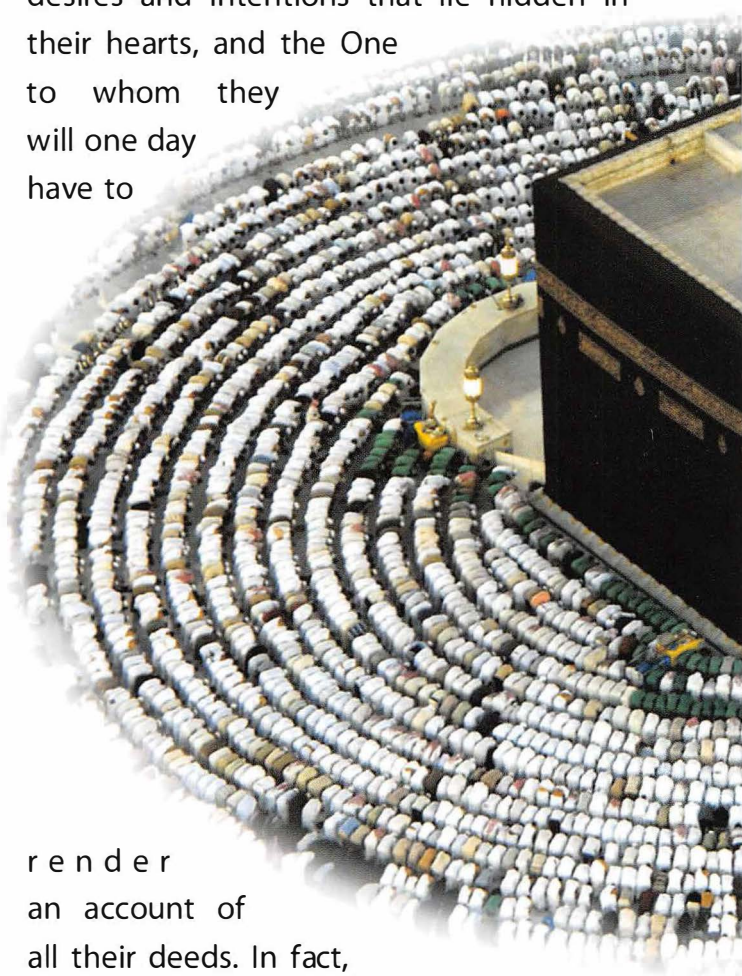
The Friday prayer, which is performed at *Dhuhr* time, has special significance as it is preceded by a sermon (*khutbah*) delivered by the *imaam*. It has to be performed in congregation and is obligatory on all adult men.

The Inner Dimensions of *Salaah* (Prayer):

Salaah serves to bring the individual closer to Allah and to bind the community together. In reality, if the prayer (*salaah*) is performed appropriately, with true remembrance of Allah and turning to Him in repentance, it will definitely have an enduring effect on us. We will be hopeful as well as fearful. After that experience, we will not want to climb down from that sublime position an sink to a level where we are bound to disobey Allah. Allah has underscored this aspect of the prayer in the Noble Qur'an:

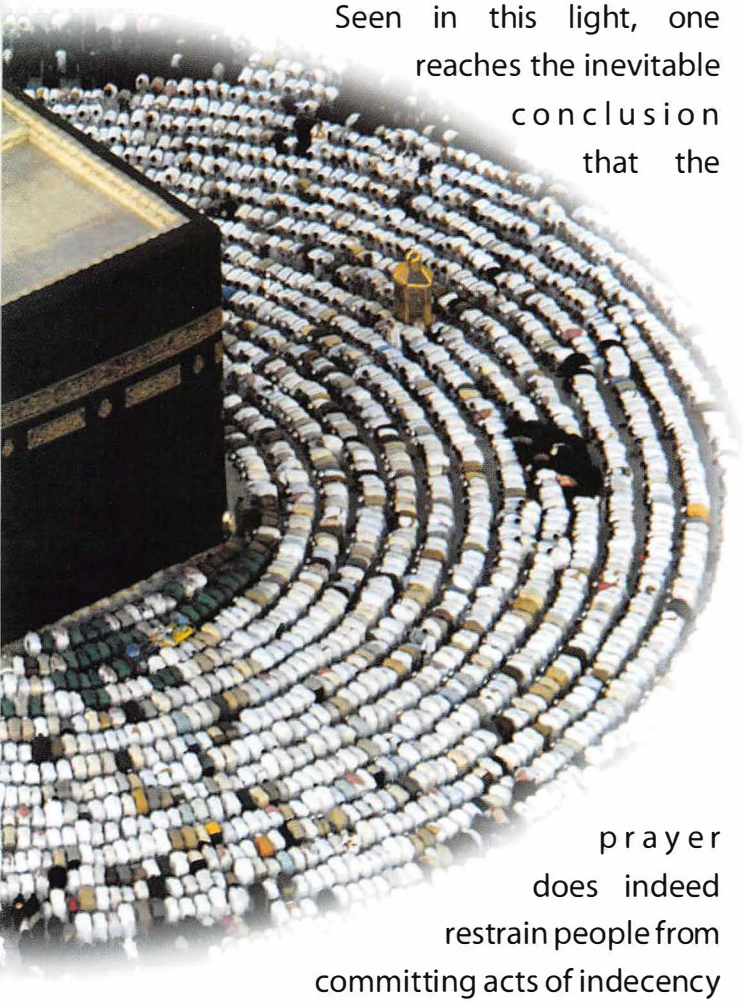
> Indeed, the prayer guards one against immorality and evil. (*Soorat al-'Ankaboot*, 29:45)

Of all the possible restraints against committing evil, the prayer is the most effective. What could be more effective than calling people five times a day to remember Allah ﷻ and to refresh in them the fact that they have no right to act with unfettered freedom, for they are the servants of the All-Knowing Allah, One who is aware of the desires and intentions that lie hidden in their hearts, and the One to whom they will one day have to render an account of all their deeds. In fact, the prayer practically trains people not to disobey any of Allah's commands even when no one is watching them.



When someone offers the prayers five times a day, duly observing all its requirements, ranging from ritual cleanliness of the body and clothing to recitations as

laid down by divine Law, this act of worship constantly breathes new life into their conscience, awaken in them a sense of accountability to Allah and transforms them into responsible, duty-conscious people. Thereby, they are trained to willingly adhere to the commands of faith, both in public and in private, regardless of whether they are subjected to supervision by any external authority and regardless of whether or not others are aware of their deeds.



Seen in this light, one reaches the inevitable conclusion that the prayer does indeed restrain people from committing acts of indecency and evil. In fact, there is no scheme of training aimed at dissuading people from evil which is as effective as the prayer.

As for those who are not ready to mend their ways or who deliberately deprive themselves of the benefits of the prayer, it is clear that no scheme of reform is going to help them.

The five daily prayers are in fact a type of purification for the true believers, as they bring them closer to Allah ﷻ and afford them the opportunity to turn to their Lord five times a day. *Imaam* Ahmad records, 'A man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, 'So-and-so prays at night, but when morning comes, he steals.' The Prophet ﷺ said, 'What you are saying (i.e. *salaah*) will prevent him from doing so. (According to Muslim scholars, this *hadeeth* is sound). The effect of *salaah* on its performers is a commonly noted fact. Even non-Muslims have admitted that they have seen a glow on the faces of Muslims as they emerge from the mosques. In the words of a distinguished American psychologist:

> All historians declare that the amazing success of Islam in dominating the world lay in the astounding coherence or sense of unity in the group, but they do not explain how this miracle was worked. There can be little doubt that of the most effective means was prayer. The five daily prayers, when all the faithful wherever they were, alone in the grim solitude of the desert or the vast assemblies in the crowded city, knelt and prostrated themselves towards Makkah, uttering the same words of adoration for the One true God and of loyalty to His Prophet, produce an overwhelming effect upon the spectator, and the psychological effect of this fusing the minds of the worshippers in a common adoration and expression of loyalty is certainly stupendous.' (Abdul Majeed Daryabadi, *The Glorious Qur'an*, the Islamic Foundation, UK, p. 717)

Afzalur Rahman also writes:

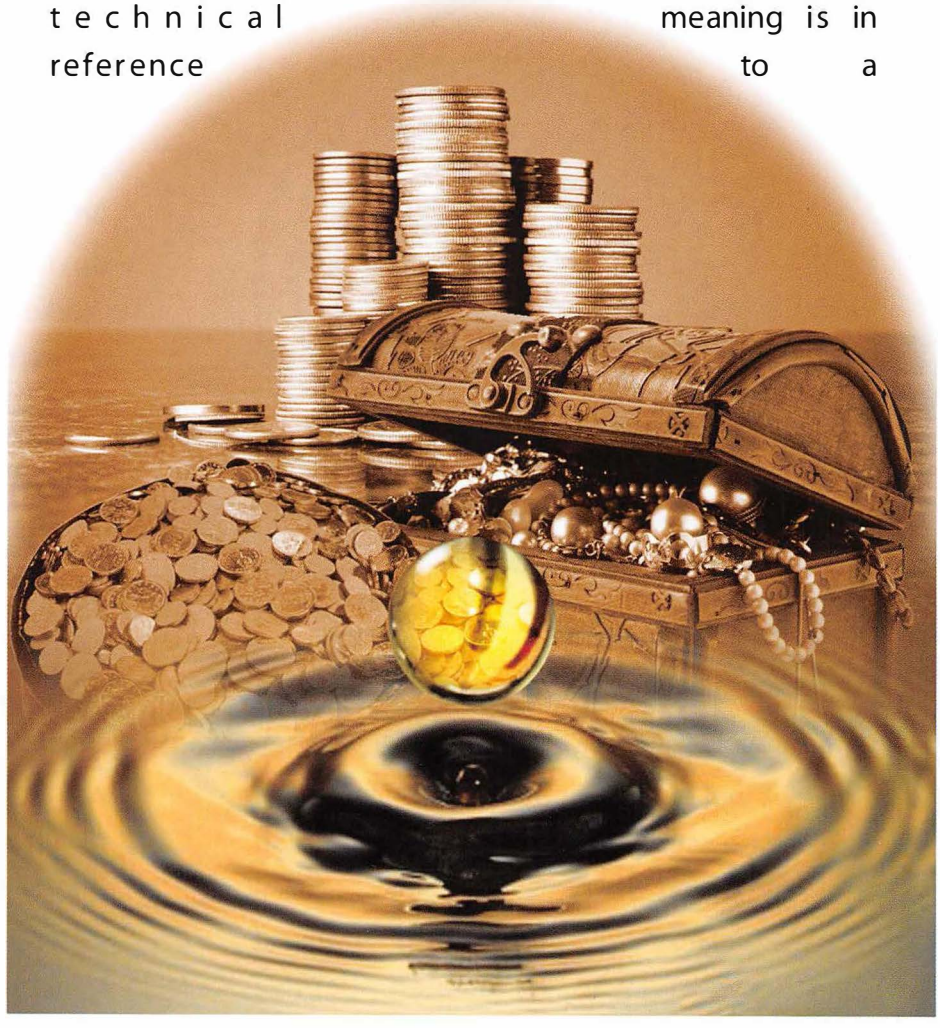
> The prayer in congregation is training in brotherhood. All Muslims, irrespective of colour, race or nationality, stand in prayer before their Lord as equals. This is an example of democracy such as no religion or social group other than Islam has successfully established in this world. Human distinctions are levelled down in prayer and the pride of the rich is cut down and the lowness of the poor is raised, so that all feel equal and humble before their Lord. The organization of prayer in rows destroys all class distinctions in society and all narrow class feelings of nationhood, or tribe, or colour or race.' (Afzalur Rahman, London, *Prayer – Its Significance and Benefits*, London)

7.3. The Third Pillar: Giving *Zakaat*

The Arabic word *zakaat* is derived from the root *z – k – y*, which means 'to grow, to flourish, to reach, to purify, and to be purified'. *Zakaat* is meant to purify a person's capital and income from the taint of selfishness, hence the name *zakaat* – the purifying dues. The term *zakaat* occurs 32 times in the Qur'an.[2]

Zakaat is the third pillar of Islam. It ranks very close to *salaah*, and they are both often mentioned together in the Qur'an – in eighty-two places, to be precise. See, for instance, 73:20, 33:33 and 2:43.

The payment of *zakaat* purifies believers and their wealth. It purifies their soul by cleansing it of the disease of tightfistedness and miserliness. In *Sharee'ah*, *zakaat*'s technical meaning is in reference to a



2- For more details, see Kassis's *A Concordance of the Qur'an*, pp. 132526-.

specific portion of one's different type of wealth that one must give every year to a specific group of recipients mentioned in the Qur'an. See (*Soorat at-Tawbah*, 9:60)

Zakaat is not a favour to be given to the poor by the rich. Rather, it is the right of the poor on the wealth of the rich. (*Soorat al-Ma'aarij*, 70: 24-25) To withhold *zakaat* is to deprive the poor of their rightful share. Thus, one who gives *zakaat* actually purifies one's wealth by separating from it the portion that belongs to the poor. One who incurs *zakaat* and does not give it will have severe punishment in the hereafter. Traditions of the Prophet ﷺ describe in detail the punishment that will be inflicted on those who do not give proper *zakaat* on their wealth.

Zakaat is one of the pillars of Islam, and if a Muslim denies its obligation or says that it is not a part of Islam, then such a person becomes a disbeliever, according to the agreement of scholars. *Zakaat* is not imposed unless the zakaatable wealth reaches a minimum level. This level is called the *nisaab*[3] or scale. Different types of properties have different *nisaabs*.

The *nisaab* on money is 85 grams of gold and so on. The *nisaab* must be in excess of the basic needs of the owner. Things used for satisfying basic needs are not considered zakaatable. Basic necessities are food, shelter, clothes, household goods, utensils, furniture, money to pay back debts, basis transportation and books of knowledge, among other things.

Zakaat Year

Passage of one lunar year (according to the hegira (*hijrah*) calendar) is required before *zakaat* can be imposed on wealth. Assets that remain with their owners for one full year are zakaatable. Rich Muslims, therefore, must establish their *zakaat* year. Many Muslims calculate *zakaat* during *Ramadaan* for the added reward of worshipping during the blessed month. So, an example of *zakaat* year may be from 15th *Ramadaan* 1430 AH to the 14th *Ramadaan* 1431 AH (one full *hijrah* lunar calendar year). Once the *zakaat* year is set, the same date range should be used for future years.

The wealth or property subject to *zakaat* should be of a growing type. It should have the capability for growth and development. *Zakaat* is obligatory on wealth regardless of whether the owner is an adult or a minor. It is due on wealth owned by the insane as well. Legal guardians should pay *zakaat* on behalf of minors and the insane.

Zakaat is compulsory on merchandise or trading goods. If a lunar year passes and the merchandise or trading goods reach *nisaab*, which is the value of 85 grams of gold, *zakaat* becomes due. *Zakaat* is also due on them is 2.5 % if their value reaches the *nisaab*. *Zakaat* on livestock and their *nisaab* is different. Agricultural produce, such as grains, is zakaatable. According to some scholars, however, *zakaat* need not be given on jewels, pearls, diamonds, and precious stones which are used for wearing. *Nisaab* on jewellery is 85 grams of gold or 595 grams of silver and

3- Nisaab on money is 85 grams of gold and so on. Nisaab must be in excess of the basic needs of the owner. Things used for satisfying basic needs are not considered zakaatable. Basic necessities are food, shelter, clothes, household goods, utensils, furniture, money to pay back debts and books of knowledge, among other things.

Who Are Entitled to Receive *Zakaat*?

The Qur'an states that there are eight categories of people who are entitled to receive *zakaat* (*Soorat at-Tawbah*, 9:60). They are: 'the poor; the destitute and the needy; workers in *zakaat* administration; those whose hearts need to be reconciled; freeing from bondage; those in debts; for the cause of Allah and the travellers.'

Zakaat: Its Function in the life of Individuals and the Community

Like *salaah*, *zakaat* has a very significant role for society as a whole. Social justice and compassion to fellow humans who are disadvantaged is one of the central themes of Islam.

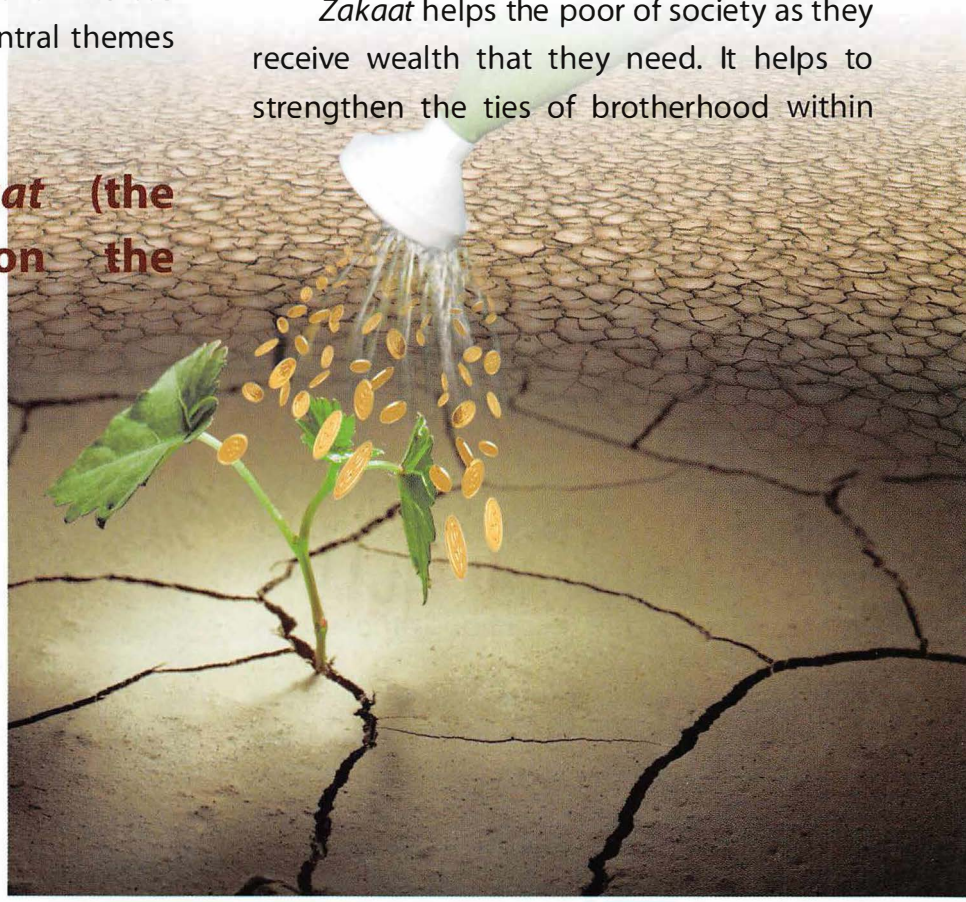
Effects of *Zakaat* (the Purifying Dues) on the Individual

Zakaat benefits not only those who receive it, but also those who pay it. In short, these effects are:

- *Zakaat* is a reminder that wealth actually belongs to Allah ﷻ.
- It purifies the soul from miserliness. Greed is the worst of moral attributes.
- It trains people to give.
- It trains them to acquire divine characteristics.
- It is an expression of thankfulness to Allah ﷻ.
- It is a cure for the love of worldly things.
- It stimulates personality growth.
- It improves ties of mutual love and purifies wealth.
- It brings growth to wealth. It may seem to decrease wealth, but in fact it brings blessings and prosperity to wealth. Allah ﷻ is the Giver of wealth and He can increase it for whomever He wants. 'Wealth never decreases due to charity.' (Muslim) (Mushfiqur Rahman, *Zakaat Calculation*)

Its Effects on the Community

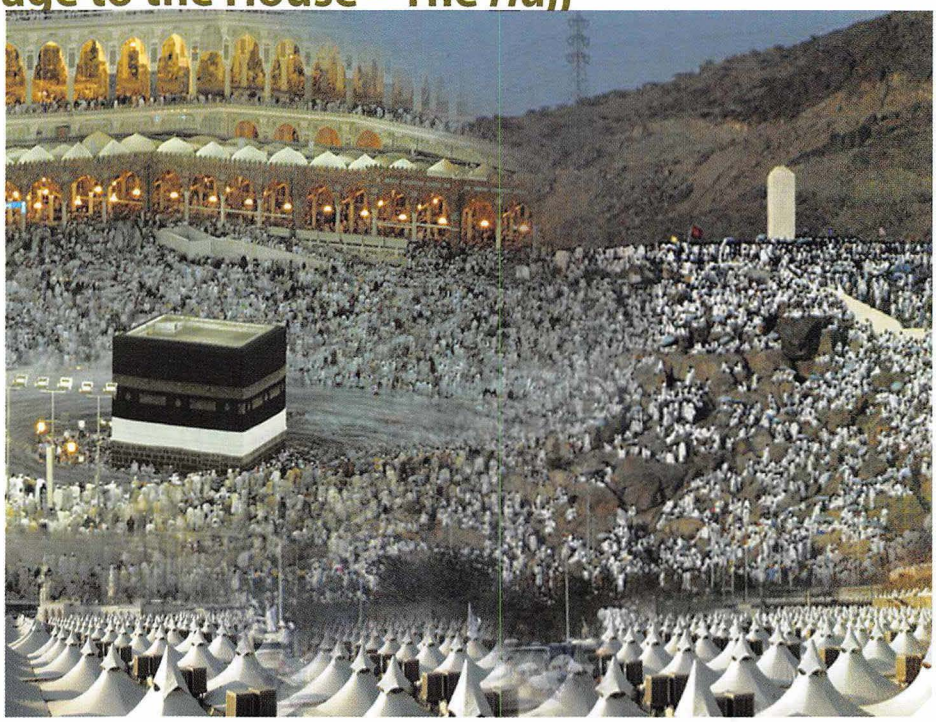
Zakaat helps the poor of society as they receive wealth that they need. It helps to strengthen the ties of brotherhood within



a society. *Zakaat* is the most effective measure to improve the economic condition of the have-nots. It is not a tax but rather a lofty form of worship whereby people come close to their Lord. The Muslims have, therefore, been enjoined to pay *zakaat* with the same sense of earnestness and devotion in which the seeker of the Lord observes the prayer. The primary motive of *zakaat* is religious and spiritual, while the social and economic aspects are subordinate to it.

Its social significance is that it awakens in true believers the sense of brotherhood with less fortunate members of society and stirs their moral conscience to make sacrifice for their sake. From the economic point of view, it discourages hoarding and concentration of wealth and helps its steady and constant flow from the rich to the poor. It is in fact a good means of providing purchasing power to the poor for enabling them to stand on their own feet. It should also be remembered that *zakaat* in Islam is not a voluntary act of charity, which a rich man gives to the poor out of his own sweet will; rather, it is an obligatory act which every rich Muslim is enjoined to perform if they are sincere in their belief in Allah, His Messenger and the hereafter.

7.4. The Fourth Pillar: The Pilgrimage to the House – The *Hajj*



The next pillar mentioned in the *hadeeth* above is the pilgrimage to the House – the *hajj*. *Hajj* is an Arabic term whose primary meaning is 'to intend to visit someone or somewhere that is the object of reverence, respect, veneration or honour'. In the terminology of the Islamic Law (*Shareeʿah*), it is the pilgrimage to the Kaʿbah in Makkah during the prescribed period: during certain specific days in the month of *Dhul-Hijjah*.

The *hajj* is an obligation upon every adult Muslim who is financially well off and physically fit to undertake the journey, once in a lifetime. It is, however, much more than an obligation. It is a pillar of Islam itself.

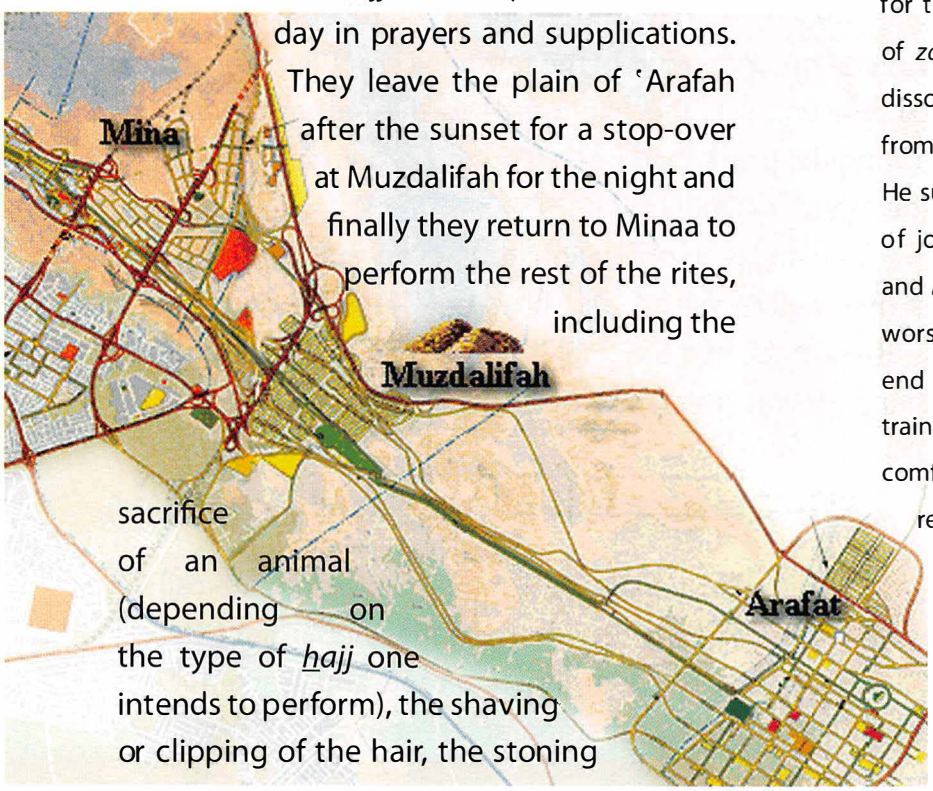
The Institution of *Hajj* and its Rites

In accordance with the command of Allah, the call for *hajj* was first given by Prophet Ibraaheem ﷺ. Since then it has been carried on for the last four thousand years. Muslims from all over the world, using different means of transport,

come to Makkah to perform the *hajj*.

There are various rites connected with the *hajj*, including wearing a special garment to enter the state of *ihraam* (sacred purity) and circling the Ka'bah seven times (*tawaaf*). The climax of the *hajj* is the standing on 'Arafah, a plain and hill to the east of Makkah. The time for this is from midday to sunset on the ninth of the month of *Dhul-Hijjah*.

The rites of *hajj* symbolically re-enact many of the events in the lives of Prophet Ibraaheem, his wife Haajar and their son Ismaa'eel. The *hajj* ceremonies start on the 8th of *Dhul-Hijjah* with pilgrims doing the *tawaaf* (circling the Ka'bah in an anti-clockwise fashion) seven times. This is followed by performing *sa'ee* (a swift walk) between the hillocks Safaa and Marwah, which are now included in the Masjid al-Haraam. Pilgrims then proceed to Minaa, which is about 5 miles from Makkah. After an overnight stay there, they move to 'Arafah on the 9th of *Dhul-Hijjah* and spend the whole day in prayers and supplications. They leave the plain of 'Arafah after the sunset for a stop-over at Muzdalifah for the night and finally they return to Minaa to perform the rest of the rites, including the sacrifice of an animal (depending on the type of *hajj* one intends to perform), the shaving or clipping of the hair, the stoning at the three pillars and the performance of another *tawaaf* of the Ka'bah. The *hajj* rites finish by the 12th or 13th of *Dhul-Hijjah*.



The rituals performed during the *hajj* create bonds of brotherhood among Muslims. In fact, *hajj* manifests the unity of the Muslim community as one family. It also removes all differences of race, colour, language, nationality and social position.

The Effect of *Hajj* on the Individual and the Community

Abdul Hamid Siddiqi describes the significance of *hajj* as follows:

> It is rightly said that it (the *hajj*) is the perfection of faith, since it combines in itself all the distinctive qualities of other obligatory acts. It represents the quality of *salaah* (prayer) since a pilgrim also offers prayers in the Ka'bah, the House of the Lord. It encourages spending of material wealth for the sake of the Lord, the chief characteristic of *zakaat*. When a pilgrim sets out for *hajj*, he dissociates himself from his hearth and home, from his near and dear ones, to please his Lord. He suffers privation and undertakes the hardship of journey – the lessons we learn from fasting and *i'tikaaf* (seclusion in the mosque for personal worship and devotion, usually observed at the end of the month of Ramadaan). In *hajj*, one is trained to be completely forgetful of the material comforts and pomp and show of worldly life. He is required to avoid the use of oil or scent or any other perfume. He is not even allowed to get his hair cut or trim his beard. In short, he is commanded to abandon everything for the sake of Allah and submit himself before his Lord, the ultimate aim of the life of a Muslim

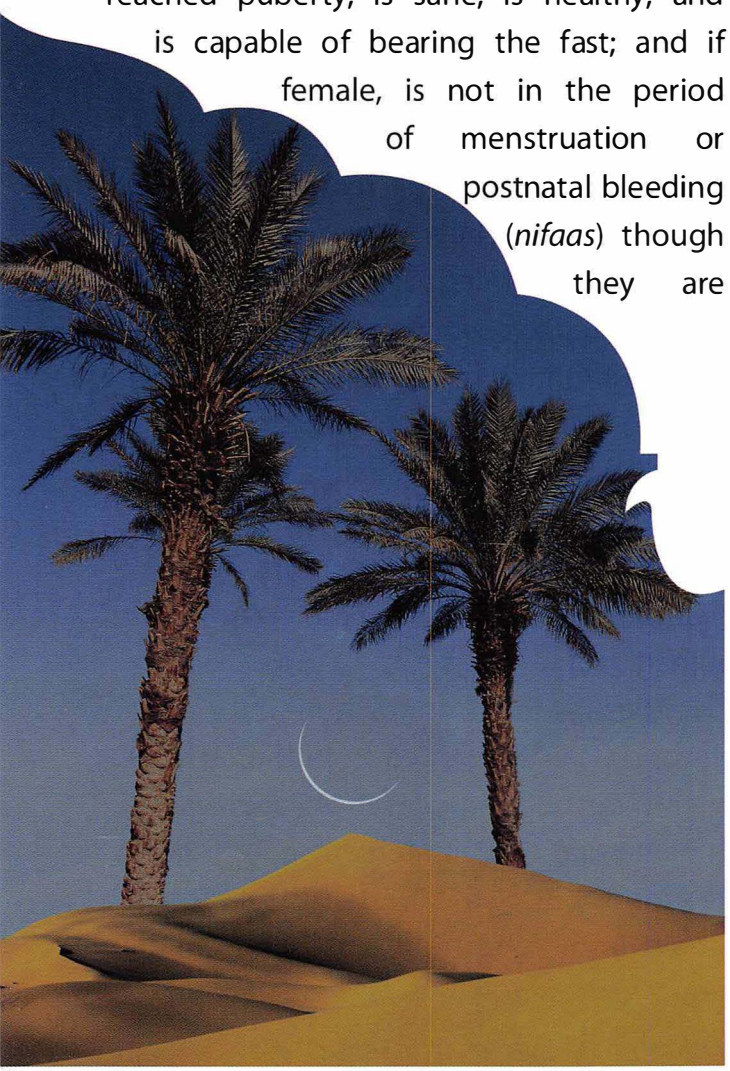
(*Saheeh Muslim*, Vol. 2, p. 578)

7.5. The Fifth Pillar: Fasting in *Ramadaan*

Sawm or *siyaam* literally means 'to refrain from something or to leave something'. In the *Sharee'ah*, it denotes refraining from food, drink, and sexual intercourse during the days of the month of *Ramadaan*. Fasting in the month of *Ramadaan* is a pillar of Islam.

Who Must Fast in *Ramadaan*?

Fasting in *Ramadaan* is obligatory for every Muslim (male or female), who has reached puberty, is sane, is healthy, and is capable of bearing the fast; and if female, is not in the period of menstruation or postnatal bleeding (*nifaas*) though they are obliged to make up for the days missed.



Those who Have a Valid Reason to Postpone Fasting

The following are permitted, if they find it necessary, to suspend fasting. However, they must fast an equal number of days after the end of *Ramadaan*, but not on the *'Eed* days.

1. The ill if the fasting is likely to increase the illness,
2. The traveller,
3. A pregnant woman – if fasting is likely to harm the health of the mother or the unborn baby or prevent her from having enough milk for her baby.

Those who are Excused from Fasting altogether

1. The terminally ill – those who suffer from a terminal, serious illness that is bound to worsen if they fast,
2. The permanently insane,
3. The very old – those who are too old and feeble to fast at any time of the year.

Instead, the terminally ill or old person should feed one poor person for everyday of fasting that they miss. If the ill person or traveller takes it upon themselves to fast, it is valid.

The Pillars of Fasting

1. The *niyyah* (the intention)
2. *Imsaak*: abstaining from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse during the daylight hours of fasting – from the

coming of dawn, until the setting of the sun.

Fasting Shows One's Sincerity to Allah

Fasting is an act of worship that shows one's sincerity to one's Lord. Only Allah is aware whether a person has truly fasted or not. No one can know if they secretly break their fast. Therefore, Allah has a special reward for those who fast. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, 'Whoever fasts the month of *Ramadaan* with *eemaan* and *ihtisaab*, all their previous sins are forgiven.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

Eemaan and *ihtisaab* are technical terms which mean that all good deeds must be done for the sake of Allah with the hope of receiving reward from Him. Thus, there should not be any other motive. *Eemaan* means faith, while *ihtisaab* means anticipating Allah's reward for one's good deeds.

Effects of Fasting on the Individual and the Community

Fasting in Islam is primarily an institution for a spiritual discipline and self-control. It is, in fact, an exercise in religious devotion in the form of cheerful and willing renunciation (abandonment) for a definite period, of all the appetites of flesh which are lawful in themselves; the unlawful ones are, of course, ruled out. Fasting has been ordained as a religious duty for the Muslims for subduing their lust and keeping their appetites well within reasonable bounds so that they may not become their slave and lose control over themselves.

Fasting strengthens their morality and self-control and deepens in them the consciousness of the Lord. It should be borne in mind that fasting does not aim at inflicting punishment upon people or saddling upon them unbearable burdens. The underlying idea behind it is to teach moderation and spiritual discipline, so that human temptations may not become so wild and uncontrollable as to flout the commands of the Great Master. Fasting is indispensable for moral and spiritual training.

Another distinguishing feature of Islamic fasting is that it does not train Muslims for complete renunciation, but for perfect and cheerful obedience to the Lord. All those things from which they are commanded to abstain during the fast, such as eating, drinking and sexual intercourse, become permissible for them at the end of the fast. This shows that Islam does not look down upon the appetite of the flesh as something ignoble and thus fit to be exterminated root and branch from the human soul.

That fasting is an institution for moral elevation can be judged from the fact that Allah ﷻ not only imposes check upon eating, drinking and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset, but also exhorts His servants to refrain from other foul acts, for example,

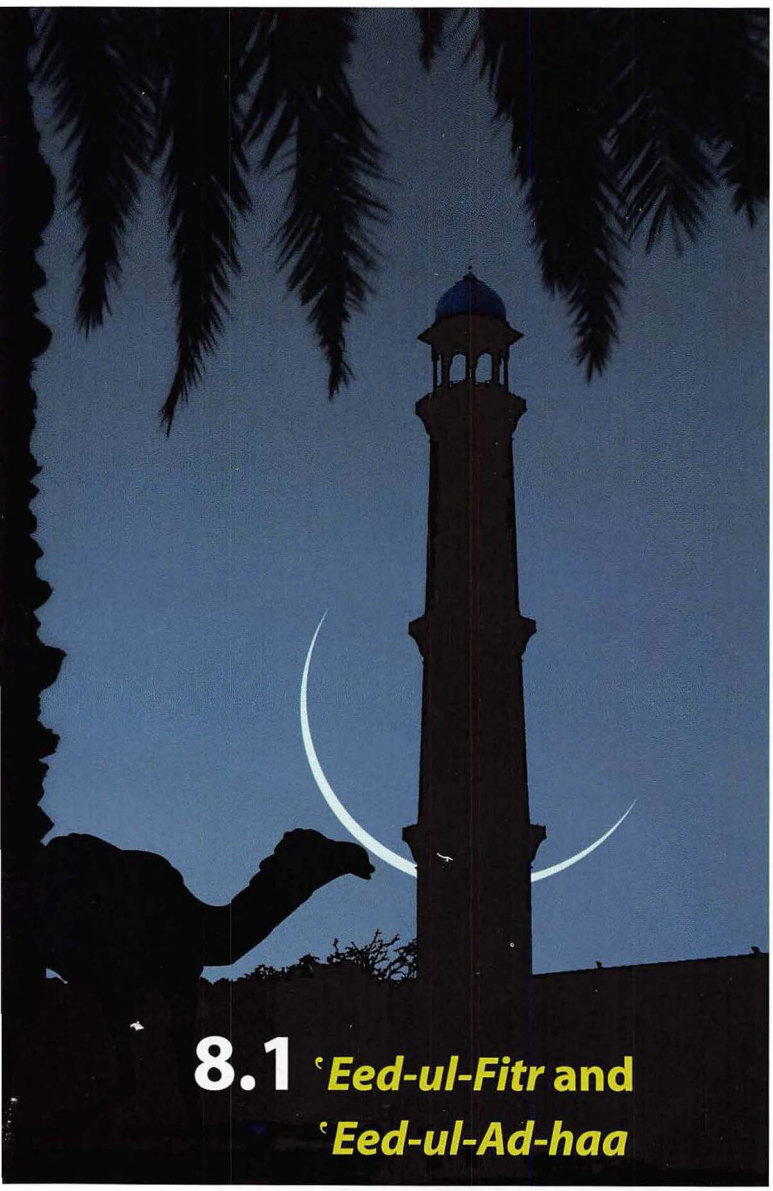
backbiting, indulging in foul speech and telling lies.

The Community Aspect of Fasting

The social aspect of fasting in *Ramaḍaan* is that the whole atmosphere is permeated with religious piety and devotion to Allah ﷻ. There is one extra congregational prayer, *taraaweeḥ*, during the night, in which the Qur'an is recited and Muslims are reminded of the fact that it was in the month of *Ramaḍaan* that the revelation of the Qur'an commenced. Thus the purpose of this month of fasting is twofold: brotherhood amongst people and individual self-discipline. When one abstains from food and drink, one feels in one's body what the poor and the hungry feel. Thus social responsibility is hammered into human consciousness as

Beliefs and Practices of Islam

8. Festivals and Religious Observances

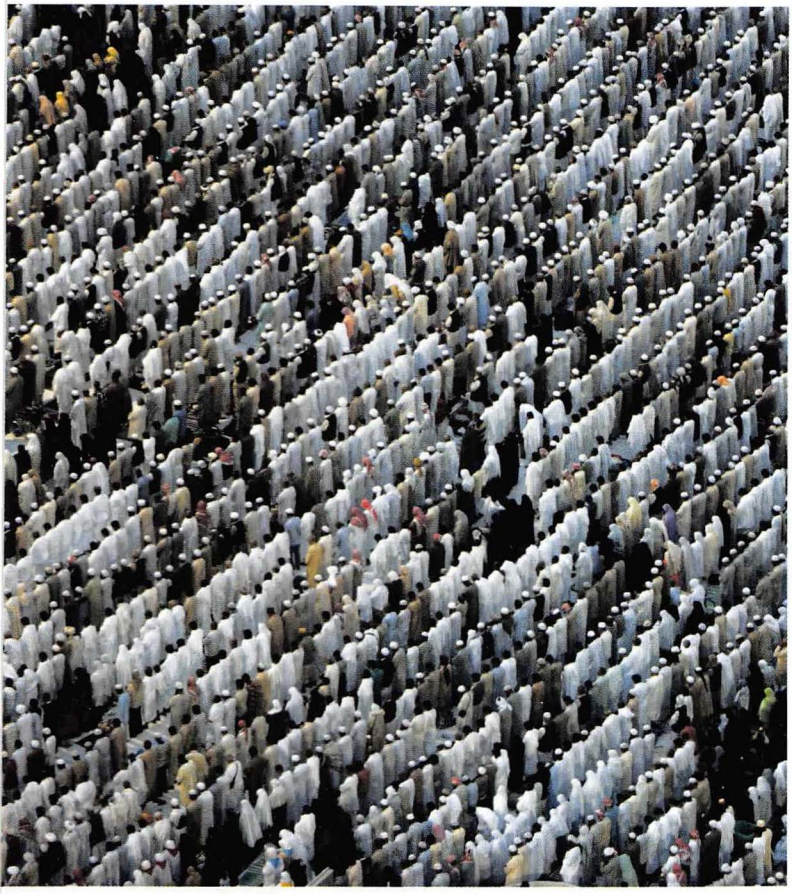


8.1 ʿEed-ul-Fitr and ʿEed-ul-Ad-haa

There are two great festivals in Islam which have a religious sanction, and in connection with both of which a congregational service of two *rakʿahs* is held, followed by a *khuṯbah*, or sermon. Both these festivals go under the name of *ʿeed*, which means a recurring happiness, being derived from *ʿa – w – d*, meaning to return.

The first of these is called *ʿEed-ul-Fiṯr*. The word *fiṯr* originally comes from the root *faṯara*, which means 'to split, to cleave, to break apart, to break the fast, to eat and drink after a fast'. *ʿEed-ul-Fiṯr*, therefore, denotes the festival of breaking the fast. *Iftaar* means the breaking of the fast, as if the fasting person has returned to a natural course or fulfilled the demand of nature. *ʿEed-ul-Fiṯr* takes place on the first of *Shawwaal*, the tenth month of the Islamic calendar. The other is *ʿEed-ul-Aḍ-ḥaa*, meaning the Festival of Sacrifice. It is thus evident that both these festivals are connected with the performance of some duty. In the first case the duty of fasting, and in the second the duty of sacrifice. A day of happiness following the performance of duty is intended to show that true happiness lies in the performance of one's duty.

One characteristic of the Islamic festivals, therefore, is that they have, underlying them, a deep spiritual meaning. But they have another trait as well. In the moment of their greatest joy, Muslims gather, in as vast a congregation as possible and fall before their Lord, giving thanks to Him that He has enabled them to perform their duty or to make a sacrifice. The congregational prayer is the chief feature of the day of festival. The preparation for *ʿeed* is more or less similar to the preparation for the Friday service. One is recommended take a bath, put on one's best clothes, wear perfume and do everything to



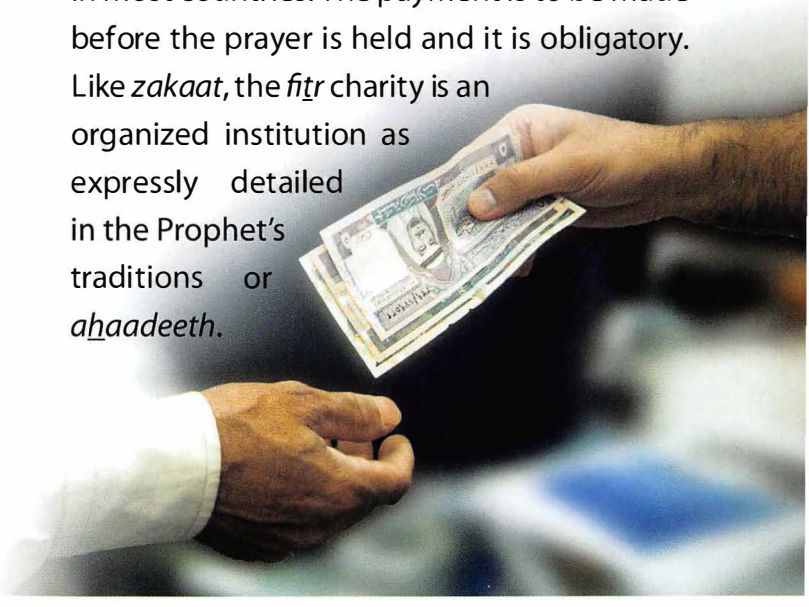
appear neat and tidy. The gathering in the *'eed* should preferably be in an open place, but, if necessary, a mosque may also be used for holding the service. An open space is preferable on account of the size of the congregation, which a mosque might not be able to hold. No *adhaan* is called out for the *'eed* prayers, nor an *iqaamah* (call that the prayer has commenced) for the arrangement of the rows. The *'eed* service consists of only two *rak'ahs* in congregation.

The *'eed* sermon is delivered after the prayer is over. It was the Prophet's practice to address the women separately, who were all required to be present whether they joined in the service or not.

While celebrating the great *'eed* festivals, a Muslim remembers not only Allah ﷻ by attending the service but also his poor and less fortunate brothers and sisters in faith. The institution of charity portion is associated with both *'eed*. Islam wants to instil awareness in the hearts of its adherents who are supposed to remain in constant spiritual contact with their Lord and turn to Him in every situation of joy or sorrow. Every moment there are demands on them that require constant vigilance; demands of their Lord, demands of the Muslim community in which they live and the demands of humanity at large.

Zakaat-ul-Fitr

On the occasion of *'Eed-ul-Fitr*, every Muslim is required to give *zakaat-ul-fitr* or 'the purifying dues of breaking the fast'. It is also called *sadaqat-ul-fitr*, which amounts to a little above two kilograms (precisely 2176 grams) of barley, rice or any other staple food of the country per head of the family, including the old as well as the youngest members, males as well as females. It is permissible, however, to pay *zakaat-ul-fitr* in value as well. It is easier, especially nowadays, to give money than foodstuffs as this is more useful to the poor in most countries. The payment is to be made before the prayer is held and it is obligatory. Like *zakaat*, the *fitr* charity is an organized institution as expressly detailed in the Prophet's traditions or *ahaadeeth*.

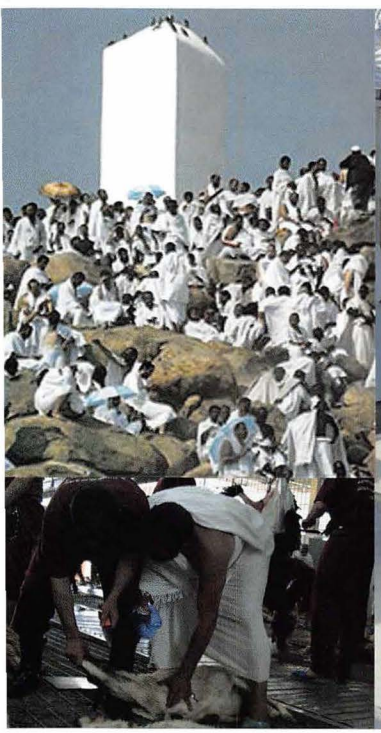


ʿEed-ul-Aḍ-ḥaa also provides an occasion for the exercise of charity. The sacrifice of an animal on that day makes the poorest members of the community enjoy the festival with a good feast of meat.

ʿEed-ul-Aḍ-ḥaa: the Feast of the Sacrifice

ʿEed-ul-Aḍ-ḥaa or the Feast of the Sacrifice is celebrated throughout the Muslim world at the end of the annual pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) to Makkah. It is celebrated according to the lunar Islamic calendar, beginning on the tenth day of the twelfth month (*Dhul-Ḥijjah*). On this day Muslims at Minaa, near Makkah, and all around the world sacrifice unblemished animals in memory of the ram substituted by Allah when Prophet Ibraaheem (Abraham) ﷺ was commanded to sacrifice his son Ismaaʿeel (Ishmael) ﷺ as a test of faith (*Soorat aṣ-Ṣaafaat*, 37: 99-113). The day of the sacrifice is the first of the four days of festive celebration known as *ayyaam at-tashreeq*. The word *ayyaam* is the plural form of *yawm*, which means a day. The word *tashreeq* comes from the root *sh – r - q*. According to some scholars, these days are called the days of *tashreeq* for the simple reason that, on those days, they used to cut the meat of their sacrificial animals into strips and dry them in the sun. Thus *tashreeq* means 'desiccation or drying of meat in the sun'. The animal is sacrificed after the *ʿeed* prayer is over. It may be sacrificed on the day of the *ʿeed* or during the two or three days that follow (the *tashreeq* days), the time during which pilgrims stop in Minaa.

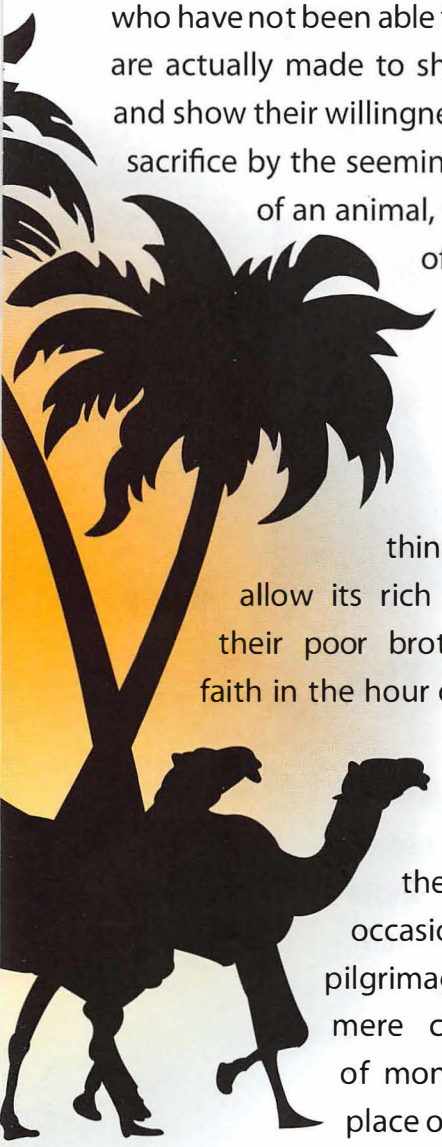
The meat of the sacrificed animal is divided into portions. The giving of one-third, or more or less, to the poor is simply optional. No hard and fast rules have been laid down. In addition to this, in places where the number of sacrificed animals is in excess of the needs of the population, the surplus is sent to other regions to be distributed to the poor and the needy. Due to the availability of the most modern freezing techniques, it has now become possible to preserve this meat and ship it to the areas of great poverty and need in the Muslim world.



A question arises here: Can a Muslim, instead of sacrificing an animal, give away its price as charity? The answer to this question, in the light of the Islamic *Sharee'ah*, is

in the negative. The sacrifice by the Muslims throughout the world on the *'eed* day is intended to make Muslim hearts, throughout the world, beat in harmony with the hearts of the unrivalled multitude at Makkah, the centre of Islam. Hundreds of thousands of people assemble there from all corners of the world. They have sacrificed all comforts of life for no object except to develop the idea of sacrifice—a sacrifice selfless beyond all measure, because it has no personal or even national end in view, a sacrifice for the sake of Allah alone.

However grand this idea, it receives a greater grandeur from the fact that people who have not been able to make that sacrifice are actually made to share the same desire and show their willingness to make the same sacrifice by the seeming act of the sacrifice of an animal, which is the final act of pilgrimage.



That this institution should also serve the purpose of charity is quite a different thing. Islam does not allow its rich members to forget their poor brothers and sisters in faith in the hour of their joy at a time of festival. But charity is not the idea underlying the sacrifice on the occasion of the *'eed* or the pilgrimage and, therefore, mere charity or payment of money cannot take the place of sacrifice.

In the sacrifice of animals, the Glorious Qur'an gives to its followers the lesson of laying down their lives in the cause of truth (*Soorat al-Hajj*, 22:34-36). It will thus be seen that Islam has invested the principle of sacrifice with a new meaning. In Islam, it signifies the sacrifice of the person who offers the sacrifice themselves, and thus become the outward symbol of their readiness to lay down their lives and to sacrifice all their interests and desires in the cause of truth. The animal that is sacrificed really stands for the animal in us, so that the outward sacrifice of the animal reminds us of the necessity for the sacrifice of the animal within us. And one day and one particular moment on that day is chosen so that all Muslim hearts from one end of the world to the other may throb with one idea at a particular moment, and thus lead to the development of the idea of self-sacrifice in the community as a whole.

Although the feast of the sacrifice immortalizes the solemn occasion of Allah ﷻ testing Prophet Ibraaheem's faith, the annual celebration is festive and social. Receiving and visiting members of the extended family and friends of the family marks this three-day celebration. Non-Muslim friends and neighbours are also remembered and involved to partake in the food and festivities. Gifts and sweets abound and people wear their best clothing.

The Beauty of Muslim Marriage: The Search for Love and Mercy

Everyone comes from a family. Each of us is like a small plant cultivated by a strong love of a father and the tender love of a mother. Marriage has a very high purpose in Islam. It can be defined as a bond unifying a man and a woman for a lifetime for the purpose of loving one another, helping one another and of being Allah's instruments in the procreation and rearing of children.

Natural Inclination for Marriage

With rare exceptions, one can say that just about everyone has a natural inclination to marry. Married life, among all paths, is the most common. Marriage is one of the established excellent practices of Islam that was encouraged by the Prophet ﷺ.

Anas ibn Maalik ﷺ narrated that a group of three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ to find out about his worship, and when they were informed about that, they considered their worship insufficient and said, 'Where are we from [Muhammad] 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 women and will not marry forever.' Allah's Messenger ﷺ came to them and said, 'Are you the same people who said such-and-such? By Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I pray [at night] but I do sleep and I also marry women. So whoever does not follow my tradition in religion is not one of my followers.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

Thus, marriage is one of the confirmed and emphasized practices of the Prophet ﷺ who once said,

> Women and perfume have been made beloved to me of this world of yours and my peace of mind is in the prayer. (Reported by Ahmad and others and is classified as *saheeh* by *Shaykh* al-Albaanee)

Primary Aims of Marriage

Marriage was instituted for three reasons: **(1)** preservation of progeny, **(2)** expulsion of the fluid which, if restricted and retained, would harm the entire body, **(3)** fulfilment of desire, attainment of pleasure and enjoyment of Allah's bounty.

Marriage has a large number of benefits including lowering the gaze, self-restraint and the ability to refrain from what is forbidden. Allah's Messenger ﷺ encouraged the Muslims to marry. He once said,

> Young men, whoever of you is able to marry must marry, for this is better for lowering the gaze and guarding chastity. But whoever [of you] is not able to marry should fast, as fasting would act as a restraint for him. (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

If the reins of piety are not strong enough to restrain a man and he fears involvement in unlawful sexual activities while he has the ability to marry, then it becomes obligatory upon him to marry. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said,

> When a servant of Allah gets married, he has already perfected one half of his religion. Let him then be heedful of Allah with regard to the other half. (Reported by at-Tabaraanee and classified as *hasan* by *Shaykh* al-Albaanee)

What Woman is best to Marry?

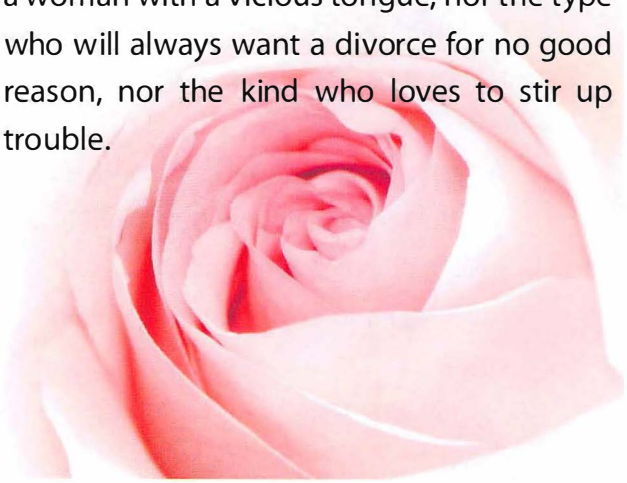
Allah's Messenger ﷺ said,

A woman is taken in marriage for four reasons: On account of her wealth, her noble descent, her beauty and her religion. So marry one who is religious, and you will prosper. (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

The world is but a passing delight, and the best of its enjoyment is a righteous wife. (Reported by Muslim)

In these traditions, the Prophet ﷺ emphasizes the importance of choosing to marry a woman with a religious disposition, for the simple reason that she will assist her husband in the conduct of his daily life, helping him keep safe from getting involved in sinful activities and unwholesome situations. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was once asked, 'Which women are best?' He replied, 'One that gladdens his sight and obeys his command and who does nothing he disapproves of concerning herself or his wealth.' (Reported by Ahmad)

It is not a good idea for a man to marry a woman with a vicious tongue, nor the type who will always want a divorce for no good reason, nor the kind who loves to stir up trouble.



Catching a Glimpse of One's Prospective Bride

It is befitting for the would-be husband to make an effort to catch a glimpse of his prospective bride, without actually being with her in private before the marriage is contracted. This would help him make the right decision and ensure that he is truly comfortable with her looks and would like to have her as his wife. The basis for this recommended viewing of the prospective bride is to be found in the following traditions:

If one feels in his heart that he should offer a marriage proposal to a certain woman, let him take a look at her, for this is more likely to promote deep intimacy between the couple. (Reported by Ahmad and classified as *saheeh* by *Shaykh* al-Albaanee)

Jaabir ibn 'Abdullaah ﷺ narrated that he heard Allah's Messenger ﷺ say,

If it is possible for anyone amongst you, when he proposes to a woman, to look and see for himself whether he really finds her attractive enough to want to marry her, he should certainly do so.

Jaabir ibn 'Abdullaah ﷺ continued,

I had proposed to a young woman, so I took to hiding myself and watching out for her, until I saw enough of her to make me really interested in marrying her. (Reported by Abu Daawood and Ahmad and classified as *hasan* by *Shaykh* al-Albaanee)

What Man is best to Marry?

The marriage guardian has a duty to consider the qualities of the prospective husband. He should take into account the interest of his daughter. He should not give her in marriage to a man with bad character or one who will fail to give her all her due. Any man who places his precious daughter's hand into the hand of a tyrant, scoundrel, irreligious person or wine-drinker actually commits an offence against his religion. He violates the right of kinship and abuses his authority.

Hence the guardian of a woman should seek a righteous man to marry her. Allah's Messenger ﷺ once said,

> If someone whose religion and character you are pleased with comes to you to marry your daughter or ward, then marry her off to him. If you do not do so, there will be commotion on the earth and widespread evil. (Reported by at-Tirmidhee and classified as *ḥasan* by *Shaykh* al-Albaanee)

A man once asked al-Ḥasan al-Baṣree, 'Several suitors have asked for my daughter. To whom should I give her in marriage?' He replied, 'To him who is aware of Allah; for if he loves her he will respect her, and even if he comes to dislike her, he will certainly not be cruel to her.'

Is wealth an important factor in marriage? The Qur'an says:

> And marry the unmarried among you and the righteous among your male slaves and female slaves. If they should be poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty, and Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing. (*Soorat an-Noor*, 24:32)

This, however, does not mean that Allah ﷻ necessarily confers riches on everyone who marries. Instead, the point which is being stressed here is that when it comes to considering marriage, people should not be fussy about their financial situation. The above-mentioned verse offers very useful guidance to the guardians of unmarried girls. They are virtually being told that if they receive a proposal from a person possessing a good character, they should not turn it down, simply because he is presently not too well off. Likewise, the relatives of the prospective bridegroom are advised not to delay marriage on the grounds that he is not earning much. The youth are also being told not to delay their marriage simply because of financial considerations. Even if they have little income, they should still marry, placing their trust in Allah.

Quite often one's marriage changes conditions for the better. With the help of one's wife one is able to manage one's expenses more wisely. Moreover, no one can see the future. Hardship can suddenly change into prosperity and the other way round. Hence, one should not be excessively calculating while considering the question of one's marriage.

The Marriage Proposal

When a man finds the woman of his choice, his next move is to make a proposal of marriage to her or her family. The proposal etiquette is well-known among people. If both parties agree, it is simply a promise to marry and nothing else. Although an agreed upon proposal is not legally binding, it still forms a mutual pledge. To break it without a valid reason would be an act of dishonesty.

If the woman is a widow or divorcee, the proposal should await the expiry of withdrawal or waiting period (*'iddah*). No proposal should be made while that of another suitor is still being considered, because proposal over proposal was forbidden by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ said,

> A believer is a brother of another believer. It is not permissible for a believer to negotiate a deal that his brother is negotiating, nor is it permissible to propose to a woman to whom his brother is proposing unless he gives him permission. (Muslim)

Likewise, it is unlawful to propose marriage to a woman to whom another has already done so and the first proposal has been openly accepted. There is no harm in doing so if the first suitor has shown himself disinterested, such as by having given up, or when enough time has elapsed to give others the impression that he no longer wants to marry. In the same way, it is also permissible to take the initiative and propose to a woman whom one does not know whether or not she is engaged, or whether the first proposal has openly been accepted or not.

In the case of a divorced woman who is not pregnant, the prescribed period of waiting (*'iddah*) before the expiration of which she may not contract a new marriage is three menstrual cycles. In the case of a woman who is pregnant, the duration of the *'iddah* is till the end of her pregnancy. In the case of a widow who is not pregnant, however, the length of the *'iddah* is four months and ten days.

Seeking Advice

Whoever is asked about what kind of person a prospective groom or bride may be should truthfully mention his or her failings: his or her defects and shortcomings to the degree necessary. It is important to note that advice should be limited to matters relevant to the affairs in question. It should not exceed to other areas.

In addition to this, one should resort to offering *Salaat-ul-Istikhaarah* (prayer for asking Allah's guidance). In fact, this was the practice of the Prophet ﷺ who encouraged Muslims to offer such a prayer in order to ask Almighty Allah for guidance when faced with important decisions or perplexing situations. This can be done by offering a two-*rak'ah* prayer along with a *du'aa'* in which one presents the matter to Allah ﷻ and asks for guidance.

The Marriage Contract

The basic elements and conditions essential to a valid and lawful marriage are four in number:

1. The consent of the marriage guardian (*waliy*).
2. The agreement of the woman: The guardian must obtain the woman's consent before the marriage and is not allowed to force her into marriage if she is not pleased with it. If he concludes the marriage contract that she is not pleased with, she has the right to annul it. The Prophet ﷺ said,

> The non-virgin is not to be married until she requests it. And the virgin is not to be married without her consent. They asked, 'How is her consent to be known?' He said, 'If she remains silent!' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

Al-Khansaa' bint Khidhaam al-Ansaariyyah ﷺ said that her father had married her off while she was a non-virgin and she disapproved of her marriage. She went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and he annulled the marriage. Likewise, 'Abdullaah ibn 'Abbaas ﷺ narrated that a young virgin came to the Prophet ﷺ and mentioned to him that her father had married her off while she disliked it. Then the Prophet ﷺ gave her the option to annul the marriage or to remain in marriage. (Reported by Ibn Maajah: *hadeeth* no. 1875 English Translation, Vol. 3)

Another *hadeeth* with similar wording adds: she said, 'I approve of what my father did but I wanted women to know that their fathers have no right whatsoever to do that.' (*Sunan ibn Maajah*, English Translation, Vol. 3, *hadeeth* no. 1874. This *hadeeth* has been classified as *saheeh*)

3. The presence of two witnesses.
4. The offer and immediate acceptance (*al-eejaab wal-qabool*)

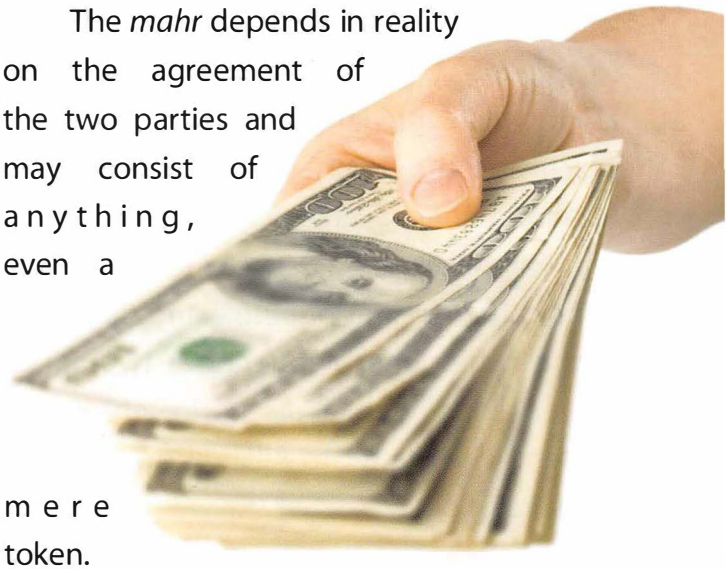
The Bride's Marriage Payment: Her Rightful Bridal Gift (*Mahr*)

The wife has specific rights upon her husband that are the result of a sound marriage contract. Some of the rights are non-material, while others are material. We will discuss these, by the help of Allah Most High, in the next chapter.

The *mahr* or the bride's rightful present constitutes one of the bride's material rights. It is also called *nihlah* (gift), *fareedah* (obligation), *hibah* (present), *sadaqah* (charity) and *sadaaq* (rightful marriage present), among other names. The terms *sadaaq* and *sidq* come from the same root which means sincerity. It is called *sadaaq* because one feels the husband's sincerity in wanting to marry the woman. The Qur'an says,

> And give the women whom you marry their rightful marriage present unconditionally. Yet, if they are pleased to give something of it to you, then enjoy it with pleasure and good cheer. (*Soorat an-Nisaa'*, 4:4)

The expression *nihlah* (marriage present) occurring in this verse signifies the giving of something willingly and of one's own accord, without expecting a return for it. The bridal gift or *mahr* is the right of the woman over the man. She is the sole owner of it. No one, not even her father, may take any of it unless she consents to this. The Islamic Law has neither set a minimum nor a maximum limit for *mahr*. It has, however, encouraged people to lighten this burden and to avoid excess so that it will be easier for the marriage to take place and young men would not be burdened with huge expenses.



The *mahr* depends in reality on the agreement of the two parties and may consist of anything, even a mere token.

According to several authentic traditions recorded in most of the compilations, the Prophet ﷺ made it clear that even an iron ring may be enough if the bride is willing to accept it, or short of that, even the imparting to your bride a verse of the Qur'an.

It is permissible to pay the entire *mahr* in advance or to delay all of its payment or to pay some in advance and to delay the rest. It is also permissible for the man to consummate the marriage without having given the woman anything. It is obligatory upon him to give her the *mahr* that is usually given to women similar to her if the two have not agreed upon a particular amount for the gift. If they have agreed on a specific amount, then he must give it.

The Wedding Feast (*Waleemah*)

The holding of a wedding feast is a strongly recommended *Sunnah*. This is based on the statement of the Prophet ﷺ to ʿAbdur-Rahmaan ibn ʿAwf ﷺ,

> Offer a feast to celebrate the wedding, even if it consists of no more than a sheep. (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

To conform to the practice sanctioned by the *Sunnah*, the banquet should consist of one whole sheep or goat, at the very least, although it is permissible to offer any kind of lawful food on this occasion.

The Timing of the Wedding Feast

The time of *waleemah* stretches from anytime of the contract to the last days of being newlywed. There are authentic reports on this matter. Anas ibn Maalik ﷺ narrated that Allah's Messenger ﷺ once consummated his marriage with one of his wives, so he sent for him and he invited some men for food. (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

When the Prophet ﷺ married Safiyyah, he held the wedding feast for three days.

(Reported by Abu Yaʿlaa and classified as *hasan* by *Shaykh* al-Albaanee)

Moreover, complete happiness comes after consummation. It is the practice in Islam for the husband to feed his family, friends and neighbours during the *waleemah*. He should also set aside a portion for the poor and the needy as a way of expressing thanks to Allah and recognizing His bounty upon him. The husband must also do his best to invite the pious and good people. He should not distinguish between the rich and the poor. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said,

> The worst kind of food is the wedding feast to which the rich are invited and the poor are ignored; and whoever does not respond to the invitation has disobeyed Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

The Obligation to Attend the Wedding Feast

It is obligatory for whoever is invited to attend the wedding feast to attend it. The Prophet ﷺ said,

> If one of you is invited to the wedding feast, he should go to it. (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

Even if a person is fasting, they should still respond to the invitation and put in an appearance. He Prophet ﷺ said,

> If one of you is invited to a meal, he should respond. If he is not fasting, he should eat. If he is fasting, he should supplicate [for the host]. (Reported by Muslim)

The Custom of Scattering Sweetmeats, Fruits and Money (*an-Nithaar*)

The custom of *an-nithaar*, which involves throwing out money, almonds, dry dates, sweetmeats, among other things, to the guests to pick up is often found in some wedding feasts. This custom tends to incite feelings of pettiness, grasping and greed. Dr. Saalih ibn Ghaanim as-Sadlaan says,

> It is disliked to do this act during weddings or at other times, for it causes people to jostle and swarm after these things, and for them to do such a thing is truly demeaning and embarrassing. Furthermore, some people will get those things and others will be left empty-handed. Therefore, it is preferred not to perform this practice. (*The Fiqh of Marriage in the Light of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah*, Translated by Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo, p. 97)

Nevertheless, it is much better to distribute treats to the guests individually, since this is more adequate, less controversial and more in keeping with the need of pious caution.

8.3 Funerals

Death is the one fact of life about which we almost all prefer to remain ignorant. Most men will not allow themselves to dwell on the thought of death. Life is, in fact, a short trip. Drug-users or better yet abusers talk about taking a trip, but the tragedy is that they never know where 'the trip' will take them; we do know, on the other hand, where life's trip will end. If we travel as Allah ﷻ wants us to, it will end in the sheer unending joy of Paradise.

Everything passes as the day passes. The earthly life is short. Death is a reality. Death is 'a cup' from which everybody is bound to drink, and it will inevitable be passed to him.

Obligations upon the Family of the Deceased

When death has been established with absolute certainty, no time should be wasted in performing the ritual washing (*ghusl*) of the deceased, which is to be followed by shrouding (*takfeen*) and burial (*dafn*). Allah's Messenger ﷺ said,

> Hasten to bury the deceased, for if it is a righteous soul, then it is good that you advance it to its destination; and if it is other than that, then you are unburdening your necks of an evil thing.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

It is incumbent upon the family of the deceased to be patient and to accept what Allah has decreed. Anas ibn Maalik ﷺ narrated that Allah's Messenger ﷺ passed by a woman who was crying at a gravesite, and he said to her, 'Fear Allah and be patient.' She said, 'Go away from me, for you have not been afflicted as I have been.' Anas ibn Maalik ﷺ said that she did not know who he was. Then it was said to her, 'He is Allah's Messenger ﷺ.' The woman then became like someone stricken with death. Later, she went to the Prophet ﷺ and said, 'I did not know you.' He said, 'Indeed, patience is required at the first moment when calamity strikes.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

The following are forbidden to the family of the deceased:

1. Wailing,
2. Beating the cheeks and tearing the garments, and
3. Shaving the head.

Performing the Ritual Washing (*Ghusl*)

The best practice is to perform the washing of the corpse with water and ground lote-tree leaves (*sidr*). Camphor should be added in the final washing, and then the corpse should be wiped dry and wrapped in a shroud.

The corpse should be washed at least three times. If three washings are not enough to make it properly clean, it should, therefore, be given extra washings. Whatever final total, however, it must always be in odd number; in other words, three, five or seven. Five pieces of cloth are used for the purpose of shrouding (*takfeen*). The sheets for shrouding purposes should be plain white sheets. If these are not available, then three pieces would be enough.

The Funeral Prayer (*Janaazah*)

The funeral prayer (*salaat-ul-janaazah*) is a collective duty (*fard kifaayah*), or a communally obligatory act. This means if some people perform it, then the obligation has been fulfilled. If no one performs it, then all are guilty of a serious sin for neglecting the obligation.

Placing the Body for the Funeral Prayer

The deceased, enshrouded on a bier, is placed in front of the *imaam* (the prayer leader) who should stand opposite the head of a male corpse, and opposite the middle of a female. When he stands in his place at the head of the congregation, he must turn and look to the right and to the left, making sure that the rows are straight, just as he does in all the other prayers (*salawaat*). The worshippers form themselves into rows according to the number of those who take part, facing the *qiblah*. The usual practice is to have three rows at least, but if the number of people is small, there is no harm if they form only a single row. Similarly, if the number of people is great, there could be more rows.

The service commences with the *takbeer* or the affirmation of the supreme greatness of Allah (*Allaahu Akbar*). Four *takbeeraat* (plural form of *takbeerah*) are generally pronounced. Immediately after pronouncing the first of the four *takbeeraat* (*Allahu Akbar*), the hands are raised and placed in the same position, as in any other prayer (*salaah*). One should then recite *Soorat al-Faatihah*. It is recommended to recite the *ta'awwudh* and the *basmalah* before it and *aameen* after it. All this is done inaudibly. However, one does not make any opening supplication (*du'aa' al-istiftaah*).

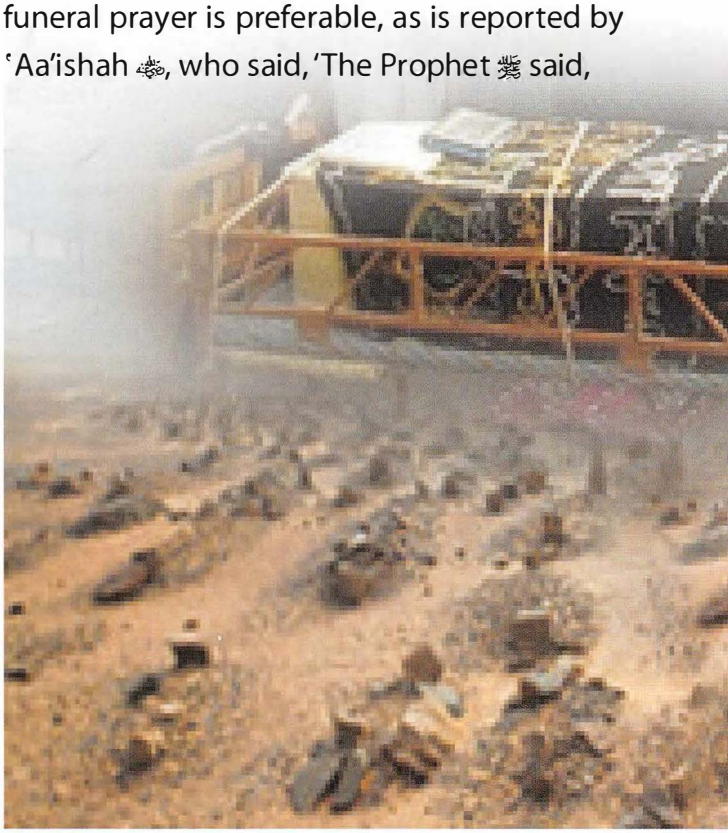
After the second *takbeer*, one should invoke Allah's blessings on the Prophet ﷺ, just as one invokes them in *tashahhud*. Immediately after the rest of the two *takbeeraat* (or more), one should pray for the deceased and for the Muslims in general (*du'aa'*). Various kinds of supplications are narrated in the Prophet's traditions. You may choose whichever you want. One should then pronounce a single salutation (*tasleem*), while turning one's face to the right. It is also permissible to pronounce two salutations, one to the right and then one to the left.

Virtues of Offering the Funeral Prayer

Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, 'Whoever follows the funeral and offers the funeral prayer for it will get a reward equal to one *qeeraat*, and whoever attends it till burial will get a reward equal to two *qeeraats*. Someone asked, 'What are two *qeeraats*?' He replied, 'It is equal to two huge mountains.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

A Large Congregation

A large gathering of people for the funeral prayer is preferable, as is reported by 'Aa'ishah ﷺ, who said, 'The Prophet ﷺ said,



If a Muslim dies and his funeral prayer is attended by a group of a hundred Muslims, and they all sincerely pray for his forgiveness, he will be forgiven. (Reported by Muslim)

ʿAbdullaah ibn ʿAbbaas ﷺ reported, 'I heard the Prophet ﷺ saying,

If a Muslim dies and a group of forty people, who do not associate any one with Allah in worship, pray for him, their prayer will be accepted and he will be forgiven. (Reported by Muslim)

Presenting Food to the Family of the Deceased

It is a *Sunnah* to present food to the family of the deceased. ʿAbdullaah ibn Jaʿfar narrated that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said,

Prepare food for the family of Jaʿfar, for a matter (meaning death) has come to them which has occupied them. (Reported by Abu Daawood and Ibn Maajah)

Jaʿfar ibn Abee Ṯaalib ﷺ was one of the cousins of the Prophet ﷺ, and the narrator of the *ḥadeeth*, ʿAbdullaah ibn Jaʿfar, was his son.

Patience in Affliction

Islam forbids indulgence in immoderate grief for the dead. It requires that hardships and afflictions be borne patiently. Upon hearing of the death of a relative or a friend or of any other affliction, a Muslim is enjoined to say:

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُون

Innaa lillaahi wa innaa ilaayhi raajiʿoon

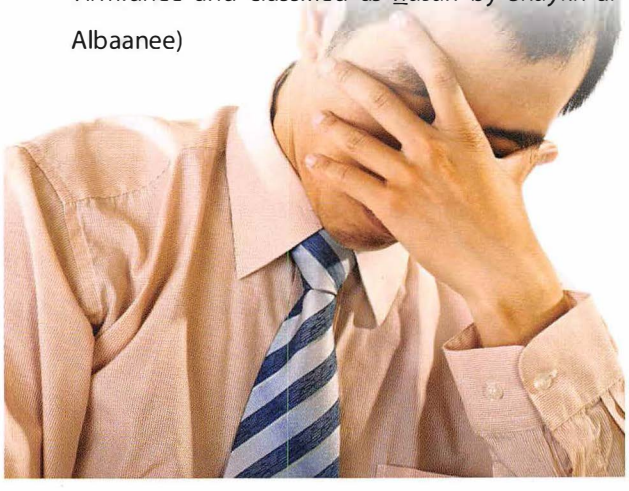
To Allah we belong, and to Him we will return.

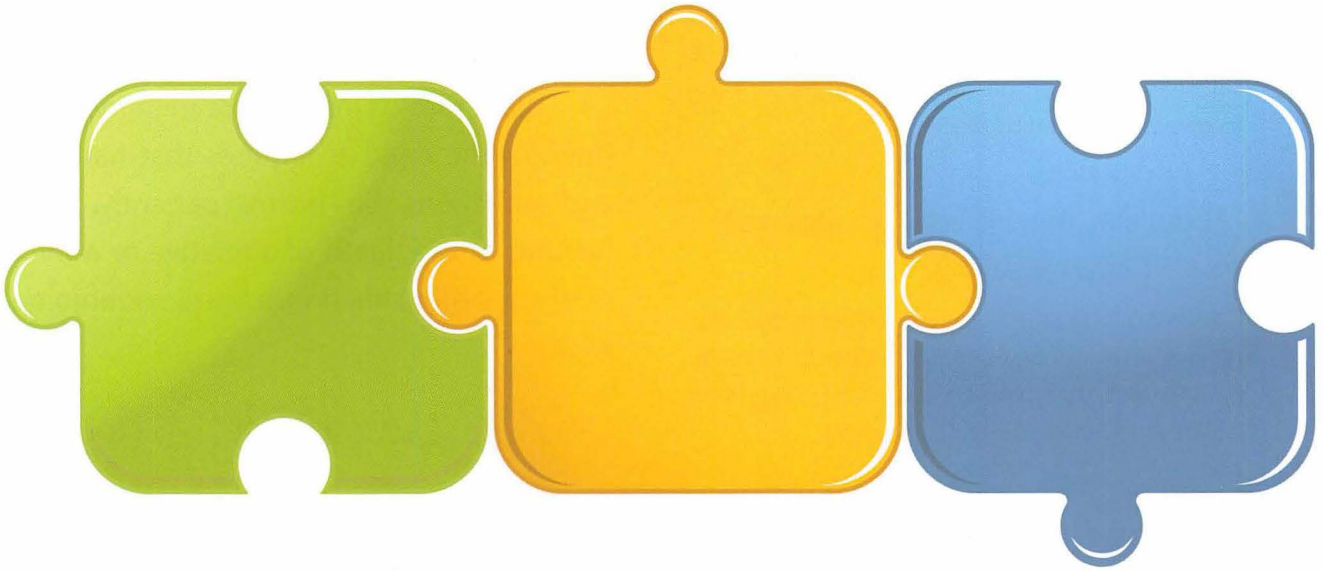
These words are a source of unlimited solace and comfort in bereavement. All of us belong to Almighty Allah and we must return to Him one day. Hence, it is forbidden to raise a wail of despair, beat one's cheeks, tear one's clothes and indulge in constant mourning.

Weeping

It is permissible to weep quietly for the dead provided that such weeping does not rise to the level of wailing. ʿAa'ishah ﷺ reports,

The Prophet ﷺ entered to where the body of ʿUthmaan ibn Maḏhʿoon was. He uncovered his face, kissed him, and cried until I saw [his] tears running down his cheeks. (Reported by at-Tirmidhee and classified as *ḥasan* by *Shaykh* al-Albaanee)





Mourning up to Three Days

Except for her husband, it is not permissible for a woman to mourn for more than three days over the death of a beloved one, such as her father, mother, brother, child, and so on. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said,

> It is not permissible for a woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day to mourn over a dead person for more than three days except for her husband, in which case she mourns for four months and ten days. (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

The Arabic word for mourning is *hidaad*, which carries the meaning of abstinence. It usually applies to a widow whose husband's death forces her to abstain from several things that were previously permissible for her. Hence, *hidaad* signifies a widow's abstinence from things which would invite others to desire her and seek her in marriage, such as wearing attractive garments and jewellery, leaving her house without need, wearing perfume or make-up.

Thus mourning or *hidaad* is a widow's physical display of sadness and grief for the death of her husband. The above-quoted *hadeeth* recorded by al-Bukhaaree indicates that a widow should mourn over her husband for the full term of her *'iddah* (waiting period), which is four months and ten days, as evidenced by the Qur'an:

> And those of you who die and leave wives behind them, they (i.e. the wives) shall wait [as regards their marriage] for four months and ten days. (*Soorat al-Baqarah*, 2:234)

Mourning, however, should not be associated with continuous grieving over the dead.

Beliefs and Practices of Islam

9. Articles of Faith

Eemaan (Faith)

Eemaan is an Arabic word which means faith. Hence, *mu'min* (feminine form: *mu'minah*) means one who believes; an adherent to the true faith. The term *eemaan* occurs 45 times in the Qur'an.

The word *eemaan* is used for faith or belief as it gives an individual peace of mind and also creates a harmonious relationship between a human being and the rest of the universe.

Eemaan is a Statement and Action

Eemaan is a statement and action. In other words, it has three essential elements: sincere belief in the heart, profession by the tongue and performance of the deeds by the physical parts of the body.

Eemaan resides in the heart. The heart is its locus, its foundation. *Eemaan* increases by acts of obedience to Allah and decreases by acts of disobedience. If the heart is filled with *eemaan* – with love of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ, hope in Allah's mercy and fearing His punishment, it will certainly drive one to perform acts of obedience to Allah.

The Articles of Faith

When Allah's Messenger ﷺ was asked by Angel Jibreel عليه السلام, 'What is *eemaan* (faith)?' He replied, 'It is to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in the Divine Decree (*al-qadar*), both the good of it and the bad of it.' (Reported by Muslim)

Thus, the essential elements of *eemaan*, according to the *hadeeth*, are as follows:

1. To believe in Allah,
2. His Angels,
3. His Books,
4. His Messengers,
5. The Last Day, and
6. To believe in divine destiny: the good of it and the bad of it.

9.1. Belief in Allah

Belief in Allah is the cornerstone of *eemaan*. All the other beliefs in Islam revolve round belief in Allah.

Oneness of Allah (*Tawheed*): the Importance of Correct Belief in Allah

Tawheed is an Arabic word which means 'making something one' or 'asserting oneself'. Most of the Qur'an, rather almost all of it, refers to *tawheed*. In fact, the entire Qur'an is the exposition of the Names and Attributes of Allah.

The Oneness of Allah: His Attributes

Faith in the Oneness of Allah means to believe that Allah is the sole Creator and the Lord of everything that exists in this universe. Allah as one's Lord and Master requires voluntary submission to His Commands.

The meaning of faith in Allah is that one should believe firmly in one's heart, be convinced of, and confidently affirm that Allah is the true God who brought into existence all created things and that He is free from all defects and inabilities.

Allah Alone is the Sustainer – the Lord (*ar-Rabb*). He is the One without any partners whatsoever in His Kingdom. He is the only Creator and the true Owner of the creation. He is the only one who nourishes, sustains and maintains His creation. Everything that happens in this creation happens by His permission and will. Sustenance and provisions are from Allah. Life and death are in the Hands of Allah. All bounties come from Him alone.

Allah commands and forbids. He elevates and abases. He changes day into night. He alternates the days of people and nations, replacing one with another. Things occur according to His will. Whatever He wills comes into being in the time and manner He wills it. His orders and decrees are fulfilled in the heavens, in the farthest reaches of the earth, and beneath it, in the seas, the skies and every other part of the universe. He encompasses all things. With His knowledge, He keeps count of every single thing.

His hearing encompasses all voices, yet they do not blend into each other. Rather, He hears the clamour of all the various tongues, in all countless languages, distinct in their countless supplications. His Sight envelopes all things. He sees the smallest black ant upon a piece of coal in a moonless dark night. The hidden for Him is visible and the secret is public.

In His Hand is all good and to Him return all affairs. His power encompasses all things. All depend upon Him for their safety and sustenance. He forgives sins, relieves hardships and removes woes. He makes the broken whole, enriches the poor, feeds the hungry, clothes the naked and heals the sick. To Him do the deeds of the night ascend before those of the day, and the deeds of the day before those of the night. There is no one to withhold what He gives and no one to give what He withholds. He is the Supreme Lord without any partners whatsoever. He is unique without equal. He has no sons or daughters. He is the one without comparison or kind. There is nothing similar to Him. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.

Hence, every rite of worship, be it prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, sacrificing animals, and so forth, must be done for the sake of Allah only. All supplications and prayers must be directed to Him alone. If someone does any of these acts for someone other than Allah, he is negating his *tawheed*. These include putting one's trust in Allah, having fear and devotion only for His sake, and so on. Submission to Him alone encompasses worshipping Him alone and obeying Him alone.

9.2. Belief in Allah's Angels

One of the unseen worlds of which Islam tells us is the world of angels. The angels are described in the Qur'an and *hadeeth* in great detail. Belief in the angels is another essential belief that forms the cornerstone of *eemaan* (faith). When Allah's Messenger ﷺ was asked by Angel Jibreel عليه السلام, 'What is faith?' he replied, 'It is to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in the Divine Decree (*al-qadar*), both the good of it and the bad of it.' (Reported by Muslim) Thus, belief in the angels is the second article of faith.

The Arabic word for angel is *malak*, of which the plural form is *malaa'ikah*. The angels belong to the unseen world (*'aalam al-ghayb*). They are created from light and are, therefore, invisible to human beings. Yet, they do not have forms and bodies. The Glorious Qur'an speaks of their having a set of wings. (*Soorat Faatir*, 35:1)

From the moment an individual is conceived in his mother's womb, until his death and beyond, the angels play a very significant role in human life. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, 'When forty nights have passed for the sperm drop (the *nutfah*), Allah sends an angel to it, and gives it its shape and creates its hearing, sight, skin, flesh and bones. Then he says, "O Lord, male or female?" Your Lord decrees whatever He wills, and the angel writes it down. Then he says, "O Lord, his lifespan?" Your Lord says whatever He wills, and the angel writes it down. Then he says, "O Lord, his provision?" Your Lord decrees whatever He wills, and the angel writes it down. Then the angel departs with the scroll in his hand, and he adds nothing to the decree, nor does he subtract anything from it.' (Reported by Muslim, *hadeeth* no. 6726)

Another *hadeeth*, narrated by both al-Bukhaaree and Muslim, states that an angel follows the sperm drop (*nutfah*: sexual fluid: gamete is the precise word for it) from the time it enters the womb until it is completed or aborted (Quoted by Dr. Mohammed Ali Albar in his work entitled *Human Development*, p. 74).

Angels accompany human beings. They protect them by Allah's leave and record all their deeds. They extract the soul of the person when the moment of their death arrives. The common phrase 'an untimely death' seems close to blasphemy (rude or disrespectful thing for Allah): every death is right on time. Moreover, to ask 'why' when someone dies young is absurd. Our strictly limited minds cannot grasp the total scheme of things willed by Allah.

The angels form a world entirely different from the world of mankind. It is a noble world, completely pure. They are in total submission to Allah. They are incapable of committing any sin and are constantly engaged in Allah's praise. Each one of them is assigned a specific task in the governance of the universe. The number of angels is known only to Allah. Angels are made of light, and Allah has not given our eyes the ability to see them.

The angels have wings: two, three, or four. Angel Jibreel ﷺ has six hundred wings. (al-Bukhaaree) Allah has created the angels in noble and beautiful forms. They are not all the same in their physical shape and status. They vary in their status before their Lord. They are neither male nor female. They do not eat or drink or get married like humans do. They have names, but the Qur'an and the *hadeeth* mention only a few of them. They are as follows:

First and foremost is Angel Jibreel ﷺ (also called *ar-Rooh al-Ameen*). He performed the most important task of bringing the message of Allah to His Prophets. He no longer performs this duty as the institution of Prophethood came to an end with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The second angel is Israafeel, who by Allah's command will blow the Trumpet on the Day of Resurrection and bring the present system and order of the world to an end. The third angel is Mikaa'eel, whose duty is to arrange for rainfall and supply of provisions to the creation of Allah by His command. And finally, there is the angel of death who has been appointed to take people's souls. It is worth mentioning here, however, that his name is not mentioned in the Qur'an or in any sound *hadeeth*. Therefore, the name *'Azraa'eel* (or *'Izraa'eel*) must not be attributed to him, as some people mistakenly do, for there is no evidence whatsoever to this effect.

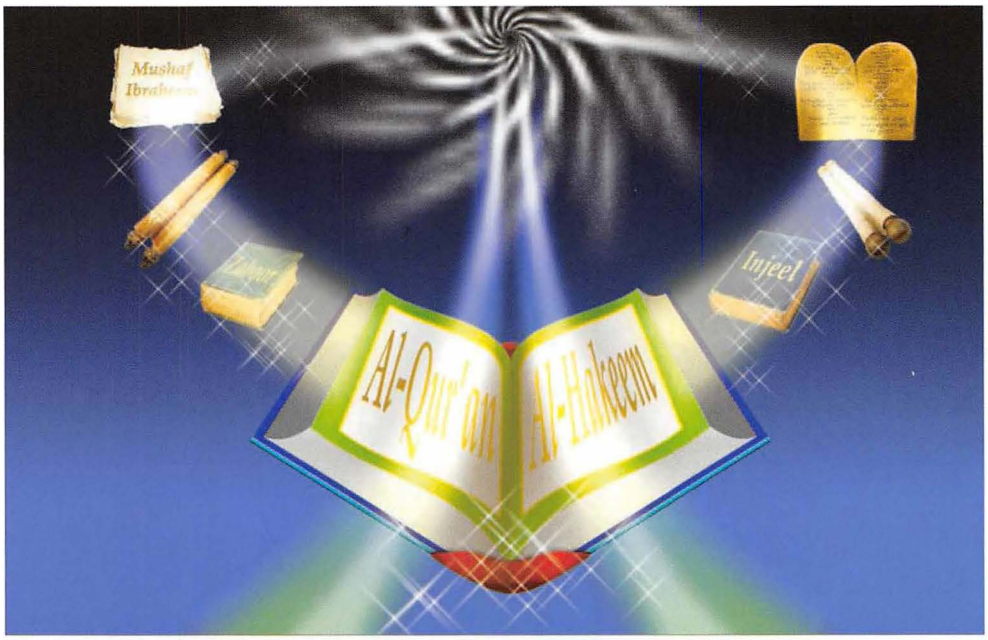
Other angels mentioned in the Qur'an are *Kiraaman Kaatibeen* – two honourable and kind scribes, and Haaroot and Maaroot. The former are attached to every human being, and as their names suggest, they record good and bad deeds. The latter were sent to the people of Babylon as a test. Among the angels is Maalik, the keeper of Hell (*Soorat az-Zukhruf*, 43:77). Among the angels are Munkar and Nakeer, mentioned in the *hadeeth*. These two angels question the dead in their graves and put them through an examination on the subject of their religious beliefs.

Allah has given the angels the ability to take up forms different from their own. The speed of angels is far greater than that of light and cannot be measured by human standards. But they are the servants of Allah and they do not have any aspect of divinity in them whatsoever. They submit to Allah's commands completely and never stray away from obeying His orders.

The Great Size of One of the Angels of Allah

Jaabir ibn ʿAbdullaah ﷺ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'I have been given permission to speak of one of the angels of Allah, one of the bearers of the Throne. The distance between his earlobe and his shoulder is like the distance of seven hundred years' travel.' (Reported by Abu Daawood, *hadeeth* no. 4727, and graded *saheeh* 'authentic')

Belief in Allah's angels is one of the essential articles of faith. For a detailed and interesting discussion concerning the angels, see Umar S. al-Ashqar's book entitled *The World of the Noble Angels*.



9.3. Belief in Allah's Books

Belief in Allah's Books is the third article of *eemaan*. This refers to the revelations Allah sent down to His messengers. These revelations were a mercy and guidance from Allah. Allah sent down many scriptures for the guidance of mankind and to instruct human beings how to lead their life in the right way.

The Scriptures Mentioned in the Qur'an

1. The *Tawraah* revealed to the Prophet Moosaa عليه السلام.
2. The *Zaboor* revealed to the Prophet Daawood عليه السلام.
3. The *Injeel* revealed to the Prophet ʿEesaa عليه السلام.
4. There is also reference in the Qur'an to the *Suhuf*, scrolls, or leaves, revealed to Ibraaheem and Moosaa.
5. The Glorious Qur'an, the final Book given to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

All of the previous revelations have been cancelled and abolished by the final revelation – the Glorious Qur'an. The Qur'an is the 'ruler' over all the previous revelations. It is the determinant factor in judging what is genuine and what is false in the earlier scriptures.

Allah sent specific and different revelations according to the needs and conditions of different people over time. This mercy of Allah in the form of revelations continued until the Qur'an was revealed. The Qur'an contains all the guidance that people need until the Last Day. The Qur'an is meant to be guidance for all times until the Day of Resurrection. This is the reason why Allah has protected the Qur'an from any tampering, errors or distortions.

The Qur'an is the uncreated word of Allah. It is the final message to mankind. It is exactly the same in its present form as it was at the time of the Prophet ﷺ. The Qur'an has come down to us complete. No additions have ever been made to it. No part, not even a tiny syllable of it, is forgotten or has gone unrecorded. The Qur'an is protected by Allah Himself from all corruptions and distortions. The previous revelations or the Revealed Books that were sent down before Prophet Muhammad ﷺ are not the same as what people today possess, such as the Torah and the Gospel.

Belief in Allah's Books requires that one must believe that these books were revealed from Allah ﷻ. However, one must act in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an – which is the final revelation.

9.4. Belief in Allah's Messengers

The next article mentioned by the Prophet ﷺ in the *hadeeth* is the belief in Allah's Messengers. The meaning of faith in Allah's Messengers is that one should firmly believe and confidently affirm that Allah sent them to mankind to guide them to the way of the truth. They were truthful and faithful, and they all delivered the message of Allah in full.

Belief in prophets and messengers is an essential doctrine in Islam. Prophethood is a favour and bounty from Allah. The terms prophets and messengers are commonly used interchangeably. However, there is a slight difference between a prophet (*nabiyy*) and a messenger (*rasool*). A messenger is a prophet who was given divine guidance in the form of scriptures, while a prophet came in the periods between messengers and followed the divine scripture, or Book, of the preceding messenger. Thus, a messenger is a *rasool* and *nabiyy*, but a prophet is not a *rasool* (messenger). The term *nabiyy* literally means 'a giver of news: the one who gives news from Allah'.

All messengers and prophets have preached essentially the same message that there is One God, Allah, to whom worship and service are due. All others are His creation. This is the Qur'anic *tawheed* – the Oneness of Allah. Islam is unthinkable without *tawheed*. All messengers and prophets brought the same *deen* (religion, way of life) for mankind. Their fundamental teachings were the same. They called upon their people, saying, 'I am a messenger worthy of all trust. So be conscious of Allah and obey me.' (*Soorat ash-Shu'araa'*, 26: 161-3) Of course the *Sharee'ah* (Islamic Law) differed from one messenger to the next due to change in conditions. As prophets and messengers were models for humanity, they were all human beings. They did not have any divine status. Their loftiest attribute was that of being servants of Allah. Such is Allah's description of them in the Qur'an.

It is worth mentioning here, however, that each prophet or messenger was sent to his own people, but Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent to all mankind. Islam is, therefore, a universal religion, unlike the previous ones which were rather local.

Aadam عليه السلام was the first prophet. After Aadam عليه السلام a succession of messengers and prophets came to renew the guidance of Allah, which was either lost or had become polluted or mixed with human interference. The last messenger was Muhammad ﷺ, who completed the chain of prophets and sealed the succession. Thus, the golden chain of prophets, which began with Aadam عليه السلام, ended with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's teachings are preserved for humanity till the end of time.

The stories of the prophets form a significant portion of the Qur'an. The Qur'an, however, tells the stories of some of the prophets and messengers but does not tell the stories of a large number of them. Among those mentioned in the Qur'an are: Aadam, Idrees, Nooh, Hood, Saalih, Ibraaheem, Ismaa'eel, Is-haaq, Ya'qoob, Loot, Yoosuf, Shu'ayb, Ayyoob, Dhul-Kifl, Moosaa, Haaroon, al-Yasa', Ilyaas, Daawood, Sulaymaan, 'Uzayr, Zakariyyaa, Yahya, 'Eesaa and Muhammad – Peace be upon them all. It is important to realize that all over the world, Allah's prophets and messengers were sent, whether named or not in the Qur'an.

A Muslim, therefore, is required to believe in all the messengers and prophets mentioned in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. As for those not mentioned in the Qur'an, one must believe in them in general. One must believe that there is not a single community to whom a warner was not sent.

If a person denies any single prophet or messenger confirmed in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, then they are in fact denying all of them. Denial of one amounts to denying all of them.

Significance of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ: Finality of his Prophethood and as a Model of Behaviour

The Glorious Qur'an mentions Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the last of Allah's Prophets:

> Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets (*khaatam-un-nabiyyeen*). (*Soorat al-Ahzaab*, 33:40)

'The Seal of the Prophets' or the Last of the Prophets, just as a seal (*khaatam*) marks the end of a document. Apart from this, the word *khaatam* is also synonymous with *khitaam*, 'the end or conclusion' of something, from which it follows that the message revealed through Muhammad ﷺ – the Qur'an – must be regarded as the culmination and the end of all prophetic revelations. The doctrine of the finality of Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, therefore, rests on the clear words of the Noble Qur'an. The *hadeeth* is even clearer on this point. The meaning of *khaatam-un-nabiyyeen* was thus explained by the Prophet ﷺ himself:

> My example and that of the prophets before me is the example of a man who built a house and he made it very good and very beautiful with the exception of a stone in the corner, so people began to go round it and to wonder at it and to say, 'Why has this stone not been placed?' I am this stone and I am the last of the Prophets.' (Reported by al-Bukhaaree)

The advent of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ universalized the institution of Prophethood in a real sense. The day of the national prophets was over, and one prophet was raised for the whole world, for all nations and for all ages (*Soorat al-Furqaan*, 25:1). The world-Prophet, therefore, took the place of the national prophets and the grand idea of unifying the whole human race and gathering it together under one banner was thus brought to perfection.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a Model of Behaviour

The Glorious Qur'an says:

> There surely is for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent model for those who hope for Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much. (*Soorat al-Ahzaab*, 33: 21-22)

The Prophet ﷺ stands out as a role model in the broadest possible sense of the term. Muslims must emulate his example and mould their lives on his exemplary pattern. But for those who are unmindful of Allah, the Prophet ﷺ is obviously not an example or a role model. His example is emulated, however, by all those who remember Allah much. The true believers would do their best to emulate the Prophet ﷺ in all matters of his life as sanctioned by the *Shareeʿah*.

There is another important fact that definitely needs to be emphasized concerning belief in the Prophet ﷺ. He is not just an example, but rather the example. As a matter of fact, there is no manner of living and belief system that is superior to that of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Moreover, there is no individual who was closer and more beloved to Allah than Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. He once said,

> Allah took me as His most intimate friend (*khaleel*) as He had earlier taken Ibraaheem (Abraham) as His most intimate friend. (Reported by Muslim)

It is important to note that the primary role of the Prophet ﷺ was to purify mankind. He is the one who demonstrated the proper method of purification. He also once said,

> None of you becomes a true believer until I am more beloved to him than his father, his children and all of mankind. (Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

The Prophet's role is simple. He is the human example that every Muslim must aspire to as his way was based on true guidance from Allah ﷻ. He is the ideal model for Muslim life, providing the pattern that all believers are to emulate. He is in fact the 'living Qur'an', the witness whose words and actions reveal Allah's will. His life and conduct shows all Muslims the proper way to purify their souls. Thus, Muslims look to the Prophet's example for guidance in all aspects of life. This is true whether one is speaking about how to pray, fast, perform *hajj*, give *zakaat*, how to treat friends as well as enemies, what to eat and drink, enjoin good and forbid evil, earn Allah's pleasure, how to deal with family members, what to wear and what not to wear, how to treat the orphans, the widows and even animals, and so forth. Traditions of the Prophet ﷺ provide guidance for personal hygiene, dress, eating, and marriage, treatment of wives, war and peace and practically every aspect of life, death and religion.

Jihaad: Struggle or Striving

The importance of *jihaad* in Islam is very clearly established in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. The Prophet ﷺ said:

> The peak of the matter is Islam, its pillar is the prayer, and its topmost part is *jihaad*. (Reported by at-Tirmidhee)

It must, however, be said at once that the Prophet ﷺ did not mention *jihaad* in the *hadeeth* discussed above, mentioning the pillars of Islam. The Prophet ﷺ did not mention *jihaad* as one of the pillars of Islam, simply because, in general, it is a communally obligatory act (*fard kifaayah*) and not an individual obligation (*fard 'ayn*). *Jihaad* thus is the summit of Islam, but is not a foundation or pillar.

A very great misconception prevails with regard to the duty of *jihaad* in Islam, namely the association of the word *jihaad* with war. In fact, *jihaad* is the most defamed word in the Islamic vocabulary. It is commonly inaccurately translated as holy war.

But this is simply not accurate. The term *jihaad* is derived from the verb *jaahada*, which means 'to strive or exert oneself', namely against anything that implies evil. The Prophet ﷺ, for example, described man's struggle against his own passions and weaknesses (*jihaad an-nafs*) as the 'mightiest form of *jihaad*' (Reported by al-Bayhaqee). Thus *jaahada* means to endeavour, strive and struggle. The noun *juhd* means 'making one's utmost effort and struggle to achieve one's object'. Applied to warfare, the term *jihaad* has been used in the Qur'an exclusively to denote a war of defence, defence of one's freedom of religion, of one's country and of the liberty of one's community.' (*Soorat al-Hajj*, 22:39-40)

The struggle made to attain nearness to Allah and to subdue one's passions, and the struggle made to win over the unbelievers, not with the sword, but with the Qur'an is, therefore, a *jihaad* in the terminology of the Qur'an.

Since this topic is limited to a consideration of the five pillars of Islam and when *jihaad* does not form a part of these five pillars, we have not dealt with this topic in greater detail. We have discussed it in Grade Eleven of this series (See *The Question of Jihaad* in Chapter 5)

The Command to Enjoin Good and Forbid Evil

This is one of the most important injunctions imposed on an individual Muslim as well as the Muslim community as a whole. Its importance can be evaluated by the fact that enjoining good and forbidding evil (*al-amru bil ma'roof wan-nahyu 'an-il-munkar*) is repeated at least nine times in the Qur'an. The Arabic term *ma'roof* denotes something that is well-known, universally recognized and generally accepted. In Qur'anic terminology, it means all good deeds that human beings recognize as wholesome and desirable; for example, helping the poor and the destitute, the widows and the orphans, the sick and the infirm, or establishing peace and harmony in society. Muslims are ordered that they should actively get involved in the social betterment of the society in which they live.

Munkar is the opposite of *ma'roof*. It literally means 'to deny, not to know, to have no knowledge'. Hence, *munkar* means 'the disagreeable, objectionable and detestable acts which human beings abhor'. Such acts include, among other things, abusing others, wrongful acts, misappropriation, pride, miserliness and shameful acts. These acts should be checked and stopped. If one is not in a position to stop such acts physically, then one should verbally condemn them; and if even this is not possible, then one should at least feel strong hatred in one's heart. The last option is, according to a *hadeeth*, the lowest degree of *eemaan* (faith) (Abdur Rashid Siddiqui, *Qur'anic Keywords*)

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudree ﷺ narrated that he heard Allah's Messenger ﷺ say,

> Whoever of you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart; and that is the weakest of faith. (Reported by Muslim)

Enjoining good and forbidding evil is a wide-ranging assignment entrusted especially to the Muslim community (*Soorat Aal-'Imraan*, 3:110). At the core of enjoining good is the concern to protect mankind from Hellfire. The purpose of creation is to gain knowledge of Allah, especially His excellent attributes. The Muslim community is obliged to carry forward the original assignment given to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and is responsible for spreading true faith.

Today mankind is on the verge of collapse and ruin. This begs the question as to who will rescue our ailing humanity. All sections of society are equally affected. So is the state of people's beliefs, morals, social life, spiritual health and faith. The duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil is a privilege, a trust passed on to Muslims from Allah's Messengers. Its objective is not only to reform others but also to mend one's ways.

9.5. Belief in the Last Day

Belief in the Last Day is one of the essential articles of faith. It is called the Last Day because no new day will come after that day. The word generally used in the Qur'an to indicate life after death is *al-aakhirah*. The Last Day is also called the Day of Resurrection, the Day of Rising, the Day of Judgment, the other life (as opposed to the near one *ad-dunyaa*), the Last Abode, the Hereafter, and so on. The word *al-aakhirah* occurs 115 times in the Glorious Qur'an, not counting the other words derived from its root.

Belief in the Last Day consists of belief in everything that the Glorious Qur'an or the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has stated about the events of that day and the events that will take place thereafter. There are many aspects of the Day, like Resurrection, Judgment, Reward, Paradise and Hell, among other things, that every Muslim is required to believe in with certainty. The Qur'an and the Prophet ﷺ have furnished graphic details of this overwhelming day.

Proof of the Hereafter

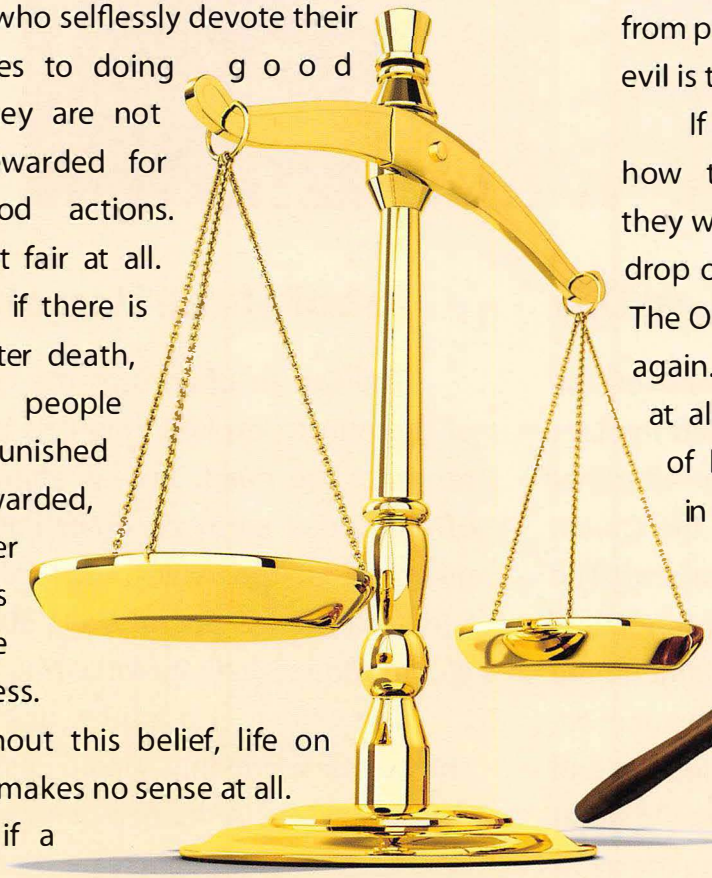
The Qur'an often uses the comparison of the rain to explain how it is possible to resurrect the dead. Just as after a shower of rain, dead earth becomes covered with greenery, so can Allah resurrect the dead. See, for instance, *Soorat Qaaf*, 50:11; *Soorat al-ʿAnkaboot*, 29:20; *Soorat al-Ḥajj*, 22:5-6)

The Qur'an also argues that if Allah is able to create not only human beings but the whole universe in the first place why should it be hard for Him to recreate them? See, for instance, *Soorat Yaaseen*, 36:79 and *Soorat al-Aḥqaaf*, 46:33).

Some of the prophets, including Prophet Ibraaheem عليه السلام were shown how Allah brought the dead to life (*Soorat al-Baqarah*, 2: 259-260). Likewise, the story of the Companions of the Cave (*Aṣḥaab al-Kahf*) related in *Soorat al-Kahf* (*soorah* no. 18 of the Qur'an) is presented as historical proof to prove that people can be raised again after sleeping for about three hundred years.

The Necessity of Judgment

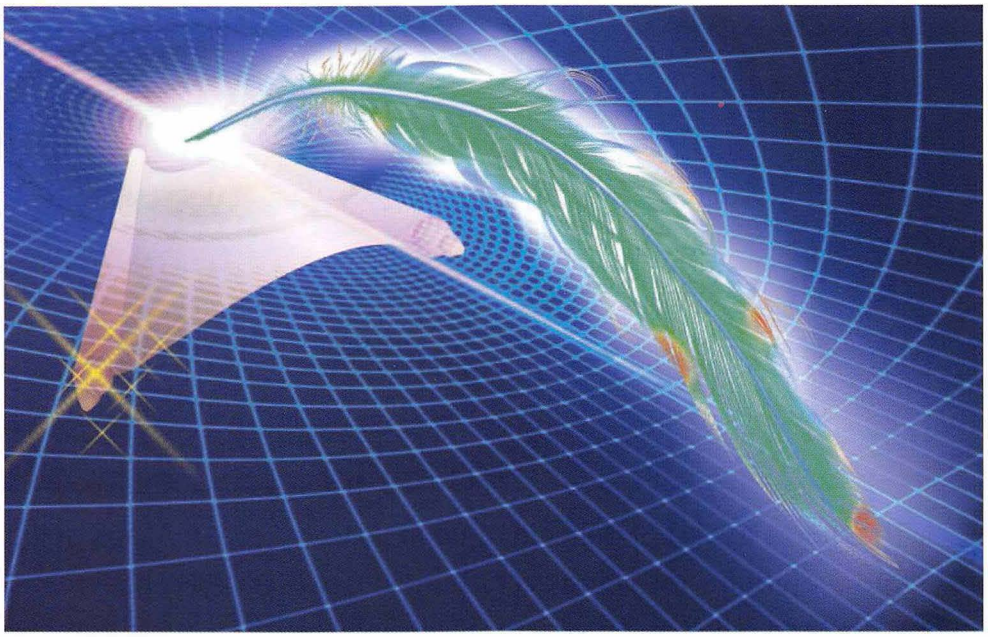
We see countless injustices and wrongs being done all around us. Perpetrators of such crimes are not always caught nor are they sufficiently punished in proportion to the crime they have committed. Then consider those pious believers who selflessly devote their whole lives to doing good deeds. They are not always rewarded for their good actions. This is not fair at all. Therefore, if there is no life after death, where people will be punished and rewarded, all other beliefs become meaningless.



Without this belief, life on this earth makes no sense at all. Likewise, if a person does not believe in the Day of Rising and does not consider that they are accountable for their actions, then they can pursue a life of pleasure and wickedness.

There will be no motivation or lure for those to follow the code of life provided by Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. Why should they go through tests and tribulations and suffer hardships? On the other hand, those who believe in the Day of Judgment will be the ones who are conscious in this life. They will act according to the dictates of the Islamic Law (*Sharee'ah*) and lead a life of piety and righteousness. Thus, this belief has a sweeping effect on people's lives. The only thing which can prevent the wicked from pursuing the life of wickedness and evil is the belief in the Last Day.

If a person were to ponder over how they themselves were created, they would see that life started as a tiny drop of semen that grew in the womb. The One who gave life first can give life again. This is not difficult to understand at all. Belief in the Last Day consists of belief in the Resurrection, belief in the reckoning of the deeds and belief in Paradise and Hell. Belief in the Last Day also includes belief in everything that happens to a person after death and before the Day of Rising. This consists of the trials in the grave and the joy or punishment in the grave. The grave is the first of the phases of *al-aakhirah*. The *aakhirah* with *Tawheed* (Oneness of Allah) and belief in Allah's messengers and prophets are the three main elements of faith (*eemaan*).



9.6. Belief in the Divine Decree (*al-Qadar*): The Good of it and the bad of it

It is an essential part of *eemaan* to believe in *al-qadar*.

The Term *al-Qadar*

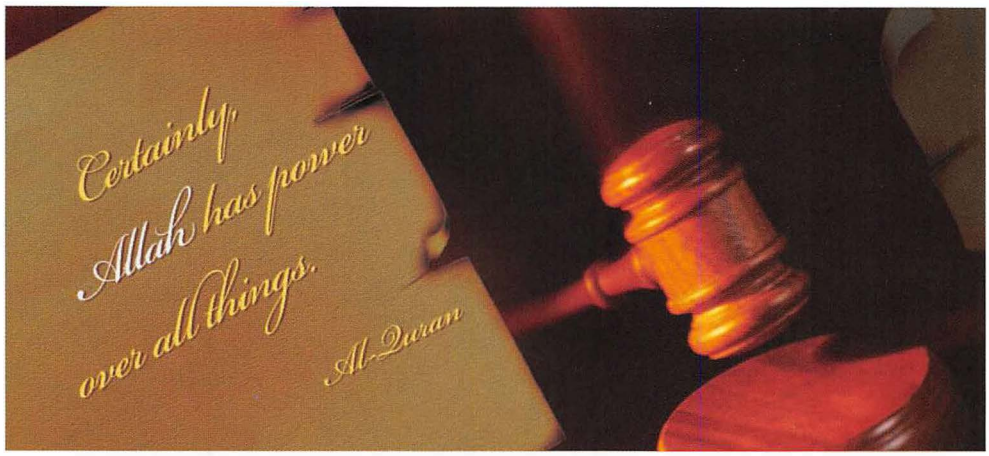
Al-qadar is an Arabic word whose linguistic meaning is 'a specified measure or amount whether of quantities or qualities'. It also means, among other things, 'to measure, to decide, to estimate the quality, quantity, or position, etc. of something before one actually makes it'. *Al-qadar* also means 'decree, fate or destiny'.

Al-eemaan bil-qadar denotes belief in the divine decree. This means that whatever happens comes from Allah. This belief makes one dependent on Allah's will. Allah alone controls all affairs, and nothing happens in this universe that is not in His prior knowledge. (*Soorat al-An'aam*, 6:59)

There are, in fact, four aspects of belief in *al-qadar*. The first of these is to believe that Allah has knowledge of everything that exists in the universe, as we have pointed out above. He has knowledge of everything, big and small, before it comes into existence.

The second aspect of belief in *al-qadar* is that Allah not only knew and knows what will happen but also has recorded this knowledge or information in minute details in the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfoodh*). All this is easy for Allah, and it is a mistake to judge Allah's knowledge by our rather limited knowledge.

The third aspect of belief in *al-qadar* is to believe in Allah's decreeing everything that exists; if He does not will something, it can never come into existence. In other words, this means that a person may intend or try, for instance, to shoot someone to death, but such a thing can only happen if Allah decrees it. The shooter may take all the necessary precautions, but if Allah does not will it to occur, it will not occur!



The fourth aspect of belief in *al-qadar* is to believe in Allah's ability to create everything and bring everything into existence. He has created everything and measured it exactly according to its due measurement.

Thus, to qualify as a believer, a person must believe in both the good side of destiny (*al-qadar*) and its bad side, in both the sweetness of fate and its bitterness. They must believe that everything that has ever happened in former eras and ages and whatever will happen in the future, until the Day of Resurrection, is in accordance with the decree of Allah and His foreordained destiny.

This is not difficult to understand. If one ponders over one's life, looks deeply into onself or into the functioning of one's body, one will soon discover that there are several things beyond one's freedom to choose. The reality is that most of one's life is not subject to one's own choice.

Think about the first moments when one arrives, in the form of a baby, in this world, when the first breath enters into one's lungs at the moment of one's birth. Does one choose the place of one's birth? Does one choose the hour, the day of one's birth? None of us chooses the moment of their arrival into this world. In other words, we all come into this life by the will of Allah. *Imaam* Ahmad was once asked about *al-qadar*, and he said, '*Al-qadar* is the power of Allah.'

A person who believes in *al-qadar* affirms that this universe and everything in it was created by Allah. When a person believes that everything that happens is decreed, and that provisions and one's lifespan are in the hands of Allah, then they can face difficulties and trials with a strong heart with their head held high. This belief is one of the greatest resources of strength for the righteous in confronting evildoers and tyrants.

For Further Reading and Research for Section C

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2. Jamal ad-Deen Zarabozo, *Commentary on the Forty Hadeeth of an-Nawawee*, Volume 1, Al-Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, Denver, 1999.
3. Abul Hasan 'Ali an-Nadwi, *Four Pillars of Islam*, Translated by Muhammad Asif Kidwai, Haji Arfeen Academy, Karachi, Pakistan, 3rd Edition, 1988.
4. Muhammad Mustafa al-Jibaly, *Closer than a Garment: Marital Intimacy according to the Pure Sunnah*, al-Kitaab and *as-Sunnah* Publishing, Arlington, Texas, 2000.
5. Muhammad Mustafa al-Jibaly, *The Fragile Vessels: Rights & Obligations between the Spouses in Islam*, Al-Kitaab and *as-Sunnah* Publishing, Arlington, Texas, 2005.
6. Dr. Saalih ibn Ghaanim al-Sadlaan, *The Fiqh of Marriage in the Light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah*, Translated by Jamaal al-Deen Zarabozo, Al-Basheer Publications and Translations, Denver, USA, 1999.
7. Muhammad Mustafa al-Jibaly , *The Inevitable Journey Part 3—Funerals: Regulations and Exhortations*, Al-Kitaab and *as-Sunnah* Publishing, Arlington, Texas, 1998.

Coursework

1. **(a)** Outline the Islamic teachings about *zakaat*.
   (b) How does *zakaat* differ from *ṣadaqah*?

2. **(a)** Give an account of the main features of the Muslim observance of Ramaḍaan.
   (b) Explain why this observance is important to the individual and the community as a whole.

3. Explain how belief in the hereafter influences the behaviour of a Muslim in this life.
4. Discuss the historical, social and religious significance of the annual pilgrimage (*ḥajj*).
5. Explain the main teachings of Islam about:

(a) God's predestination of all events
(b) The Angels
(c) Revealed books other than the Qur'an
(d) The Prophet ﷺ as a model of behaviour.

6. Explain how the following pillars of Islam promote communal solidarity amongst Muslims:

(a) *Ash-Shahaadataan*
(b) *Ṣalaah*
(c) *Zakaat*
(d) *Ṣawm*

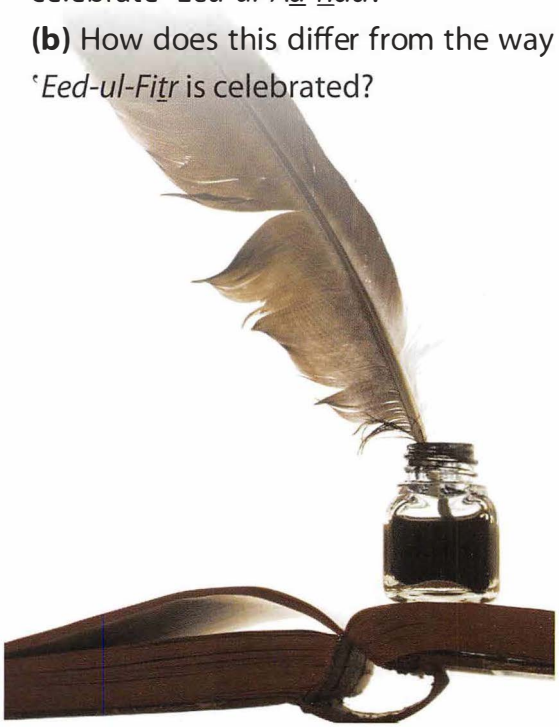
7. Discuss the historical, social and religious significance of *ʿEed al-Aḍ-ḥaa*.
8. Explain the main teachings of Islam about:

(a) Personal struggle (*jihaad*)
(b) The command to enjoin good and prohibit evil (*al-amru bil maʿroof wan-nahyu ʿan-il-munkar*)
(c) Fasting outside *Ramaḍaan* (*ṣawm*)
(d) Resurrection and the Day of Judgment (*Yawm al-Qiyaamah*).

9. Discuss **three** ways in which, according to Islamic, teachings Allah ﷻ communicates knowledge and awareness of Himself to human beings.

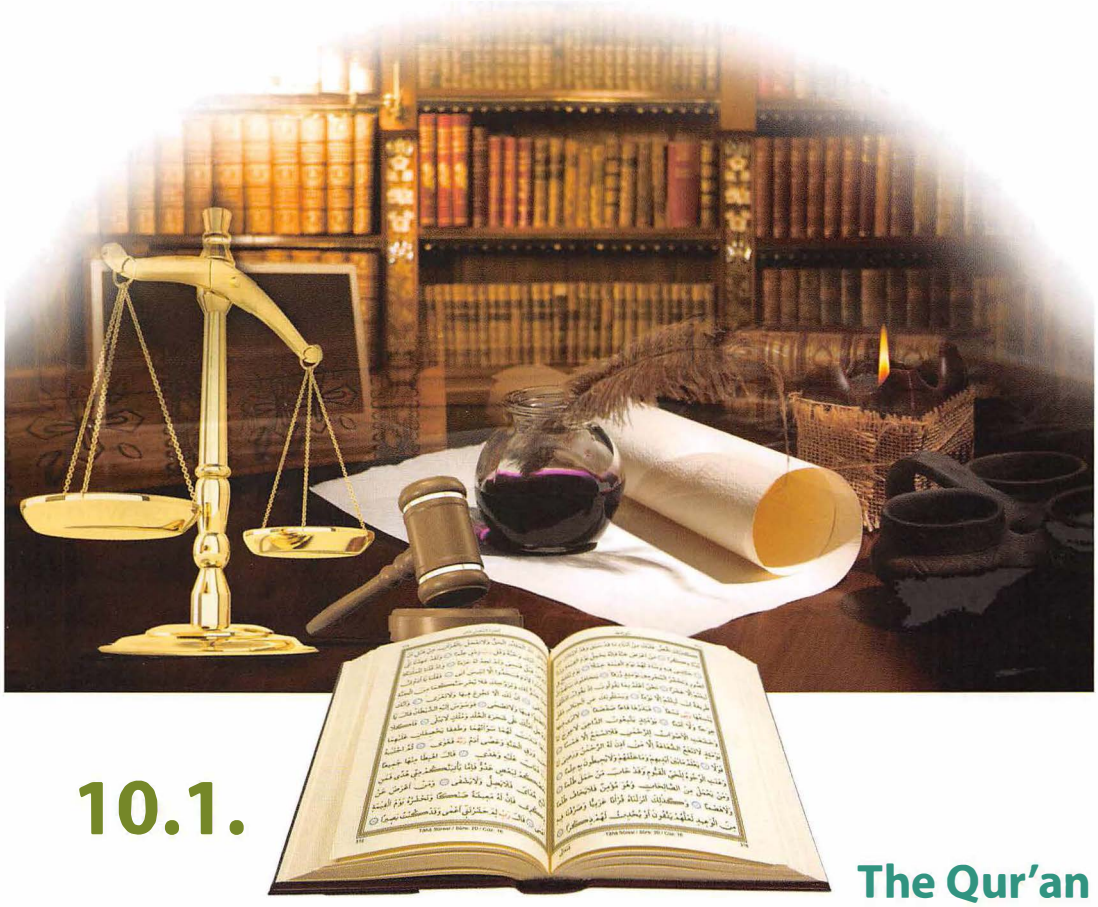
10. What features distinguish the five daily prayers from the *Jumuʿah* (Friday) prayer?

11. **(a)** How do Muslims in your country celebrate *ʿEed-ul-Aḍ-ḥaa*?
    (b) How does this differ from the way *ʿEed-ul-Fiṭr* is celebrated?



The Bases of Islamic Law

10. The Qur'an as the Main Source of all Islamic Teachings



10.1. The Qur'an and its Method of Interpreting its Teachings (*Tafseer*)

The first and foremost source of all teachings in Islam or of Islamic Law is the Glorious Qur'an. The Qur'an is the Book of Allah sent down to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the last of the prophets. It contains knowledge imparted by Allah ﷻ for the guidance of humankind and provides a code of conduct for every

believer. It is a commandment and authority for the believers, providing solutions to every situation that they may encounter until the Day of Judgment. It is the 'rope' of Allah through which individuals and nations can achieve success if they hold on to it. It is the remedy for all the human spiritual ailments and acts as the criterion to choose between truth and falsehood. Its injunctions are clear, sublime and blessed.

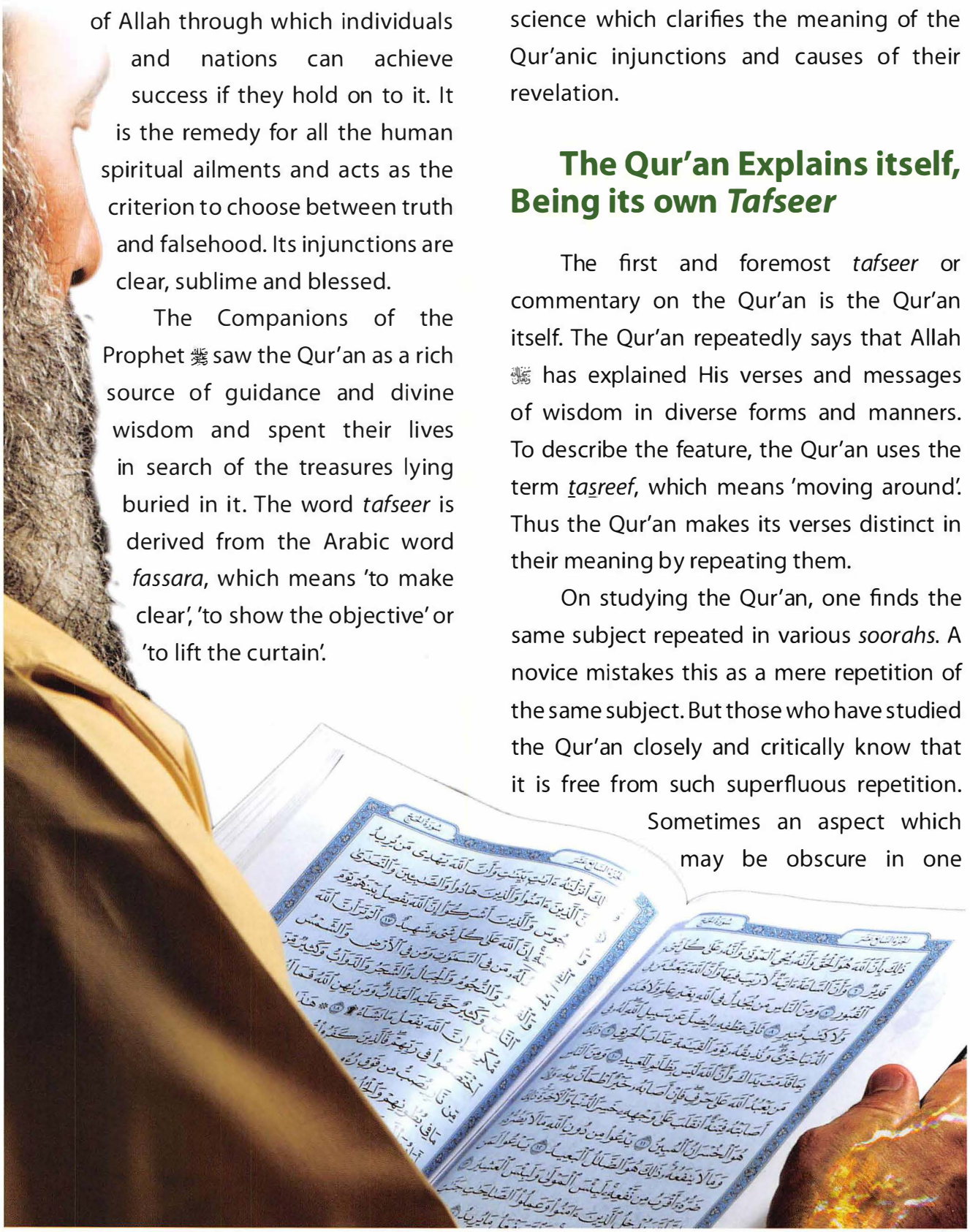
The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ saw the Qur'an as a rich source of guidance and divine wisdom and spent their lives in search of the treasures lying buried in it. The word *tafseer* is derived from the Arabic word *fassara*, which means 'to make clear', 'to show the objective' or 'to lift the curtain'.

Tafseer (commonly translated as exegesis or commentary), therefore, would signify the science through which the Book of Allah can be understood. It means the science which clarifies the meaning of the Qur'anic injunctions and causes of their revelation.

The Qur'an Explains itself, Being its own *Tafseer*

The first and foremost *tafseer* or commentary on the Qur'an is the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an repeatedly says that Allah ﷻ has explained His verses and messages of wisdom in diverse forms and manners. To describe the feature, the Qur'an uses the term *tasreef*, which means 'moving around'. Thus the Qur'an makes its verses distinct in their meaning by repeating them.

On studying the Qur'an, one finds the same subject repeated in various *soorahs*. A novice mistakes this as a mere repetition of the same subject. But those who have studied the Qur'an closely and critically know that it is free from such superfluous repetition. Sometimes an aspect which may be obscure in one



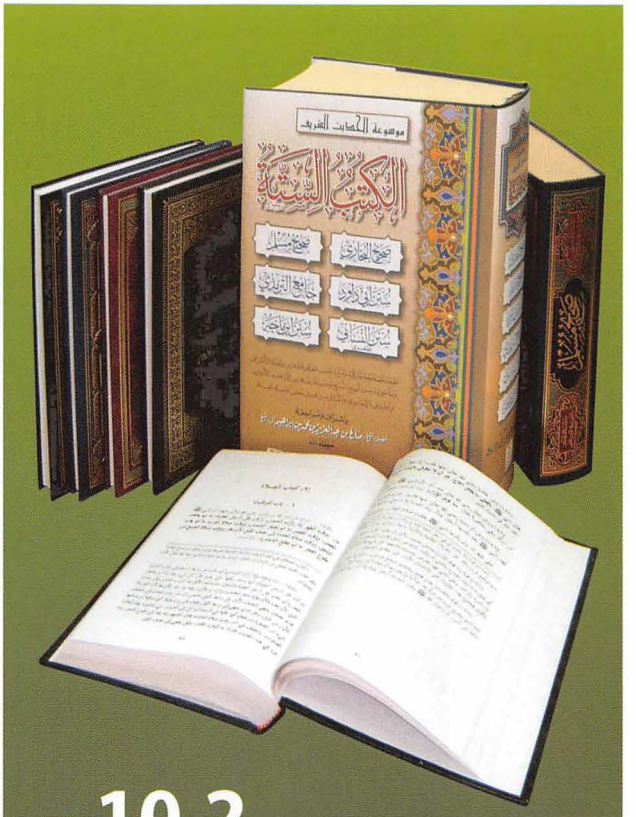
place becomes quite clear in another context, or the thrust of the text which is not obvious in one place is quite apparent in another, when put in a different context. To illustrate, Allah says:

> Lawful for you as food are grazing animals, except that which is now recited to you. (*Soorat al-Maa'idah*, 5:1)

The purpose of this statement becomes comprehensible in the light of another verse of the same chapter:

> Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah, and [those animals] killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a head-long fall or by the goring of horns, and those from which a wild animal has eaten, except what you [are able to] slaughter [before its death], and those which are sacrificed on stone altars, and [prohibited is] that you seek decision through divining arrows. That is grave disobedience. This day those who disbelieve have despaired of [defeating] your religion; so fear them not, but fear Me. This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as your religion. But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin, then indeed Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. (*Soorat al-Maa'idah*, 5:3)

Therefore, when commentators explain some verse, they first check to see if an explanation of this verse is already there elsewhere in the Qur'an itself. If it is there, they adopt it as their first choice. Sometimes the significance of a word is vague in one verse but quite clear in another verse placed in a different setting. An argument which is unclear in one place is lucidly clear in another place. Obviously the wisdom behind this Qur'anic style is to make its message accessible to all seekers of truth. In fact, the Qur'an is one entire whole with parts of it explaining its other parts. What is stated generally in one place in the Qur'an is explained in another, and what is briefly mentioned in one place is presented in detail in another.



10.2.
The *Sunnah* as a Source of Guidance for Muslims and its Relationship to the Qur'an

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ never spoke of his desire, but only told what Allah ﷻ revealed to him. The Noble Qur'an bears witness to it:

> Your companion [Muhammad] is not misguided or misled, nor does he speak of his own desire. It is nothing but a revelation revealed. (*Soorat an-Najm*, 53:2-4)

The Prophet ﷺ once said, 'I only say what I have been told.' (part of a *hadeeth* reported by Ahmad) The above-quoted verses confirm that the Prophet ﷺ received revelation from Allah, which guided all his thoughts and actions.

The real significance of these verses is that they indicate the importance of the *Sunnah* on the interpretation of the entire message of the Qur'an and in the formation of the Islamic way of life. It is for this reason that after the Qur'an, which is the Speech of Allah and the first textual source of Islamic Law (*Shareeʿah*), the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ occupies the second place as the hidden revelation (*wahiy khafiy*).

The Prophet ﷺ said,

> Certainly, I have been given the Book and the like of it along with it.' (Reported by Ahmad and Abu Daawood)

In fact, the Prophet's entire life is after all a practical *tafseer* of the Qur'an. It is for this reason that Qur'an commentators (*mufassiroon*), in order to understand the Qur'an, have laid the greatest emphasis on *hadeeth*, or traditions, as the second source, and it is in the light of the *ahaadeeth* (sing. *hadeeth*) that they have determined the meanings of the Book of Allah. However, research-orientated commentators do not accept a narration as trustworthy until it adheres to the principles employed in the scrutiny of *hadeeth* narrations.

The Prophet's *Sunnah* is captured in the authentic *hadeeth* literature. Hence, in order to know what the *Sunnah* is, one must turn to the sound *hadeeth* literature. Thus, the authority and importance of the *Sunnah* directly means the authority and importance of the authentic *hadeeth*. The importance of the *Sunnah* can be assessed from the following facts:

The *Sunnah* spells out what is undefined in the Qur'an such as the obligations which are unspecified in the Qur'an for which it provides the details and times. No one claims to be able to comprehend the Qur'an and know all its rulings without the help of the *Sunnah*. The revelation came to Allah's Messenger ﷺ, and the Angel Jibreel عليه السلام supplied him with the *Sunnah* which explains it.

Once a man said to ʿImraan ibn Husayn رضي الله عنه that the Qur'an contains the clarifications and details of everything and that there is no need for the *Sunnah*. ʿImraan ibn Husayn رضي الله عنه said, 'You are rather senseless. Do you find in the Book of Allah that *Salaat-udh- Dhuhr* (the noon prayer) is four *rakʿahs*, recitation in it must not be loud, the number of prayers or the amount of *zakaat* to be paid? Do you find this explained in the Qur'an?'

10.3. The Importance of the *Shareeʿah* in the Life of the Muslim Community and Individuals

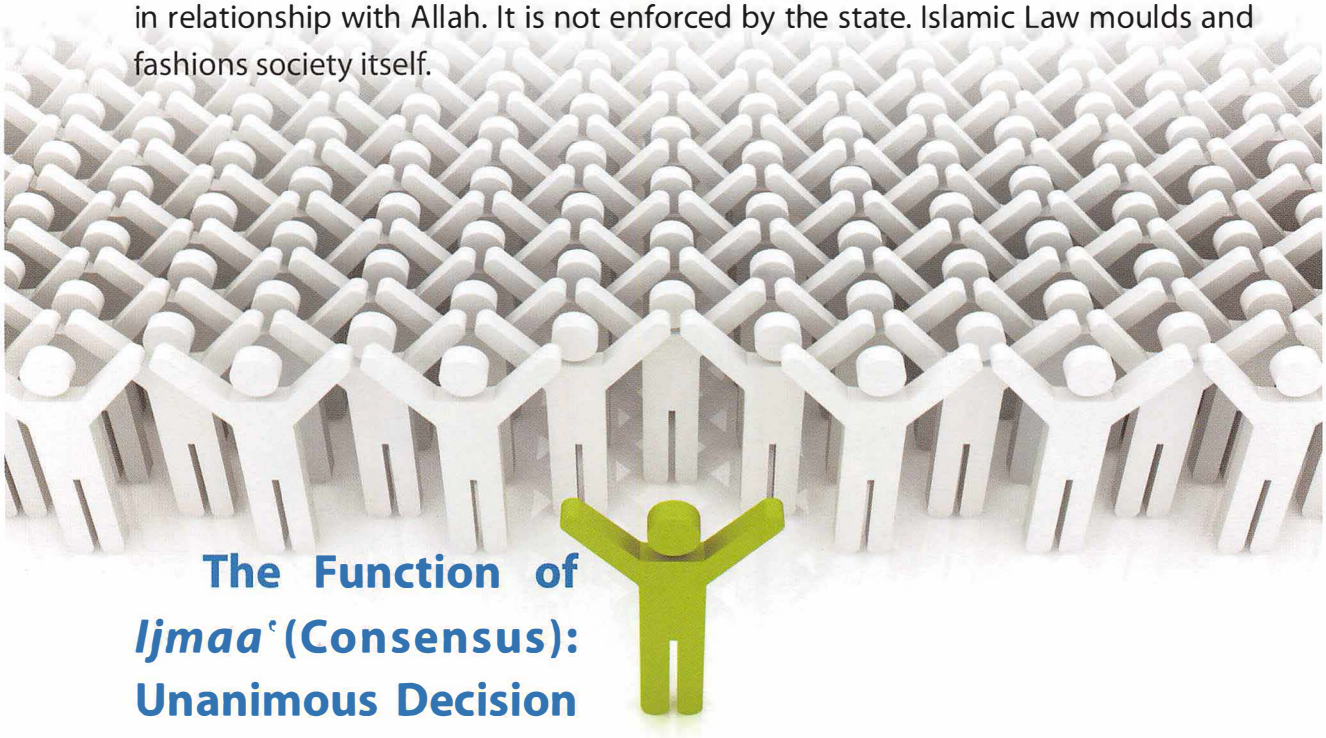
What is *Shareeʿah*?

Shareeʿah is an Arabic word which means 'the road to be followed'. Literally it means 'the way to a watering place.' It is the path not only leading to Allah but also one shown by Allah Himself, the creator, through His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Allah alone is the Sovereign and it is He alone who has the right to ordain a law that liberates people from servitude to other than Allah. This is the only reason why Muslims are obliged to strive for the implementation of this law, and no other law whatsoever.

Thus the general term for law in Islam is *Shareeʿah*, which can be roughly translated as the path in which Allah wishes people to walk, and every human deed without exception falls under the perspective of the law. There has been absolutely no more far-reaching effort to lay out a complete pattern of human behaviour than the Islamic Law (*Shareeʿah*). The general belief underlying the *Shareeʿah* is that people are incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong without assistance from their Lord. It is for this reason that guidance was sent to them through the prophets and messengers. Allah, who is All-Powerful, revealed a path, or law, for people based on His unbounded supreme will. His will is not to be judged by human reasoning and must be completely obeyed and without question.

For a Muslim, the *Shareeʿah* represents divine and eternal law and is consequently completely trustworthy. It is the basic institution of Islamic civilization. *Shareeʿah* is, therefore, linked in the Muslim mind with a comprehensive set of rules for life which, if

followed, please Allah in this world and earn salvation for those who follow them in the next. Islamic law is binding primarily upon individuals who stand directly in relationship with Allah. It is not enforced by the state. Islamic Law moulds and fashions society itself.



The Function of *Ijmaa'* (Consensus): Unanimous Decision of the Community

The word *ijmaa'* is derived from *jam'* which means 'collecting or gathering together'. Hence, *ijmaa'* carries the two-fold significance of composing and settling something which has been unsettled. In the terminology of Muslim jurists, *ijmaa'* means the consensus of the Prophet's Companions and the unanimous agreement reached on the decisions taken by subsequent learned jurists and qualified legal scholars on various matters. This, then, is the third textual source of *Sharee'ah*.

The validity of *ijmaa'* as a source of law is based on the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. *Ijmaa'* owes its origin to the following Qur'anic verse:

> And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers—We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination. (*Soorat an-Nisaa'*, 4:115)

The Prophet ﷺ also said,

> My *Ummah* (followers) will never all agree upon error.' (Reported by at-Tirmidhee and Ibn Maajah)

An example of this is the *ijmaa'* of the Companions on the caliphate (*khilaafah*) of Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq ﷺ, then the caliphate of 'Umar ﷺ. However, no matter how high the rank of the learned scholars and how thorough their ponderings, no amount of *ijmaa'* can annul or cancel a text, that is to say, a provision laid down in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ. Common agreement is worth nothing if it is unfounded.

Qiyaas: Reasoning by Analogy or Analogical Deduction

The word *qiyaas* literally means 'measuring by or comparing with, or judging by comparing with, a thing'. Briefly, it may be described as reasoning based on analogy. A case comes up for decision which is not expressly provided for either in the Qur'an or the *hadeeth*. Jurists look for a case resembling it in the Noble Qur'an or in the *hadeeth*, and by reasoning on the basis of analogy, arrive at a decision. Thus, it is an extension of the law as met with in the Qur'an and *hadeeth*, but it is not of equal authority with them. This is because no jurist has ever claimed flawlessness.

It should be noted, however, that the *qiyaas* of one generation may be rejected by a following generation. In fact, this reasoning supposes the existence of a model case to which one compares the new case, but the model or type-case must already be mentioned elsewhere – in the Qur'an, the *hadeeth* or the *ijmaa'*. Hence, it can be deduced that according to the learned scholars, there is nothing wrong in using *qiyaas* in deriving a logical conclusion in Islamic Law as long as that conclusion does not go against the injunctions of the Qur'an or the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ.

Ijtihaad: Personal Reasoning

The Arabic word for *ijtihaad* literally means 'an effort or exercise of independent judgement in deriving rules of conduct from the sources of jurisprudence'. Hence, a *mujtahid* is one who exercises *ijtihaad* and works out independently the rules of conduct from the original sources of Islamic Law. In its widest sense, it means the use of human reasoning in the explanation and interpretation of the *Sharee'ah*. Therefore, before one can be a *mujtahid*, one has to be knowledgeable about the religion of Islam, the *Sunnah*, Jurisprudence and principles of Islamic Law.

Being a derivation from the root word *j- h - d*, *ijtihaad* literally means 'striving or self-exertion in any activity, which entails a measure of hardship'. *Ijtihaad* is sanctioned by the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* and the dictates of reasoning. According to one *hadeeth*, when a judge exercises *ijtihaad* and gives a right judgment, he will have two rewards, but if he errs in his judgment, he will still have earned one reward. The full version of this *hadeeth* is as follows:

'Amr ibn al-'Aas ﷺ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,

> If a judge passes a judgment, having struggled to arrive at what is correct, and he gets it right, he will have two rewards. If he passes a judgment, having struggled to arrive at what is correct, but gets it wrong, he will have one reward. (*Sunan Abu Daawood*, English translation, Darussalam, Riyadh, Vol. 4, *hadeeth* no. 3574,)

For Further Reading and Research

1 Muhammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 3rd edition, The Islamic Texts Society, UK, 2005.

2 ʿAbd ar-Rahman Doi, *Shareeʿah: Islamic Law*, Revised and Expanded by Abdassamad Clarke, Ta Ha Publishers Ltd., London, UK, 2008.

Coursework

1. What traditional methods are used to relate the Qur'an to the changing conditions in society?
2. Giving **three** examples, discuss how legal experts have actually done the above in practice.
3. How would you tell someone about the significance of the Qur'an in a Muslim's life?
4. How can the teachings of Islam be made relevant in new situations? Give examples to illustrate your answer.
5. 'The *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ is a human implementation of the revealed word of God.' To what extent is this claim accurate?
6. How relevant is the *Shareeʿah* to Muslim individuals and communities in the modern world?
7. Discuss the relationship between the four bases of the *Shareeʿah*.
8. Define and explain the place of
   (a) *Sunnah*, and
   (b) *Ijtihaad*, in Islamic legal method.
9. Define and discuss the importance of the *Sunnah*, explaining how it differs from the Qur'an.
10. With specific examples, discuss how the legal sources of consensus (*ijmaaʿ*) and analogy (*qiyaas*) are employed in Islamic legal thinking.
11. To what extent does a Muslim wedding ceremony in any country you know conform to the teachings of the Qur'an and *hadeeth*?
12. Explain why the majority of Muslims believe that the Qur'an cannot be understood properly without the help of the *Sunnah*.