

# Faith and Beliefs

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Rendered into English by  
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## Faith and Beliefs

*Imān* (faith) is an ancient religious term. The root *امن* is also found in Hebrew and means considering something to be true and relying on it. The word *امين* (amen) is made from this word and through it we corroborate something. In the Qur'ān, *imān* has been used in this meaning. Thus if something is accepted with the certitude of the heart, then this is called *imān*. The foundation of this word is *imān* (faith) in God. If a person accepts the Almighty such that he submits his heart and mind to Him to the utmost, then in the terminology of the Qur'ān, he is a *mu'min* (believer). Imām Farāhī writes:

... thus the conviction which exists with all the conditions and corollaries of humility, trust and acknowledgment is called faith. And a person who professes faith in God, in His signs, in His directives, submits all that he has to Him and is happy on all His decisions is called a *mu'min*.<sup>1</sup>

It is this very essence of faith on account of which the Qur'ān demands from a person that besides substantiation from the heart, his words and deeds should also testify to it. Thus it calls every act of virtue emanating from *imān* and an essential quality of a believer. Narratives which say that a Muslim is he from whose hands and tongue other Muslims are secure,<sup>2</sup> and faith has a little over seventy branches, one of which is modesty,<sup>3</sup> and he who has faith in God and the Hereafter should show kindness to his neighbours, respect his guests and say kind words or remain

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1. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1991), 347.

2. *Bukhārī*, No: 10; *Muslim*, No: 162.

3. *Bukhārī*, No: 9; *Muslim*, No: 153.

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silent,<sup>4</sup> refer to this very essence of faith. It is evident from this discussion that righteous deeds are mentioned after belief in the Qur'ān as an explanation, and in reality it is like mentioning a specific category after a general one. Imām Farāhī writes:

Faith resides in the heart and in the intellect and in matters of heart and intellect a person cannot only deceive others, but at times even deceive himself. He thinks that he is a believer, whereas he is not. For this reason, two witnesses have been appointed over faith: words and deeds. And since words uttered can be untrue, therefore a person who merely professes faith through his words has not been regarded as a believer; it is essential that a person's deeds should testify to his faith.<sup>5</sup>

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ (٨: ٢-٤)

True believers are those whose hearts are filled with awe at the mention of God, and when His revelations are recited before them, their faith grows stronger and they are those who put their trust in their Lord alone, are diligent in their prayers and spend [in Our cause] what We have given them. Such are the true believers. For them are ranks before God and forgiveness and a very respectable sustenance. (8:2-4)

Similarly, the Qur'ān says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ (٤٩: ١٥)

True believers are those who have faith in God and His messenger and then were never entangled in any doubt, and fought with their wealth and with their persons in the cause of God. It is these who are true [in their faith]. (49:15)

4. *Bukhārī*, No: 6018; *Muslim*, No: 176.

5. *Farāhī*, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr*, 349.

No doubt, in the eyes of law, every person who professes faith in Islam with his tongue is a Muslim. The extent of his faith can also not be ascertained as far as law is concerned; however, as far as true faith is concerned, it is never static. Verses 2-4 of Sūrah Anfāl quoted earlier show that the faith of a person grows stronger when he remembers God and hears His revelations and witnesses His signs in the world within him and in that around him. The Qur'ān has compared faith to a tree whose roots are deep in the soil and branches spread in the vastness of the sky:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٤-٢٥)

Have you not reflected how God has mentioned the example of the word of purity? Its example is like that of a pure tree whose roots are deep in the earth and branches are spread in the sky; it yields its fruit in every season by the directive of God. [This is a parable of the pure word] and God mentions such parables to men so that they may take heed. (14:24-25)

While explaining these verses, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī has written:

In the verse, the expression “word of purity” obviously refers to the “word of faith”. It is compared by the Almighty to a fruit-laden tree whose roots are firmly implanted in the soil and whose branches are nicely spread in the sky and it bears fruit in every season with the blessing of its Lord. Its roots being deeply implanted in the soil refers to the fact that faith is deeply and firmly implanted in human nature and that it is not like a plant which has sprouted from dung that has no root and a slight calamity can uproot it like the word of disbelief about which the Qur'ān has used the words (إِجْتَنَّتْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ (١٤ : ٢٦) (which can be uprooted from the very surface of the earth; it has no stability, (14:26)). On the other hand, like a strong tree, it has firm and deeply set roots so that even if a storm passes upon it, it is not even slightly disturbed. The verse goes on to describe that it is lavishly fruit-laden and that it is not like a barren tree which

neither provides anyone with shade nor with fruit. Its spaciouly spread branches in the sky provide shade to caravans and in every season provides them with sustenance and nourishment from its fruit. This obviously refers to the blessings and benefits which a believer bestows on his own life and through it on others who in some way come in his contact. These blessings and benefits by nature are both ideological as well as practical. They bear witness to a person's faith and through it a person becomes dear to God and attains His nearness.<sup>6</sup>

Same is the case of one's faith growing weaker. Thus if a person instead of making it stronger through sound knowledge and righteous deeds does acts which are against the requirements of faith, it grows weaker, and in some cases is totally wiped out. Some verses such as *هُمُ لِلْكَفْرِ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ* (on that day, they were closer to disbelief than belief)<sup>7</sup> point to this aspect. The Qur'ān has emphasized that people who continue to lead a life laden with sin, and sin completely encompasses their life or become so arrogant that they deliberately cross the limits set by God or intentionally kill a Muslim, their faith will carry no weight and they will have to face the eternal punishment of Hell<sup>8</sup> except if God on the basis of His wisdom decides to forgive someone.<sup>9</sup> Thus at one instance it is said that after disobeying the Prophet (sws), any claim to faith is not acceptable to the Almighty:

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي  
أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا (٦٥:٤)

But they will not – I swear by your Lord – they will not be true believers until they seek your arbitration in their disputes and then feel no discomfort in their hearts on the verdicts you give in their disputes and submit to you entirely. (4:65)

Certain narratives of the Prophet (sws) also explain this reality:

6. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tazkiyah Nafs*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 2005), 325.

7. The Qur'ān, 3:167.

8. The Qur'ān, 2:81; 4:14; 4:93.

9. The Qur'ān, 4:48.



When a fornicator commits fornication, he is not a believer at that time and when a thief commits theft, he is not a believer at that time and when a drinker consumes liquor, he is not a believer at that time.<sup>10</sup>

None of you can be a believer unless I become dearer to you than his son, his father and all other people.<sup>11</sup>

I swear by the one in whose grasp is my life that a person cannot be a believer unless he likes for his brother whatever he likes for himself.<sup>12</sup>

When any person among you sees an evil [in his circle of authority], he should try to curb it by [the force of] his hands. If he does not have the courage to do it, he should try to curb it by his tongue and if [even] this is not possible, he should consider it bad in his heart and this is the lowest level of faith.<sup>13</sup>

It is evident from this that both faith and righteous deeds are essential to one another. Thus just as righteous deeds are necessary for faith, similarly faith is necessary for righteous deeds. At all places, the Qur'ān has stated this professing faith to be the very first condition for salvation. The reason for this is that if a person deliberately rejects the Almighty and His signs or invents a lie upon Him by associating partners with Him, then this is arrogance, and about arrogance the Qur'ān has clearly said that a camel can enter the eye of a needle but an arrogant person cannot enter Paradise:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ  
الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ  
جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَمِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ (٧: ٤٠-٤١)

Indeed those who denied Our revelations and evaded them in arrogance, the gates of heaven shall not be opened for them and neither shall they be able to enter Paradise except if a camel is able to pass through the eye of a needle. [This is their punishment] and thus do We punish the criminals. Hell shall be their bedding and the flames of Hell shall be their covering and

10. *Bukhārī*, No: 5578; *Muslim*, No: 202.

11. *Bukhārī*, No: 15; *Muslim*, No: 169.

12. *Bukhārī*, No: 13; *Muslim*, No: 170.

13. *Muslim*, Nos: 178, 179.

in this way do We punish the evil-doers. (7:40-41)

Consequently, the Qur'an has said that deeds have no basis without faith. They are like ashes which strong winds have scattered away. On the Day of Judgement, not the slightest bit of these deeds will remain of any worth to them before the Almighty. All that a person earned will be doomed and the punishment of such evil earning would await him:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادٍ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ لَّا يَقْدِرُونَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا عَلَيَّ شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ (١٨:١٤)

The deeds of people who disbelieved the Almighty are like ashes which are subjected to severe wind on a stormy day. They shall gain nothing from what they do. This is straying far into error. (14:18)

In Sūrah Nūr, the deeds of people who are devoid of the treasure of faith are compared to the mirage found in a desolate desert which is a mere eye-wash. A thirsty person jumps towards it thinking it to be water but when he draws near, he comes to know that what he thought as waves of water were actually grains of shining sand:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيَعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمَانُ مَاءً حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ فَوَفَّاهُ حِسَابَهُ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (٣٩:٢٤)

And as for the disbelievers, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty thinking that it is water [lept towards it] until when he came near it he found nothing: In fact, he found God there. Then He took his account and swift is God in taking account. (24:39)

This is the faith which the Qur'an wants its followers to embrace. It consists of five things:

1. Belief in God
2. Belief in the Angels
3. Belief in the Prophets
4. Belief in Divine Books

## 5. Belief in the Day of Judgement

The Qur'an says:

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ  
وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُّسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ  
الْمَصِيرُ (٢ : ٢٨٥)

The Messenger has believed in what has been revealed to him by His Lord, and so do those who follow [him]. All of them professed faith in God and His angels and His books and His Messengers. [They affirm:] “We do not discriminate between any of God’s Messengers,” and they said: “We heard and have obeyed. Lord! We seek Your forgiveness, and [believe that on the Day of Judgment] to You shall we return.” (2:285)

### 1. Belief in God

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ هُوَ اللَّهُ  
الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيَّمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ  
سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى  
يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٥٩ : ٢٢-٢٤)

He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He knows the unseen and the manifest. He is the Most-Gacious, the Ever-Merciful. He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He is the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace in entirety, the giver of peace, the Guardian, the Mighty One, the All-powerful, the Most High. Exalted is God above whom they associate with Him! He is God, the Architect, the Originator, the Modeller. All good names are His. All that are in the heavens and the earth give glory to Him. He is the Mighty, the Wise One. (59:22-24)

Allah is the name of the being Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all other creations. The article *alif lām*

appended to the word is for definition, and since the very beginning this name has been specifically used for the Lord of this world. Before the advent of the Prophet (sws), in the times of Arab *jāhiliyyah* also this name was used for Him. This word was also one of the remnants of the religion of Abraham (sws) which the Arabs inherited. Thus the Qur'ān says:

وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لَيَقُولُنَّ  
 اللَّهُ فَأَنَّا يُؤْفِكُونَ اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
 بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ  
 بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٢٩ : ٦١-٦٣)

And if you ask them: “Who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon [to His law]?” They will reply: “Allah.” How are they then deluded away [from the truth]! It is Allah who gives abundantly to whom He pleases and gives sparingly [to whom He pleases]. Allah has knowledge of all things. If you ask them: “Who is it that sent down rain from the clouds and therewith revived the earth after it became dead.” They will say: “Allah.” Tell [them]: “Gratitude is for God alone!” But most of them do not use their intellect. (29:61-63)

The Qur'ān informs us that an acknowledgement of the providence of the Almighty is found innately in man's nature. It says that this matter manifested itself in the form of a pledge. The Qur'ān refers to this event as a real-life incident and not something metaphorical. Since man has been sent here for trial, the whole incident has been erased from his memory; however, its essence is etched on his heart and ingrained in his soul and nothing can obliterate it. Consequently, if man is reminded of it in the absence of any hindrance in his surroundings, he leaps to it the way a child leaps to its mother even though it never saw itself emerge from her womb and is drawn towards her with such conviction as if it already knew her. A person feels that this pledge of his with the Almighty was the answer to a very natural need found within him. Once he got this answer, all the requirements of his psyche were also fulfilled simultaneously. The Qur'ān says that this testimony of man's inner-self is so

undeniable that as far as the providence of God is considered, man will be held accountable before God merely on the basis of this testimony:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِّنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ  
وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٧: ١٧٢-١٧٤)

And remember when your Lord brought forth from the loins of the progeny of Adam their children and made them testify against themselves. He said: "Am I not your Lord?" They replied: "We bear witness that You are." This We did lest you should say on the Day of Judgement: "We had no knowledge of that," or present the excuse: "Our forefathers had already adopted idolatry and we later became their children so will You destroy us on account of what these false-doers did?" [We have fully explained things here] and thus do We explain Our revelations [so that people are left with no excuse to deny the truth] and so that they may return to the right path. (7:172-174)

Besides this innate guidance, man has also been equipped with the ability of deriving conclusions from what he hears, sees and feels – conclusions which are actually beyond these faculties. A simple example to illustrate this is the law of gravitation. An apple falls on the ground. When a stone is to be lifted from ground, strength must be exerted. It is difficult to ascend stairs than to descend them. The moon and the stars move in the skies. Man has been witnessing all these phenomena for centuries until it was Newton who discovered that they are a result of the law of gravitation. This law itself cannot be observed; however it is accepted as a scientific reality in the whole world. The reason for this is that all theories and known facts are in harmony with it. All observable realities are explained by this law, and as yet no other law is able to explain various phenomenon as it has done.

This process obviously is the derivation of the tangible from the intangible. When a person makes use of this ability of his and studies the universe which stretches around him, then this study

of his also vouches for this very reality found in his inner-self.

Thus he sees that everything of this world is a miraculous manifestation of creativity; everything has deep meaningfulness; it has been created with great diligence and thoroughness; there exists amazing wisdom, planning, usefulness and order; there are found superb mathematical and geometrical realities whose only justification is the fact that they have a Creator and this Creator is not an uncontrolled and unrestrained being. On the contrary, He has an unfathomable mind. This is because if power does not emanate from a wise and all-knowing being, then it should be mere tyranny; the truth of the matter is that this is not so: this expression of power and strength has aptness about it; it is also very harmonious and is very advantageous and produces great marvels which cannot be produced by an uncontrolled and unrestrained force.

This is an indisputable reality; without accepting it, in no way can the intellectual thirst of a person be quenched. Consequently, the Qur'ān has asserted that belief in God is the light of the heavens and the earth. It lights up the heart of a person, and in its absence this world is bleak and murky, meaningless and purposeless.

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَّا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٢٤ : ٣٥)

[Belief in] Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth! [In the heart of a person] the similitude of His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp – the lamp is in a glass, the glass as if it were a brilliant star – that is being kindled by the oil of a blessed olive tree that is neither of the eastern nor of the western [side]: its oil would all but light up, even though no fire touched it. Light upon light! Allah guides to His light whomever He wishes. [This is a similitude]. And Allah strikes these similitudes [to guide] people. [He deals with each person the way he deserves it]. And Allah has knowledge of everything. (24:35)

Although these testimonies were sufficient, however in order to leave people with no excuse in rejecting them the Almighty took a step further: He initiated mankind by a human being who directly heard from God, saw his angels and in this manner bore direct witness to the truth. The Almighty took this step so that after the death of Adam, the first human being, this information could be transmitted to the descendants of Adam generation after generation and so that the concept of God and the Hereafter should not become alien in any period of time, in any place on the earth and in any generation of mankind. The Qur'ān says that after the creation of Adam and Eve certain superior creations were asked to prostrate before him. The objective was to tell them that it is not creation from fire or light which makes someone superior; on the contrary, real superiority lies in obedience to God. The Qur'ān says that in compliance with this directive all the angels and the jinn prostrated before Adam; however Iblīs (Satan) showed disobedience and refused to prostrate. After this, Adam and Eve were asked to live in an orchard where they had all the necessities of life but the fruit of one tree was prohibited to them. This tree was the tree of procreation whose fruit is the means of sustaining the existence of man in this world. The Almighty stopped them from tasting this fruit and warned that Iblīs being their open foe would certainly try to make them disobey God in this matter. Consequently, this is precisely what happened and Iblīs came over to them in the guise of a well-wisher and an anxious counsellour and told them that the secret of eternal life and everlasting kingdom lies in this fruit from which they are being deprived. Adam and Eve were lured by these prompts of Iblīs and ended up tasting the fruit while being overwhelmed with its craving – something which normally grips a person when he yearns for such a fruit. It became evident from this incident that man will face the greatest trials from two of his instincts: ego and sex. They were thus directed to come out from the orchard and take their abode at some other place in the earth. At this, Adam felt ashamed and turned to God. Seeing this, the Almighty blessed him with the urge to repent and Himself revealed to him the most appropriate of words for this repentance and then forgave him. The Qur'ān says:

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وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ  
 الْكَافِرِينَ وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ  
 شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا  
 فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ فَتَلَقَىٰ آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ  
 الرَّحِيمُ (٢ : ٣٤-٣٧)

And [in order to communicate the nature of trial through which man will be put through in this world, also narrate to them the incident] when We asked the angels to bow down to Adam and they bowed down except Iblīs: he refused and showed arrogance and in this manner became among the rejecters. And We said: “O Adam! dwell you and your wife in this orchard and eat freely in it from wherever you want to; but both of you! Do not go near this tree or you will become transgressors.” Then did Satan make them slip and had them turned out from the state they were in. And We said: “Move [out], all [you people] with enmity between yourselves and on earth will be your dwelling-place and a provision for a specified time.” Then Adam learnt from his Lord some words of [repentance and then repented before his Lord through these words] and his Lord accepted his repentance. Indeed He is forgiving and merciful. (2:34-37)

Not only this, once Adam and Eve were sent to live in this world, the Almighty, for a considerable period of time, made a means for them to know and judge if their faith and deeds were acceptable to God or not. This was like making every person of that time directly experience and observe the truth so that he too could become among the witnesses along with his progenitors. It is evident from the Qur’ān (3:183) that the means adopted for this purpose was that people would offer sacrifice before God; then, as a sign of divine acceptance, fire would descend from the heavens to consume this sacrifice. The murder of Adam’s son, Abel took place as result of such an incident. According to the Bible (Genesis, 4:1-12), Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a farmer. One day Cain brought forth some fruit of his land to



present before God and Abel bought some first-borns of his cattle and some animal-fat. When these were presented before God, the offering of Abel was accepted and that of Cain was not. This angered the latter so much that he killed his brother Abel. The Qur'ān has described this incident in the following words:

وَأْتَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ أَبِي آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ  
 مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ لَئِن بَسَطْتَ إِلَيَّ يَدَكَ  
 لَتَمْتَلِنِي مَا أَنَا بِبَاسِطٍ يَدَيْ إِلَيْكَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ إِنِّي  
 أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبُوءَ بِإِثْمِي وَإِثْمِكَ فَتَكُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ  
 فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٥: ٢٧-٣٠)

And recount to them in all truth the story of Adam's two sons when each made an offering, and the offering of one was accepted while that of the other was not. He said: "I will kill you." The other replied: "God accepts offerings only from the righteous. If you raise your hand to slay me, I shall not raise mine to slay you; for I fear God, Lord of the Universe. I want that you should incur my sin and yours and thus become an inmate of the Fire and such is the punishment of the unjust." At last, his soul prompted him to slay his brother; he slew him and thus became among the losers. (5:27-30)

It is evident from this discussion that the existence of God is an obvious reality and that the conception of God is inherited by a person through his ancestors. Both the material and the spiritual world bear witness to His existence. However, who is this being? What are His attributes? What are the laws and practices He has set for Himself? These are the questions which arise in the mind of a person for comprehending God. This comprehension is essential for faith. When the Qur'ān demanded from people to profess faith in God, it answered these questions. In the following pages, we will take a look at these answers.

### i. Being

The Qur'ān has explicitly stated that no mind can comprehend the being of God. The reason for this is that the being who has created these means of comprehension can certainly comprehend

human beings, however these means can in no way be able to comprehend Him who comprehends these means. It must also remain in consideration that our comprehension of God is passive. The most important faculty of a human being is the faculty of sight. For this, he has been given eyes; however, eyes too cannot see a thing unless they reflect light. The Qur'ān says:

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ (١٠٣:٦)

No eyes can comprehend Him, though He comprehends all eyes. He is subtle and all-knowing. (6:103)

The account of Moses (sws) in which he audaciously requested the Almighty to show Himself to him has been related by the Qur'ān so that man should always remain aware of his limits and limitations and should always remember that even if the messenger with whom the Almighty spoke was not able to see Him, what to speak of others. The Qur'ān says:

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنظُرْ إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَن نَرَاكَ وَلَكِن نَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ نَرَاكَ فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ سَاجِدًا فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٤٣:٧)

And when Moses came at the appointed time and His Lord communicated with him, he [gaining confidence as a result] said: “Lord, reveal Yourself to me that I may see You.” He replied: “You shall never see Me; but look upon the mountain in front of you; if it remains intact in its place, then only shall you see Me.” And when his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, He razed it to dust and Moses fell down unconscious. When he recovered, he said: “Glory be to You! I turn to You, and I am the first of the believers.” (7:143)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

The Almighty revealed Himself in this manner to assure Moses (sws) that even mountains are not able to bear the vision of God – mountains which are the most solid and firm structures of this earth; so how can man who is so feeble a

structure before these mountains can bear this vision. Man has a limited power of tolerance. His eyes can see light; however, if the intensity of this light exceeds a certain limit his eyes are dazed by it and at times he even loses his sight. Similarly, his ears are able to hear sounds; however, his ears can only hear to a certain extent. If the roar of thunder, for example, exceeds a limit it can shatter his ear-drums. The sun is an essential requirement of man; however, its light and heat are only beneficial to him if the sun remains at a certain distance from him and passes on its light and warmth through many many layers and sieves of the atmosphere. If some day, the sun comes a little near to the earth, all life forms would be burnt down. So when man is such a feeble entity how can he have the strength and ability to see the pure and untainted being of the Almighty who is absolute light and is beyond and above this universe and what is going on in it.<sup>14</sup>

No doubt, believers would be able to see the Almighty on the Day of Judgement. This is evident from the verse: *كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَمَحْجُوبُونَ* (15: 83) (Certainly not! On that Day, they shall certainly be held away from their Lord, (83:15)).<sup>15</sup> However, there are various levels of seeing the Almighty, and this seeing the Almighty is not tantamount to fully comprehending him. Probably, the nature of this seeing would be that all barriers and impediments shall be withdrawn and people would be able to see the Almighty the way they see the sun, the moon and the stars and in reality this seeing is nothing but observing light reflected from these heavenly bodies. This is the example the Prophet (sws) gave people when they inquired from him about the nature of this observation<sup>16</sup> and said: “You will see Your God in a manner that there will be no obstruction between Him and you except His cloak of greatness.”<sup>17</sup>

14. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., vol. 3 (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1994), 360.

15. The Qur’ān has stated this regarding the rejecters of the truth. It is evident that the believers will not be deprived of this observation and all obstacles and hindrances to see the Almighty will be withdrawn there.

16. *Bukhārī*, No: 7437; *Muslim*, No: 451.

17. *Bukhārī*, No: 4878; *Muslim*, No: 448.

After this, what remains is observing God through similes and parables. The Qur'ān has used these literary devices to describe Paradise and Hell. A person's inner-self also adopts a similar method in dreams and in spiritual observations seen while being awake. However, in case of God's being, even this means is not possible. The reason is that this means can only be employed if the thing which is compared and likened to is found in some form or the other in a person's imagination or in the world around him. Man has no such data within or outside him regarding God's being. Thus, this means too can be of no use in this regard. Consequently, the Qur'ān says:

فَلَا تَضْرِبُوا لِلَّهِ الْأَمْثَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٧٤:١٦)

Thus do not compare God because God knows [Himself] and you know not. (16:74)

## ii. Attributes

Contrary to the person of God, His attributes can be comprehended to some extent by a human being. The reason is that man himself finds some of these attributes within him, though at a very small scale. God has granted man some portion of His knowledge, power, providence, wisdom and mercy. Man can thus analogously have some idea of the attributes of God. This aspect can also be understood by saying that man's being is passive in nature. The Qur'ān has used various words for the action which emanates from God to create man's being: these words are *irādah* (intention), *qawl* (utterance), *mashī'at* (will), *kalimah* (word) and *amr* (state of affairs).<sup>18</sup> The reality of a *sha'yy* (thing) is this *mashī'at* (intention). A *sha'yy* (thing) is called a *sha'yy* because of it.<sup>19</sup> The attributes which manifest in a thing are in reality the attributes of this word. The reality of man's being is also the same. Furthermore, he possesses an awareness of his being and thus is able to comprehend to some extent the attributes of the Maker. However, it is essential for this that a person keep his intellect

18. The following verse refers to this very reality: *إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ* (٨٢:٣٦) (His state of affairs is that when He intends [to do something] He need only say: "Be" and it is. (36:82)).

19. The word *sha'yy* is *fa'īl* from *shā'a yashā'u* and technically the *fa'īl* form here connotes the *maf'ūl*. (Translator)

alive and that he, under the guidance of divine revelation, keep reflecting on the signs of God within him and in the world around him. For this very reason, the Qur'ān has repeatedly called upon its addressees to exercise *ta'aqqul*, *tafakkur* and *tadhakkur*. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

The objective of *ta'aqqul* is that a person should neither be guided merely by his desires, impulses and emotions nor should he give himself up to superstitions and myths; on the other hand, he should be guided by the intellect God has bestowed on him and must trust the guidance it provides.

*Tafakkūr* means that one should prudently deliberate on the decrees and laws of the universe and on the requisites and requirements of human nature, and acknowledge with full sincerity the principles which govern one's life which are derived from these decrees and laws.

*Tadhakkur* means that the self-evident truths in which a person believes should be remembered by him even in the upheaval of his emotions and desires, and then without any hesitation accept the obvious consequences.<sup>20</sup>

If one deliberates on one's surroundings and on the world within him, everything bears testimony that God is not merely the first cause and an eternal entity; He is in fact a being who has intention and knowledge and has all noble attributes.

An explanation of this follows:

1. Matter does not have the faculty of intention. It also does not possess any knowledge and intellect. Similarly, the intention and intellect and other potentials of the soul cannot be its own because it is plagued with weakness, short memory and weak will and determination. However, since from both matter and soul, great benefits and remarkable phenomena are produced – which cannot result from a power which is blind and deaf – both are creations and every creation requires a creator:

أَمْ خَلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمْ الْخَالِقُونَ أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بَلْ لَأَ

20. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tazkiyah Nafs*, 92.

يُوقِنُونَ (٥٢ : ٣٥-٣٦)

Were they created without a Creator or were they their own creators? Have they created the heavens and the earth? [No] in fact they [in reality] have no faith! (52:35-36)

ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّيْتُ تُوَفِّكُونَ (٤٠ : ٦٢)

Such is God your Lord, the Creator of everything. There is no god but Him. Where then can you turn away from Him. (40:62)

2. This Creator of the Heavens and the earth is self-sufficient and does not need anyone. Thus there is only one cause of creation and that is His intention of mercy. When He desired to bestow His favour, He created this world and blessed His creation with innumerable favours that cannot be counted. Thus just as His name is Allah, it is also Raḥmān:

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ  
وَالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدَانِ وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي  
الْمِيزَانِ وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ  
فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَالنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْأَكْمَامِ وَالْحَبُّ ذُو الْعَصْفِ وَالرَّيْحَانُ فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ  
رَبِّكُمْ تُكذَّبُونَ (٥٥ : ١-١٣)

It is the Most Gracious who has taught the Qur'ān [because] He created man and taught him articulate speech. [Just look up and observe] the sun and the moon pursue their ordered course. The plants and the trees all bow down in adoration; and He has raised high the sky and set up a balance [in it] that you also do not exceed the balance; and weigh properly with fairness and do not fall short in the balance. And He has laid the earth for His creation. Therein are fruits and sheathed palm-trees, and husked grain of various sort and scented flowers. So which of the majesties of your Lord will ye, O men and jinn, deny? (55:1-13)

3. Knowledge is nothing but the knowledge of hidden potentials; thus every knowledge bears witness to these

potentials. If these potentials are not from a being who can perceive and can exercise His will, then they should be mere coercion; however, the organization found in this world and its deep meaningfulness refute this. None of these can be without exercising knowledge and intellect. Thus the creator is not merely powerful; He is knowledgeable and wise too:

قُلْ أَنتُمْ كُفْرُونَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ أُنْدَادًا ذَلِكَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً لِّلسَّائِلِينَ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَىٰ فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحٍ وَحِفْظًا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (٤١ : ٩-١٢)

Ask them: “Do you disbelieve in Him and associate partners with Him who created the earth in two days? The Lord of the Universe is He. And [after creating the earth] He set up on it mountains towering high above it and placed His blessings upon it and for all the needy according to their needs provided it with sustenance with correct measure – all this in four days. Then He turned towards the sky which was in the form of smoke and He said to it and to the earth: “Obey the directive willingly or unwillingly.” Both said: “We come forth willingly.” Then He made seven heavens in two days and to each heaven He assigned its task. And We decked the lowest heaven with brilliant stars and made it fully secure. All this is the design of the Mighty One, the All-knowing. (41:9-12)

4. The organization and management of the world within us and the one outside is a reality. It cannot be imagined without a being who is living and who can exist for Himself, needing no one for His existence, and is also instrumental in bringing others into existence:

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا

خَلَقَهُمْ وَلَا يَـحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَـوُدُّهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ (٢: ٢٥٥)

God, there is no god but He, the Living, the Sustainer. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. All that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. Who can intercede with Him for someone except by His permission? He knows what lies before them and what is after them and without His will they cannot grasp any part of His knowledge. His dominion prevails in the heavens and the earth, and their protection does not weary Him in the slightest way and He is the Exalted and the Glorious One.

5. What is time? It is a concept which emanates from the fact that the Creator, who is living and is self-sustaining, is eternal. Thus, He is the foremost and nothing is before Him. He is the last and there is nothing after Him; He is the apparent and nothing is above Him; He is the hidden and nothing is below Him. He cannot be curtailed in time and space; however, His knowledge encompasses whatever is found in time and space:

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٣: ٥٧)

He is the first and the last, the apparent and the hidden and He has knowledge of all things. (57:3)

6. Any conception of a being without attributes is mere supposition. Differences in opinion in this regard are nothing in reality and the essence of each opinion is the same. Thus all worthy attributes like creativity, justice, mercy, compassion, knowledge and wisdom are validated as the personal attributes of God and precede their effect because the cause of everything precedes its effect. Consequently, it is said that even after destruction of this world the grandeur and majesty of God shall continue to exist with full grace:

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهَ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (٥٥: ٢٦-٢٧)

All that lives on earth is mortal and only the person of Your majestic and glorious God will abide forever. (55:26-27)



7. In understanding the attributes of God, the aspect of finesse in them however should always remain in consideration because power is praiseworthy only when it is complemented by mercy, affection and justice. If anger, revenge, rage and fury manifest against oppression and injustice then it is commendable too. Mercy, forgiveness and generosity are laudable in their right context. The mention of the attribute of *ḥamīd* (praiseworthy) with *ghanī* (self-sufficient), *ḥakīm* (wise) with *‘alīm* (knowledgeable) and *ghafūr* (merciful) with *‘azīz* (powerful) in the Qur’ān guides us to this very aspect of finesse and poise:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ  
سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٧: ١٨٠)

And for God are only good names; call on Him by these names and keep away from those who distort them. And whatever they are doing, they shall soon receive its reward. (7:180)

8. Whatever conception of God one perceives, it cannot be devoid of majesty, splendour and perfection. Consequently, for example, attributes such as al-Wāḥid (the only one), al-Aḥad (the unique) and al-Ṣamad (the rock) depict perfection; the attributes of al-Quddūs (the holy), al-Salām (the one who is peace in entirety) and al-Mu’min (the peace giver) are attributes of splendour and al-Malik (the king), al-‘Azīz (the powerful) and al-Jabbār (the dominant) are attributes of majesty. The attributes of majesty produce fear, respect and praise in a person; the attributes of splendour produce gratitude and love for Him and instill hope in a person. The attributes of majesty are more apparent to his senses and the attributes of splendour are more apparent to his intellect and heart. If God is kept in consideration, the attributes of splendour appear more dominant, and if a human soul is kept in consideration, the attributes of majesty appear dominant. Man while fearing God leaps towards Him for this very reason and tries to seek refuge in His attributes of splendour. In the supplications of the Prophet (sws), the words *اللَّهُمَّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ* (God! I seek refuge with You from You.)<sup>21</sup> refer to this very reality. This is the prayer of the person who is overwhelmed with the love of His

21. *Muslim*, No: 1090.

Lord, is apprehensive of His self-sufficiency and magnificence, is anxious of meeting Him and submits to all His decisions with full regard. When the Qur'ān says that all gracious names are His, it means that every name which depicts His majesty, splendour and perfection is gracious and can be given to Him:

قُلْ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ (١١٠:١٧)

Tell them: “You may call [Him as] Allah or Raḥmān; by whatever name you call Him, His are the most gracious names.” (17:110)

Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, after explaining these aspects in his *al-Qā'id ilā 'Uyūn al-'Aqā'id*, writes:

The conception of God in one's heart should be someone who is kind, merciful, forgiving and compassionate. He smiles and laughs with full sympathy and is gentle. He is the kindest of the kind and the most merciful. He is a person's support and avenges from his enemies on his behalf. This is because one can attain tranquility through Him, seek His nearness and is anxious of meeting Him. Then hallowed is He as well and is also an embodiment of the truth. Thus it is logically impossible that He not differentiate between good and evil and that someone who is bad, filthy, unjust, antagonistic, one who forbids good, exceeds limits, is skeptical of the truth and is adamant in opposing the truth attain His nearness. Indeed, He is forgiving and merciful to those who turn to Him and adopt what is good and forsake what is evil, who remember His greatness and majesty so that he can give Him due regard, who keep humbling themselves before Him keeping in mind that He is self-sufficient and does not need any of His creations and is grand in His planning and management. Then in spite of the fact that all His decisions are the very truth and are decked with His relentless mercy, His creations have knowledge of these decisions to a limited extent which is appropriate for them. Thus it is essential that all His decisions be accepted and His servants should be happy and content with all His commands and directives.<sup>22</sup>

22. Farāhī, *al-Qā'id ilā 'Uyūn al-'Aqā'id*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Azamgarh:

9. The greatness of the Almighty becomes evident from His attributes of perfection. When a person acquires the correct understanding of these attributes, he professes faith in a God Who is unique, peerless and only one of a kind; He is the rock of shelter for all; to Him solely belong the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them; no one shares His sovereignty and no one is His partner in running the affairs of this universe; there is nothing in this world which is hidden from Him; no affair of this world is beyond His jurisdiction and control; everything needs Him, but He needs no one; matter, plants and animals all prostrate before Him and are busy in celebrating His praises and glorifying Him; His power is immense and He is all-embracing and every particle of this universe is subservient to His will; Whenever He wants, He can destroy any thing at any time and whenever He wants, He can re-create it; it is He who bestows honour or humiliation; every thing is mortal and He is the only immortal; He is beyond what is beyond yet He is closer to man than his life-vein; His knowledge and wisdom encompass everything; He even knows what is concealed in the hearts; His intention supersedes all intentions and His command supersedes all commands; He is free of all faults and is without any blemish and beyond any allegation:

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ  
وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ  
أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ  
مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ لَهُ  
مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ  
وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٥٧ : ١-٦)

All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God. He is the Mighty and Wise. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He only gives life and He only gives

death, and He has power over all things. He is the First and the Last, the Apparent and the Hidden and has knowledge of all things. It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then sat on the throne. He knows all that goes into the earth and all that emerges from it and all that comes down from heavens and all that ascends to it. He is with you wherever you are and is aware of whatever you do. He has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and to Him turn all affairs. He makes the night pass into the day, the day pass into the night and He has knowledge of what is concealed in the hearts. (57:1-6)

10. Among the attributes of perfection, the attribute of *tawhīd* occupies the most importance. It is this attribute of *tawhīd* which is the most explained and emphasized upon by the Qur'ān. So much so, the *sūrah* on which the last group of the Qur'ān effectively ends directs the Prophet (sws) to declare the concept of *tawhīd* openly before the people:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ  
(١١٢ : ١-٤)

Proclaim [O Prophet!]: *That* God is alone. He is with every one. He is neither anyone's father nor anyone's son; and there is none like Him. (112:1-4)

All the efforts of the Prophets of God revolve around establishing *tawhīd* in the society. Every single word of its history narrated by the Almighty in the Qur'ān testifies to this reality. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

... they are sent in this world so that they can take people out of the servitude of others and make them the servants of God purely. They should consider Him to be their Creator and their king and only serve Him and show their obedience to Him alone and only trust Him. They should seek help solely from Him. They should thank Him only when they are blessed with favours and seek His help only when in distress. Both in fear and in hope, they should always look up to Him and they should consign themselves to Him. Their love

should be subservient to His love and their likings should be subservient to His likings. They should consider Him to be sole and singular as regards His being, His attributes and His rights and in no way should associate any one with Him in these matters whether this associate be an angel, a jinn, a prophet, a saint, any other person or their own selves.<sup>23</sup>

It is this importance of *tawhīd* on account of which the Qur'ān has explicitly stated that without adhering to it, no deed of a person is acceptable and if a person adheres to it, then there is hope that every sin may be forgiven. The Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا (٤٨:٤)

God will not forgive those who [deliberately] set up partners with Him; lesser than this [sin] however, He will forgive any sin for anyone He [according to His law] wants to. And [in reality], he who associates partners with Him is guilty of a heinous sin. (4:48)

The reason for this is that a person cannot remain persistent on his sin if he professes faith in *tawhīd*, and if he happens to sin, he will find that the grace and blessing of God will induce him to repent and to seek God's forgiveness. Such a person will surely turn to God and as such become entitled to be forgiven before the Day of Judgement. For this very reason, the Prophet (sww) is reported to have said that a person shall surely be granted Paradise if he adheres to *tawhīd*. The Almighty will not cast such a person in the fire of Hell.<sup>24</sup>

The argument which nullifies polytheism is that no one has any basis of associating partners with God. At more than one place, the Qur'ān has demanded from its addressees to present if they can any grounds for polytheism whether based on intellect or on divine sources. Only God Himself could have informed us if He had any associates or not and the only way to have

23. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Haqīqat-i Shirk-o Tawhīd*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1988), 310.

24. *Bukhārī*, No: 5967; *Muslim*, Nos: 136, 138, 139.

knowledge of God's will in this regard were the Divine books He revealed or the traditions and narratives which have been transferred generation after generation from his prophets and messengers. None of these contain anything which substantiates polytheism in any way:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ ائْتُونِي بِكِتَابٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا أَوْ أَثَارَةٍ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٤٦: ٤)

Ask them: "Have you reflected on those whom you worship besides God? Show me what have they created on this earth or do they have a share in the heavens? Bring me a scripture revealed before this, or some other vestige of divine knowledge, if what you say is true." (46:4)

Other arguments of *tawhīd* which are cited by the Qur'ān are also very sound and based on established facts derived from knowledge and reason. As examples, we shall present some verses here:

وَاللَّهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (١٦٣-١٦٤)

Your God is one God. There is no god but Him. He is the Compassionate, the Ever-Merciful. There is no doubt that in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day and in the ships that sail in the ocean with cargoes beneficial to man and in the water which God sends down from the sky with which He enlivens the earth after its death, dispersing over it all kinds of living beings and in the manifestations caused by the winds, and in the obedient clouds that are between the sky and earth – surely in these there are signs for men of intellect [to understand this reality]. (2:163-164)

Imām Amīn Aḥṣan Iṣlāḥī writes:

If one reflects on this verse, it becomes evident that it cites parallel, in fact opposing, elements of nature which at the same time display amazing harmony and unity in the overall service which they do for this universe. A perfunctory look at each member of the pairs the verse refers to shows that they are opposite to one another: the heavens and the earth, the night and the day, the ships and the seas. However, a deeper look shows that if from one aspect they seem opposite to one another, then from another they seem to complement one another for the over all benefit and well-being of this universe. Without the sky and its glowing suns and glittering stars, the earth would lose its liveliness and prosperity and in fact would cease to exist. Similarly, without this earth, who can tell, many stars and heavenly bodies would be gravely affected. Similarly, just as our life and that of other living things of this earth is dependent on the light, heat and freshness provided by the day, it is also dependent on the calm, peace and cool of the night. It is both night and day in unison which guarantee life on this earth. Look at the astounding expanse of seas and oceans around us and the mountainous waves which build up in them and produce awe and dread; however, in spite of such dreadfulness and fright they may cause, how smoothly and slickly do ships and boats glide across them and link the trade, economy, culture, knowledge and technology – in fact every sphere – of various parts of our world.

The next part of the verse mentions rain from the heavens which once again sustains life and vivacity and once again embellishes the surface of the earth with greenery and vegetation. The heavens, one can clearly, see are millions of miles away from the earth; yet the two are harmonious with one another and come together to produce all this. Hidden in the earth are treasures of flora and foliage but it is only after the heavens send down rain that this concealed treasure is revealed. Similar is the relationship between clouds and winds. Heaps and mounds of moisture laden clouds stand their ground unless strong winds push them and propel them to various

parts which have been fixed for them. It is these winds which thrust them towards north and south and east and west. It is they who make them vanish from the heavens and then make them re-appear on the horizon when they want to.

What then does a deep reflection on all these phenomena lead to? Is this world the battle field of opposing and conflicting elements in which contrasting and divergent forces always seem to be at logger-heads with one another or does there exist an immensely wise and prudent force which reigns supreme over all these opposing elements and sagaciously uses them to create a systematic order and an over all purpose? Obviously, it is this second conclusion which one reaches after deeply observing this world. On further deliberation, one comes to the conclusion that this world has not come into existence of its own accord and nor the development it has undergone be regarded as automatic. If such was the case how could its conflicting elements have worked in harmony with one another to achieve a higher goal – the harmony and concord which is so evident in every part of this universe.<sup>25</sup>

The Qur'ān says:

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذَا لَاتَّبَعُوا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا (٤٢:١٧)

Tell [them]: “If, as they claim, there were other gods besides God, they would surely seek to dethrone Him.” (17:42)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣḫāhī writes:

The Idolaters of Arabia considered God to be the sovereign deity analogously on the basis of kings and rulers of this world; they also professed faith in a lot of other deities about whom they thought that they had a share in this rule and would be able to procure the nearness of God for those who worship them and would also be able to have the desires and wishes of these worshippers fulfilled. This verse is a refutation of this baseless claim. They are told that if God had partners and associates as they think, then they, at some time or another,

25. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣḫāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 401.



would have tried to rebel against Him and overthrow Him and the whole system of this world would have been disrupted. The implication is that the worldly kingdoms and kings, on the basis of which they have analogously set up partners of God, every now and then would get disrupted and geographically altered because of the rebellions and disputes from their courtiers; however, here no one can even point out a single instance in which, for example, the sun left its path or the earth its orbit. In another verse, this aspect is referred to in the following words: (لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا (21:22)) (were there other gods in the sky and earth besides God, they would have become disrupted, (21:22)).<sup>26</sup>

At another place, the Qur'ān says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ  
وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالدَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَكَثِيرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ  
العَذَابُ وَمَنْ يُهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُّكْرِمٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ (22:18)

Do you not see that whatever is in the heavens and the earth: the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the beasts, and countless men – all prostrate before God? And there are many on whom punishment has become mandatory and He who is humiliated by God has none to honour him because God does what He intends [according to His law]. (22:18)

Cited here is the argument in favour of *tawhīd* which is testified by every object of this universe by its very existence. We have already alluded to the fact that every object of this universe in its nature has an Abrahamic temperament. The sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains and the animals that tread the earth all follow the divine law on which they have been created. None of them deviates from this law in the slightest manner. The sun whom some foolish people worship bears testimony from its very existence that it stands and bows before the Almighty every day. It raises his head at the time of sunrise and then stands before the Almighty till noon.

26. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 4, 508.

After midday, it kneels before Him and at sunset prostrates before Him and remains in this state all night. It is to this reality which the waxing and waning of the moon and the rising and setting of stars point. The same is true for the mountains, trees and animals. Their shadows at all times stand, kneel or bow down before the Almighty and a little deliberation shows that such is the Abrahamic temperament of this shadow that it always remains opposite to the sun. If the sun is in the east, the shadow will stretch in the west and vice versa. In other words, the shadow of every object from its very existence tells us that it is not the sun but its Creator who is worthy of prostration.

This argument in favour of *tawhīd* is more of a hint and is seldom grasped by logicians; however, for those who reflect on the universe, this hint has great value.<sup>27</sup>

### iii. Dealings and Practices

The dealings of God with His servants and the manner in which He deals with them are called *sunnatullāh* by the Qur'ān. The Almighty says that these practices are permanent and unalterable. Consequently, for a true comprehension of God, just as knowledge of His attributes is essential, knowledge of His dealings with His creation is also essential. We shall now present the details of these dealings; however, before we do this, it is essential that certain premises remain clear in our mind at the very outset.

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

1. The Almighty has created each person with a noble nature and has blessed him with the ability to discriminate good from evil and has given him the freedom to choose whichever of them he wants to. After that, his becoming a good or a bad person is dependent on his attitude and on the Almighty's grace. If he tries to adhere to virtue, the Almighty's grace impels him to virtue and if he adopts evil, the Almighty, if He wants to, leaves him to tread the path of evil.

2. Issues on which the Almighty will hold a person accountable are those in which he has the freedom to choose and exercise

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27. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 229.

his free will. People who do not have this freedom will not be held accountable by Him. This freedom to exercise one's will has been granted by the Almighty and not something which a person possesses. Thus a person exercises his will while remaining subservient to the will of God. The Almighty, on the basis of His own will and wisdom, may not allow man to achieve what he intends; however, because of some reason which only His wisdom can encompass, if He does not allow a virtuous intention of a person to materialize, He does not deprive him of its reward; similarly, if He does not allow evil intent to materialize, then this does not mean that He will necessarily acquit a person in the Hereafter.

3. Wherever the will of God has been mentioned in the Qur'ān, it only means that except for God Himself no one has the power to stop Him from materializing it or to alter it in any way. It does not mean that His will is not subservient to justice and wisdom. The Almighty is wise and just and nothing that He does is devoid of justice and wisdom. Hence wherever His will is stated in the Qur'ān, it must be considered to be subservient to the wisdom and justice according to which He is running the affairs of this world. It would not be correct to assume that He would act contrarily to whatever practice He has initiated for Himself and to the justice and wisdom He has chosen for Himself. For example, the Qur'ān says that God guides whomsoever He wills and leads astray whomsoever He wills. This statement does not mean that He does not adhere to any principle of justice and wisdom in giving guidance to someone or leading him astray; it only means that giving guidance to someone or leading him astray materializes in accordance with the practice He has set for it and no one has the power to change or break it.

4. In the Qur'ān, we find certain acts being attributed to God; however, the real objective in this regard, as referred to earlier, is not the attribution of these acts, it is their attribution to certain laws and principles on the basis of which these acts materialize. Because these laws and principles have been set by the Almighty, He has attributed the acts which emanate on the basis of these laws and principles to Himself at certain places

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in the Qur'ān. For example, فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ (5:61) (and when they deviated [from the truth], God led away their hearts [from the truth], (61:5)) and وَنُقَلِّبُ أَقْبُلَهُمْ وَنَبْصَرَهُمْ (6:110) (We will turn away their hearts and eyes [from the truth], (6:110)). On such instances, the Qur'ān also refers to the principle on the basis of which a certain act emanates. For example, words such as: "God only leads astray the defiant." These insinuations are meant to direct the attention of the reader on the factual reality so that the apparent meaning of the words does not create any misconception in his mind.

5. The eternal and all embracing knowledge of the Almighty does not negate any of the practices and laws set by Him. Undoubtedly, He knows from the very beginning whether a person will adopt the right path or go astray; however, besides this, He also knows that a person will adopt or reject the right path in accordance with the law of guidance prescribed by Him.<sup>28</sup>

Two further things should remain clear as well:

Firstly, certain things are attributed to God also because He is the first cause and nothing can originate or materialize without His will and certain things are attributed to us because at times we become worthy of them. The Qur'ān thus says:

وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ فَمَا لَهُمْ لَوْ لَأِذَا كَادُوا يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَعِمْنَ اللَّهُ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَعِمْنَ نَفْسِكَ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا (4: 78-79)

And if they receive any benefit, they say: "This is from God." But when evil befalls them, they say: "This was because of you." Tell them: "Everything is from God! [so whatever happens, happens with His permission]." What has come over these men that they are not prepared to understand a word? Whatever good befalls you is from God and whatever

28. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 114.

affliction comes your way is because of your own selves. [Their real ailment is that they doubt your prophethood; leave them aside] We have sent you forth as a Messenger and sufficient is God's testimony [to this]. (4:78-79)

While explaining these verses, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

... first those people are addressed who were attributing their successes to God and failures to the Prophet (sww). They are told that the actual reality is that both good and evil manifest with the will of God; without His consent nothing can come into being. The difference, however, is that good comes into being as a requisite of God's mercy and evil comes into being because of man's deeds. Viewed thus, evil is related to one's ownself.

Here one must keep in consideration that God is an embodiment of good. He has created this world as a manifestation of His mercy. Hence to ascribe any evil to Him is against His noble attributes. Evil comes into being because of a person's ill-use of his free-will. The Almighty has granted a person a certain sphere in which he has the freedom to exercise his will. This freedom is a great favour of the Almighty. It is on its basis that man occupies pre-eminence among other creations. It is on its basis that in the Hereafter, he will be held accountable and rewarded or punished accordingly. In the absence of this freedom, there would have been no difference between a human being and an animal. However, one thing that needs to be kept in consideration regarding this freedom is that it is not unlimited and unrestricted; as referred to before, this freedom is restricted to a certain sphere; and then, within this sphere too, it is subservient to the will and wisdom of the Almighty. Without His will and permission, a person cannot fulfill any of his will and intentions. Good intentions also materialize because of His grace and bad intentions also materialize because of the respite He grants. If the Almighty allows a certain evil intent to materialize, then this is attributed to God because it materialized because of His will and consent; however, from another angle it is an act of a human being because it was a product of his will.

What must further be understood is that whenever the Almighty allows the evil of a person or a group of persons to become rampant in a society then this is because, at a collective level, some benefit or well-being of His creation is intended. At certain instances, giving such opportunity to evil to flourish is to test the righteous so that their weaknesses are done away with and their qualities are polished. At certain other instances, the reason is to leave the wicked with no excuse to deny the truth and to bring to an end their period of respite. At still other instances, the Almighty creates circumstances so that what is hidden in the nature of people is revealed. Thus not only righteous deeds emanate from them as a result but evil deeds also emanate from people who have them hidden in themselves.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, the basis of the directive of good and evil, and right and wrong is that what is in accordance with the attributes of God and what is against them. We praise justice because justice is an attribute of God and for this reason its liking has been ordained in our nature. No doubt, this directive is relative as such but is also eternal because the attributes of God are eternal. Furthermore, there is no clash or conflict between these attributes so that the Almighty on one occasion wills something which is in accordance with His attributes and at another wills something else which is in conflict with them. In all circumstances, He fully adheres to justice:

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١٨:٣)

God bears witness that there is no god but He, and so do the angels and people [in this world] who have true knowledge. He is fully adherent to justice; there is no other God; [He is] the Mighty, the Wise. (3:18)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

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29. Ibid., vol. 2, 344.

The reference that God is adherent to justice is a very important constituent of faith and so close it is to the essence of Islam that one can say that it is in fact Islam. The importance it occupies requires that some points delineated by my mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī in this regard be stated here so that people who intend to deliberate on the philosophy and wisdom of religion are able to benefit from them:

1. The word *imān* originates from the verbal noun *amn*. This, in other words, means that believing in something and adhering to it is ingrained in the very nature of *imān*. As an obvious consequence of this, it is essential that a person must have a deep conviction on the existence of God. However, this conviction can only be achieved if a person believes that intellect is primarily meant to guide him and not to misguide him. It should be accepted, in other words, that intellect by its nature is a barometer of justice within a person. This premise necessarily leads to another conclusion: human nature is created by the Almighty on the principles of justice and equity. The reason for this is that the Almighty being an embodiment of justice and equity holds justice and equity very dear and is also One who wants to establish justice and equity everywhere. All these conclusions are a logical consequence and are in fact self-evident. It is evident from this discussion that one cannot verify the veracity of something unless the Creator is regarded to be an embodiment of truth and justice. From this fact, all the actions and deeds which emanate from God are regarded to be just and the way this fact is validated through intellect, it is also validated through universal truths. An explanation of this compact premise is that the Almighty has ingrained piety in human nature and made hearts inclined to relish and accept it. In such a situation, how is it possible for us that we like piety and not regard God as someone who likes piety. How can we regard our liking for the truth to be true if we are not satisfied with the liking for the truth of our Creator. We want to please Him by doing a good deed because we are satisfied that He is pleased by a good deed. We ascribe good attributes to Him because in liking these attributes we are fully convinced of the veracity of our nature.

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2. The foundation of faith is love for God. We profess faith in a being whom we love, whom we want to please and from whom we have high hopes and expectations. This is not possible unless we are certain that it is absolutely impossible that He be unjust and oppressive. He will grant His favours to those who will obey Him and punish only those who are worthy of punishment. It is against human nature to love an unjust and oppressive master.

3. If one deliberates on the favours and blessings of the Almighty, the foundation of the requirement of professing faith in the Almighty which emerges in human nature is gratitude. This gratitude becomes mandatory when one accepts that it is the right of the Creator Who has bestowed these favours on us and a requisite of these favours. It is this very reality on the basis of which the Qur'ān has called *shirk* (polytheism) as *zulm* (injustice) and *imān* as gratitude. Owing to this very reason, the basis of a person demanding his rights is necessity of justice. This is a self-evident reality of *sharī'ah* and law. On these very grounds, the basis of every *sharī'ah* is justice and fairness.

4. The consequence of faith is obedience to God and the consequence of obedience to God is the pleasure of God. In every deed and act which is done, there is a similar relationship of causation which the Almighty has established through His commands and directives and has guided us in various ways towards it, and since we have full conviction on these results of deeds, hence while relying on His promises we obey Him. If we do not have faith on the fact that God honours His promises, all basis of deeds will be razed to ground and all reliance will remain on either of the following two things: like the Christians on the false notion of intercession, which totally depends on Christ, whom they worship as a deity and love more than God Himself or like the Jews on their deviation from the truth and their short-sightedness: they abandoned their ship to the winds and because of their arrogance and pride did not remain content with the judgement of God as if to them there was no principle before God to discriminate good from evil. To protect oneself from going astray in this manner, it is



essential that one has full conviction that God adheres to justice and every directive and promise of His is true, as specified by the Qur'ān: (۱۱۵:۶) وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا (fulfilled was the word of your Lord in truth and in justice, (6:115)).<sup>30</sup>

Following are the *sunan* (practices and dealings) of God:

### 1. Tests and Trials

God has created this world for trial and test. Every single person on this earth faces these trials and as such His practice of putting mankind through trials is a universal phenomenon. Whatever is ingrained in human nature comes to surface because of these trials; the secrets of the inner personality of a person are revealed through these very trials and the levels attained by a person in his ideologies and in his deeds are ascertained through these very trials. The Qur'ān says that life and death have been created for the very purpose of judging that who among mankind adopts a rebellious attitude towards his Creator and who leads a life according to the liking of his Creator. No doubt, the Almighty has knowledge of everything; however, He has set the practice for Himself that He does not merely reward and punish people on the basis of His knowledge; on the contrary, He does so on the basis of their deeds. For this very purpose, He has implemented the system of trial on this earth:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا، وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ  
الْعَفُورُ (۲ : ۶۷)

[He] Who created death and life that He might test you as to which of you is best regarding deeds. And He is also Mighty and Forgiving. (67:2)

The circumstances of sorrow and happiness, poverty and affluence, grief and joy which befall a person in this world are governed by this very practice of God. Through such circumstances, the Almighty tests His servants and differentiates the good among them from the evil. When He blesses someone

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30. Ibid., vol. 2, 55.

with affluence and status, He tests whether such people will remain grateful to Him or not, and when He afflicts someone with poverty and hardships, He tests whether such people will remain patient or not:

وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ (٣٥:٢١)

And We are inflicting you with sorrow and happiness to test you, and to Us shall you return. (21:35)

Writes Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī:

... He gives wealth and status to some people to see if they become grateful, humble and obedient on this favour or end up proud and arrogant, pompous and conceited and ill-treat the poor and do not spend on others from what God has blessed them with. Similarly, He deprives some people of wealth to see if they remain patient in such circumstances, are thankful for what they have, are satisfied with their fate and remain honourable in their hardships or in frustration and disappointment end up in despair and dejection, show discontent on their fate, become angry with God and live a life of misery as a result.<sup>31</sup>

All these facilities and provisions with which this earth is endowed with are meant to test man. These provisions, in other words, are not provided to him for his indulgence and pleasure; they are a means to try him. By providing them to man, the Almighty is judging whether a person seeks the comprehension of His Creator and in this way attains success in the Hereafter or loses his way by indulging in them:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لِّهَا لِنَبْلُوهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (٧:١٨)

We have decked the earth with whatever is in it so We can test them that who is the best regarding his deeds. (18:7)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

This world is a place of trial and test. In it, God is testing that

31. Ibid., vol. 3, 60.

who while using his intellect and brains seeks the Hereafter, and who while following his desires ends up seeking this world. For the purpose of test, God has adorned the face of this earth with make-up that is deceptively pleasing to the eye. There is great lure and attraction in wealth and children, in orchards and gardens, in fields and crops, in cars and villas, in buildings and castles, in positions of high social and political status of this world. All its pleasures are at hand and easy to attain while its pangs are hidden. On the other hand, all the successes of the Hereafter are as yet concealed from the eyes, and those who seek them are immediately faced with a lot of hardships in this world. Indeed this is a severe trial. Not every slave to his passions can come through it. Only those will sail through it who are perspicacious enough not to be misled from these worldly lures which may attempt to deceive them in one guise or another and are never prepared to lose the favours of the Hereafter by getting caught in the lures and attractions of this world.<sup>32</sup>

These are the details of the law of trial and test that is generally faced by human beings. A specific form of this law comes into play in the times of the *rusul* (Messengers) of God. At the behest of the Almighty, their propagation culminates in the worldly Judgement of their addressees and those who claim to profess faith in these messengers are, during the course of this propagation, put through certain trials and tests which are generally not faced by others. Consequently, the Qur'ān says:

أَحْسَبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ  
قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٢٩ : ٢-٣)

Do people think that once they say: “We believe [in the *rasūl*],” they will be left alone and not be tried even though We [similarly] tried those who lived before them. So God will surely set apart the truthful, and He will also surely set apart the liars. (29:2-3)

Once the Messengers of God communicate the truth to their

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32. Ibid., vol. 4 558.

addressees to the extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it, this test manifests itself to isolate and separate the believers from the disbelievers before the latter are punished. The words: (۳ : ۲۹) فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ (so God will surely set apart the truthful, and He will also surely set apart the liars) of the above quoted verse refer to this very reality. The implication is that before the judgement is delivered it is clearly known where each person stands. At certain other places in the Qur'ān too, this law and practice of God is mentioned with similar emphasis:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ  
وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ (۲):  
(۱۵۶-۱۵۵)

And We shall test you with some fear and some famine and some loss of property and life and some loss in produce [from the fields]. And [O Prophet!] give glad tidings [of success in this world and in that to come] to those who persevere [in this cause]. [Those] who when afflicted with some calamity say: "We belong to God, and to Him [one day] we shall return." (2:155-156)

## 2. Guidance and Error

In this trial, man has been asked to guard himself from going astray and consciously adopt the guided path. The Qur'ān has informed us that this guidance is found in the very nature of a person. Moreover, once a person attains the age of intellectual maturity, the signs of the heavens and the earth around him direct his attention to this guidance. If a person values and treasures this guidance and benefits from it and is grateful to his Lord for it, it is the practice and law of God that He increases the glow of this guidance and creates in a person a further desire for this guidance, and as a result of this induces in him the urge to benefit from the guidance brought by the prophets of God:

نُورٌ عَلَىٰ نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ\* (۳۵:۲۴)

Light upon light. God guides to His light whom He wills and

God cites parables to mankind and God has knowledge of all things. (24:35)

وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَآتَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ (٤٧: ١٧)

And those who are guided, He will increase their guidance and also grant them their share of piety. (47:17)

This can be called culmination of guidance and the Qur'ān has stated with full clarity that without the will of God, even a desire for obtaining it is not produced in a person. This will of God is also related to this law of guidance of His. God is aware of everything and is also wise: He gives this favour to only those who accept the guidance ingrained in their nature:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ تَذَكُّرَةٌ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَالظَّالِمِينَ أَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٧٦: ٢٩-٣١)

This [Qur'ān] is only a reminder. So whoever wishes should take the path leading to Allah and you do not wish [O People!] until Allah so wishes [according to His law]. Indeed, Allah is all-knowing, wise. He admits into His mercy whomever He wishes [on the basis of this knowledge and wisdom]. And for the wrongdoers, He has prepared a grievous punishment. (76:29-31)

If a person decides upon evading this ingrained guidance, refuses to use his intellect, and deliberately deviates from the truth, then in the words of the Qur'ān this is *zulm* (wronging the soul) and *fisq* (defiance), and the Almighty never guides a person who continues to wrong his soul and persists in defiance and He leaves him to wander in the darkness of error and misguidance:

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَجْعَلُ الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَىٰ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (١٠٠: ١٠)

And it is not possible for anyone to profess faith [in the Prophet] except by God's permission. [This permission is only granted to those who use their intellect] and those who

do not use their intellect, He puts on them the dirt of [error and misguidance]. (10:100)

The consequence of such behaviour is that the obduracy, stubbornness and selfishness of such wrong-doers increase and they are deprived of the ability to think and understand in the right way. A state reaches when the Almighty seals their hearts in retribution of this wrong behaviour:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أُنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٢: ٦-٧)

Those who have decided to reject [this Book], it is the same to them whether you warn them or not; they will not believe. Allah has [now] set a seal on their hearts and on their ears [in accordance with His law], and on their eyes is a veil and great is the penalty that awaits them [on the Day of Judgment.] (2:6-7)

At another place, the words are:

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِن جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ لَّيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهَا قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ وَنُقَلِّبُ أَفْئِدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (١٠٩-١١٠)

And these people keep solemnly swearing by God that if a sign comes, they will definitely believe in it. Tell them: “Signs are with God” and how will you know that even if signs come they will not believe and [in retribution of this sin] We will turn away their hearts and eyes [from the truth] since they refused to express belief at first and We will let them wander about in their wrongdoing. (6:109-110)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

This is a mention of the practice of God according to which some are blessed with faith and some deprived of it ... people who deliberate on the innumerable signs which are found in this world and in the world within their own selves and with their heart and soul adhere to the obvious consequences of this

deliberation are blessed with faith. On the other hand, people who in spite of witnessing all these signs turn deaf and blind to them and take to narcissism and remain caught up in their desires and do not open their eyes even after persistent reminders by the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sww), their hearts and eyes are turned away from the truth by the Almighty as a result of which they are deprived of the correct vision and understanding. After this, the greatest of signs and miracles have no effect on them. The practice of God is that the hearts and thoughts of people who instead of looking straight and walking in the right direction look crookedly and walk in the wrong direction are rendered warped and crooked. The Qur'ānic verse: فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ (٥:٦١) (and when they deviated [from the truth], God led away their hearts [from the truth], (61:5)) points to this very practice of the Almighty. Here, in the verse under discussion, while referring to this practice of God, Muslims are prodded that how do they believe that if such people according to their demand are shown a miracle they will become believers. If so, many signs which exist in the world around man and in that within him and towards which the Qur'ān has pointed and explained their implications have failed to convince their hearts and set right their vision? How can another sign change and convince them? How can the veil which stretches across their vision today be lifted tomorrow and how can the blindness in them which today stops them from seeing such signs go away when a new sign is shown to them? The way they have been belying all signs throughout their lives will only make them belie another sign and the metamorphosis which you see today in their hearts and eyes will play its role tomorrow also when they witness the sign.<sup>33</sup>

### 3. Beyond-Capacity Directives

The Almighty never gives a directive to human beings in the *sharī'ah* revealed by Him which is beyond their capacity. In all that emanates from God for human beings, it is always made sure that they are not burdened beyond what they can bear and whatever directive be given is given keeping in view human capacity and capability. Consequently, a person will not be held

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33. Ibid., vol. 3, 140.

liable for sins done out of forgetfulness or misunderstanding or done inadvertently, and God's only requirement of man is that he should follow His directives in both form and spirit with full veracity and honesty. Verses such as (٢٨٦ : ٢) لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا (God does not burden a person beyond his capacity, (2:286)) and other similar ones mention this very practice of God. However, this does not mean that if people adopt a rebellious behaviour, then too the Almighty does not burden them beyond their capacity. It is evident from the Qur'an that for reprimand and training<sup>34</sup> or for punishment<sup>35</sup> or to show them the consequences of their evil deeds<sup>36</sup> or to make them aware of their helplessness against the power of God,<sup>37</sup> people are certainly burdened beyond their means.

#### 4. Rise and Fall of Nations

Under the law of trial which has been mentioned earlier, just as God selects people to make them undergo a trial of patience or of gratitude, in a similar manner He also selects nations for this purpose. As a result of this selection, when a nation once rises among the comity of nations, the practice of God with it is that He keeps it on this position until it itself plunges into lowliness with regard to morality and knowledge. This is an unchangeable practice of God and when, after repeated warnings, He decides to humiliate and depose a nation no one can stop Him and no power of this world can help that nation against the Almighty. The whole history of mankind bears witness to this practice of God:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُعَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُعَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِن وَّالٍ (١١ : ١٣)

God does not change His dealing with a people unless they themselves change their characteristics, and when God decides to afflict them with a misfortune, none can ward it off. And for such people there is none who can help them against

34. In the verse (2:286) just quoted, subsequent words are: "Lord do not lay on us a burden such as You Laid on those before us."

35. This is a very common subject of the Qur'an and can be seen at various places.

36. The Qur'an, 68:42; 4:100.

37. The Qur'an, 2:24.



God. (13:11)

Consequently, the Qur'an has said that this phenomenon of rise and fall shall happen with every nation of this world, and as a result some of these nations would be destroyed and others inflicted with great punishment. History tells us that first the Hamites and then the Semites were selected for this purpose and for the past five hundred years, the progeny of Japheth have been chosen for this purpose. These are last peoples on which history will be ending. The Qur'an says that after this the Day of Judgement shall come:

وَإِنْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُوهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا  
كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا (٥٨:١٧)

And there is no nation which We shall not destroy or sternly punish before the Day of Judgement. That is decreed in the Book of God. (17:58)

### 5. Divine Help

When the Almighty entrusts a person or a group with any of His missions and asks them to achieve it, then He also provides His help to them. This mission can relate to propagation of His message and it can also relate to *jihād* and warfare. Many verses such as (٤٧ : ٣٠) كَانَتْ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (helping the believers is incumbent upon Us, (30:47)) clearly say that the Almighty has held it mandatory on Himself to help the believers who have taken up such a mission:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ (٧: ٤٧)

Believers! if you help God, God will help you and strengthen you. (47:7)

This help does not come randomly. It is based on a rule and it comes in accordance with it. Its details are given in a separate booklet that I have written: *The Islamic Sharī'ah of Jihād*. However, here this much should remain clear that what makes a person worthy of help is perseverance and piety. The Qur'an says that when in the battle of Uḥud the Prophet (sws) in order to raise the morale of his people told them that the Almighty will

help them with three thousand angels, the Almighty endorsed his proposal and out of His grace even increased this number by two thousand; however, at this instance, the Almighty clearly said that the promise of this help is dependent on the condition that Muslims should show perseverance and abstain from showing disobedience to God and His Prophet (sws):

بَلَىٰ إِن تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَأْتُوكُم مِّن فَوْرِهِمْ هَذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ  
آلَافٍ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِينَ (١٢٥:٣)

Yes! If you persevere and are fearful of God, and your enemies launch an attack on you at this very moment, God will help you with five thousand angels who will be marked with specific signs. (3:125)

## 6. Remorse and Repentance

If a person commits a sin, there exists a chance for him to repent. The Almighty has asserted (The Qur'ān, 6:54) that He has made mercy incumbent upon Himself, and therefore He never punishes people who after sinning repent and mend their ways. In this regard, the rule is that if people repent immediately after they commit a sin the Almighty definitely forgives them; however, He does not forgive people who deeply indulge in sin all their lives and when they see death approaching start to repent and seek forgiveness from the Almighty. Similarly, He also does not forgive people who deliberately deny the truth if they continue on this denial till death. This practice of God regarding repentance has been mentioned in the Qur'ān in the following words:

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِن قَرِيبٍ  
 فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ  
 يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْآنَ وَلَا  
 الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (١٧-١٨)

God's responsibility is to forgive only those who commit a sin while being overwhelmed with emotions and then quickly repent. It is they who are forgiven by God. God is all-knowing and wise. But He will not forgive those who sin all their lives and, when death comes to them, say: "Now I

repent!" nor those who die as disbelievers. It is for these whom We have prepared a grievous punishment. (4:17-18)

## 7. Reward and Punishment

In the Hereafter, reward and punishment is a certain reality; however, it is evident from the Qur'ān that at times this reward and punishment also takes place in this world. This lesser judgement is a prelude to the greater judgement which will take place in the Hereafter. The various forms of this reward and punishment which the Almighty has spelled out in the Qur'ān are:

Firstly, people who are only after this world, live and die for it and are absolutely indifferent to the Hereafter are given whatever worldly benefits the Almighty wants to give them, and then their account is settled by Him in this very world and they are rewarded or punished in this world on the basis of their deeds right:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَسُونَ (١١:١٥)

We recompense in this world the deeds of those who desire the life of this world with all its finery, and they are not given less in it in any way. (11:15)

Secondly, those who reject their respective *rasūl* (messenger) even after being communicated the truth to the extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it are punished in this very world and those who profess faith in him are embraced by the blessings of God from all sides:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قَضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (١٠:٤٧)

For each nation, there is a *rasūl*. So when a *rasūl* comes to a nation, their matter is decided with justice and they are not wronged. (10:47)

This is an unchangeable practice of God. The accounts of the people of Noah (sws), Lot (sws), Shu'ayb (sws), Hūd (sws) and Sāliḥ (sws) besides those of other prophets which have been narrated in the Qur'ān are a tale of the lesser days of judgement that took place in this world. In human history, such a lesser day of judgement was set up for the last time for the people of the

prophet Muḥammad (sws):

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ  
يَضُرَّعُونَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ الْحَسَنَةَ حَتَّىٰ عَفَوْا وَقَالُوا قَدْ مَسَّ آبَاءَنَا  
الضَّرَّاءُ وَالسَّرَّاءُ فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَعْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا  
وَأَتَقُوا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَكِن كَذَّبُوا فَأَخَذْنَاهُم  
بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٧: ٩٤-٩٦)

And whenever We sent a prophet as a messenger to any city We tested its people with hardships which were financial and which afflicted their persons so that they adopt humility in their supplications. Then We changed their adversity to good fortune so that when they had prospered a lot they said: “Good and bad days also befell our fore-fathers.” At last we seized them suddenly and they were caught unaware. And had the people of these cities professed faith and remained God-fearing, We would have showered upon them blessings from the heavens and the earth. But they rejected, and We seized them in retribution of their misdeeds. (7:94-96)

Thirdly, the Almighty has promised the progeny of Abraham (sws) that if they adhere to the truth, they will lead all nations of the world and if they deviate from it, they will be deposed from this position and will have to face the punishment of humiliation and subjugation. The words (أَوْفُوا بَعَهْدِي أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ (٢: ٤٠)) (keep my covenant, and I will keep yours, (2:40)) refer to this very covenant of the Almighty with the Israelites. The warning sounded in the words (إِن عُدْتُمْ عُدْنَا (١٧: ٨)) (if you do it again, We would also do it again, (17:8)) also refers to this. All the books of the Bible mention the details of this covenant.

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ  
ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ (٢: ١٢٤)

And recall when Abraham was put to trial by His Lord in a few things and he fulfilled them. He said: “I have decided to appoint you the leader of mankind.” “And what of my descendants?” asked Abraham. He replied: “My covenant

does not apply to the evil-doers.” (2:124)

It is this very promise of the Almighty which is specifically mentioned for the Israelites in the following verse:

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَأَكَلُوا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ  
وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أُمَّةٌ مُقْتَصِدَةٌ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَعْمَلُونَ (٦٦:٥)

And if they adhered to the Torah and the Gospel and that what has been revealed to them from their Lord, they would have received the sustenance [of their Lord] from above them and from beneath their feet. [No doubt], there is one group among them who is righteous but those whose deeds are evil abound. (5:66)

It is recorded in Deuteronomy (28:1-25):

If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country ... The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven ... Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you ... The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom ... However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country ... The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth. (Deuteronomy 28:1-25)

## 2. Belief in the Angels

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١٣:٣٥)

Gratitude is for God only, Creator of the heavens and the earth, He who has made the angels as messengers, with two, three or four wings. He increases His creation according to His will. Indeed, God has power over all things. (35:1)

The beings through whom the Almighty sends down His directives for His creation are called angels. The Qur'ān uses the word الملائكة (*al-malā'ikah*) for them, which is a plural of the word مَلَك (*malak*), and the word مَلَك (*malak*) itself has sprung from مَلَاك (*mal'āk*). The word means "a messenger". In the above quoted verses, the Qur'ān itself has alluded to the fact that the word *malā'ikah* has been chosen for them to connote this very meaning. Consequently, it is evident from the Qur'ān that it is through the angels that communication between this world and the one beyond it is established, and the Almighty is running the affairs of this world through them. The way this is done is that whatever directive they receive from the Almighty is implemented by them as His obedient subordinates. Their own intention or exercise of authority is not involved in this process in any way. They are an embodiment of obedience and are busy all the time in glorifying Him and in celebrating His praises and never disobey Him in the slightest of way:

وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ (١٦:٤٩-٥٠)

And they are not defiant to the slightest and fear their Lord, Who is above them and do exactly as they are bidden. (16:49-50)

While explaining the reasons for which man has been asked to profess belief in the angels, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

An inseparable part of faith in divine books and in prophets is faith in the angels. Without believing in the angels, the

channel between God and His prophets is rendered ambiguous and unclear. This ambiguity not only conceals an important step in the means of communicating guidance and knowledge, but is also responsible in leading mankind astray in matters of divine guidance. Mankind has always acknowledged that there is a God and has also conceded that if there is a God, then He should inform them of His likings; however, when He does not come before us face to face and we are not able to directly view Him, then the question arises about the means through which He communicates His guidance and directives to His creatures. If for this purpose, He selects certain outstanding individuals, who are called prophets and messengers, then the same question also arises about them: How does He communicate His directives to them? Does He come face to face with them or adopts some means for this purpose? The answer to this question is that the means through which God communicates with His creation is *wahī* (divine revelation), which He sends down through His angels, in particular, the exalted angel, Gabriel. These angels are the noblest and most superior of God's creatures. They have the ability to directly acquire *wahī* from the Almighty ... it is because of this strong connection of the angels with prophets and divine revelation that in order to profess faith in the prophets of God and in His books, it is essential that faith be professed in them as well. They are entrusted with the responsibility of communicating between God and His prophets and messengers and viewed thus they are essential as they are the only creatures which are able to have equal communication with both this world and the one beyond it. Because they are made from light, they are able to bear the glow and radiance of God and because they have been created they are also able to maintain communication with human beings. Except for them, no creature can attain this level of nearness with the Almighty. Hence it was deemed necessary that besides professing faith in prophets and messengers, faith should also be professed in messengers who can mediate and communicate between God and His messengers.<sup>38</sup>

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38. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 423.

The responsibilities of the angels which the Almighty has mentioned in the Qur'ān are the following:

1. They implement the directives of God among His creation:

تَنْزِلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ (٩٧: ٤)

In that [night], descend the angels and the Spirit by the permission of their Lord with commands in all affairs. (97:4)

2. Just as they descend with the directives of God, they also ascend upwards to be in the presence of God:

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ (٧٠: ٤)

The angels and the Spirit ascend towards Him in a Day the measure of which [according to your calculation] is fifty thousand years. (70:4)

3. They reveal the messages of God to His prophets:

يُنزِلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ بِالرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرُوا أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاتَّقُونِ (١٦: ٢)

He sends down the angels with the revelation of His directive to those among His servants whom He chooses to warn people: "There is no god but Me: therefore fear Me." (16:2)

It is evident from the Qur'ān that it is generally Gabriel who brings down the revelations. He occupies the highest status among the angels and is the most favoured one as well. He can directly access the Almighty, and no one can come between him and the Almighty. The Qur'ān has also called him powerful, trustworthy and one who is obeyed. This means that he is fully capable and able to carry out all responsibilities entrusted to him. Hence, there is no possibility that any other power or evil spirit influence or over-awe him or convince him to betray God or that he himself mix up or make mistakes in the revelations given to him. He has been safeguarded from all these shortcomings by the Almighty. The Qur'ān says:



عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَى وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَى ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى  
فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى فَأَوْحَى إِلَى عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَى (٥٣: ١٠-٥)

He is taught by one who is powerful and mighty. He stood on the uppermost horizon; then, drawing near, he came down within two bows' length or even closer, and revealed to his servant that which he revealed. (53:5-10)

4. They write down and preserve the words and deeds of human beings:

وَأِنَّا عَلَيْنَكُم لَحَافِظِينَ كِرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٨٢: ١٠-١٢)

Whereas appointed over you are guardians, noble scribes. They know what you do. (82:10-12)

5. They descend with glad tidings and punishment for people:

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى قَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ أَنْ  
جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيذٍ فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكَرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ  
خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمِ لُوطٍ (١١: ٦٩-٧٠)

And our messengers came to Abraham with glad tidings. They said: "Peace be to you!" Abraham answered: "Peace be to you too!" Soon he brought them a roasted calf [to serve them]. But when he saw their hands being withheld from it, he felt strange and a little afraid of them. They said: "Have no fear; we have been sent forth to the people of Lot [to mete out punishment to them]." (11:69-70)

Another thing which is incidentally evident from the above verses is that angels can assume the form of human beings and in spite of this do not require food for their sustenance and are free from such wants.

6. They remain busy in glorifying and exalting the Lord and pray to Him for the forgiveness of those who inhabit the earth:

وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ

الْغُفُورِ الرَّحِيمِ (٥:٤٢)

And the angels give glory to their Lord, celebrating His praises and seek forgiveness [from Him] for those on earth. Pay heed! Surely it is God Who is the Forgiving One, the Merciful. (42:5)

7. They claim the souls of people:

قُلْ يَتَوَفَّاكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ (١١:٣٢)

Say: “The angel of death in charge of you will claim your souls. Then to your Lord shall you be returned.” (32:11)

8. They are the companions of the faithful both in this world and in the Hereafter and give them glad tidings of Paradise at their death:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ نَحْنُ أَوْلِيَائُكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِي أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدْعُونَ (٤١: ٣٠-٣١)

As for those who said: “Our Lord is God,” and remained steadfast on this, angles will descend to them [with the glad tidings]: “Fear not and grieve not and accept the glad tidings of the Paradise you used to be promised of. We were your companions in this world and [now] we are also your companions in the Hereafter. And here you shall be given everything you desire and everything that you ask for.” (41:30-31)

9. In the Hereafter, they shall be in the presence of God and shall be carrying His throne:

وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ (٧٥:٣٩)

And you shall see the angels encircling the throne, glorifying and celebrating the praises of their Lord. (39:75)

وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ عَلَىٰ أَرْجَائِهَا وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَانِيَةٌ (١٧: ٦٩)

And the angels will be at its borders and eight of them will on that Day bear the throne of your Lord over them. (69:17)

10. They shall be in charge of Hell:

عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ (٦٦:٦٦)

It [-Hell-] will be in the charge of stern and mighty angels who never disobey what God commands them and do exactly as they are directed. (66:6)

It is implicitly evident from the Qur'ān that the angels shall also be in charge of Paradise and its affairs.

Besides referring to these obligations and responsibilities, the Qur'ān has at several places negated the various erroneous concepts people had formed about them. Consequently, it was clarified that angels are not the daughters of God the way these foolish deem them to be; in fact, the angels are the near ones of God. They have attained this nearness not because they are able to have their way with God by influencing or cajoling Him but because they conform to every standard of serving and obeying Him. They cannot even take the initiative in conversing with Him unless He allows them to – what to speak of having their way with Him in such a manner. Then whatever they are asked, they reply with all due respect and always speak the truth. They can neither intercede for someone nor take any step on their own; on the contrary, they always await the directives of God and tremble with His fear:

قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ وَهُمْ مِّنْ حَشِيَّتِهِ مُتَشَفِّقُونَ وَمَنْ يَقُلْ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّي إِلَهٌ مِّنْ دُونِهِ فَذَلِكُنَّ نَجْرِيهِ جَهَنَّمَ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ (٢١ : ٢٦-٢٩)

They say: “The Merciful has children.” [Certainly not] He is above this! In fact [these angels] are but His honoured servants. They never take the initiative in speaking to Him and in all circumstances obey His command. He knows everything what is before them and what is behind them and

they do not intercede for anyone save those whom He accepts, and tremble in awe of Him. And whoever of them says: "I am also a god besides God," We shall punish Him with Hell. Thus do We reward the wrongdoers. (21:26-29)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

Human intellect has always been curious about the spirits that live in the world beyond and so vehemently has it remained in going after them that if it has not been able to lay hands on the truth in this matter, it has even adopted the most erroneous and flawed notions about it. The soothsayers and magicians of Arabia regarded the jinn, devils and voices from the beyond to be a means to communicate with the world beyond; the astrologers of India would try to unravel the secrets of the unknown world through the paths followed by heavenly bodies. The worshippers of Chinese temples would try to contact the unknown world by means of the spirits of their forefathers. The Qur'ān negated all these unfounded means of communication with the unknown world and regarded knowledge gained through these means to be an amalgam of truth, and untruth and at the same time explained that the only reliable means of communicating with God is the angels who come to His Messengers and whatever God asks them to deliver these messengers, they do so in its original form.<sup>39</sup>

### 3. Belief in the Prophets

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ  
وَأِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَىٰ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ  
وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآدِينَ دَاوُودَ زُورًا وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ  
نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَىٰ تَكْلِيمًا رُسُلًا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ  
لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (٤: ١٦٣-١٦٥)

We sent our revelations to you [O Prophet!] the way We sent [them] to Noah and to the prophets who came after him; And

39. Ibid., vol. 1, 424.

We revealed [them] to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the progeny of Jacob, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon and We gave the Psalms to David. We have sent revelations to Messengers whom we have mentioned to you earlier and to some Messengers whom We have not mentioned to you and with Moses God had spoken, the way one speaks: these Messengers who were sent as bearers of glad tidings and of admonishment so that after them people are left with no excuse which they can present before God, and God is Mighty and Wise. (4:163-165)

People through whom the Almighty completed providing His guidance to mankind are called prophets. They were, in fact, human beings; however, the Almighty selected them for this purpose on the basis of His all embracing knowledge and wisdom. As such, prophethood is God-given and cannot be acquired through self-effort or training.<sup>40</sup> The Qur'ān has narrated the incident in which Moses (sws) was given prophethood. When he reached the valley of Sanai with his family on his way back from Midian, it was night-time. It was difficult to find one's way in the dark and it appears that it was quite chilly too. Meanwhile, a darting flame was seen at a distance and perhaps no one except Moses (sws) observed it. He bade his family to stay where they were and himself expressed his desire to find out more about what he had seen and possibly bring back some fire to warm themselves or that if there were people there he would inquire from them the way to the fire. When he came near the place he had sighted the flame, he heard a voice say: "Moses! I am Your Lord, so take off your shoes; you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā; I have selected you for the responsibility of prophethood and messengerhood; so listen carefully to whatever is being revealed to you." The Qur'ān has told us that after this he was given the same message as was given to other prophets:

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ  
أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعَ

40. The Qur'ān, 6:125.

هُوَ أَفْتَرَدَى (٢٠: ١٤-١٦)

I am God. Indeed, there is no god but Me. Serve Me, and for My remembrance, pray with vigilance. The Hour is sure to come – but I will keep it hidden – [it shall come] so that every soul is rewarded for its labours. Thus any person who does not believe in it and yields to his desires should not turn you away from the prayer, lest you perish. (20:14-16)

It is Moses' (sws) distinction that God spoke to him. The incident of the first revelation to Muḥammad (sws) has been mentioned in the Qur'ān in Sūrah Najm. It is evident from it that the position of prophethood was conferred on him through Gabriel, the exalted angel of God. The Qur'ān says that on this occasion he appeared in his actual form on the higher horizon and the Prophet (sws) saw him with his naked eyes. He then came near him to instruct him and just as an affectionate teacher bends over his dearly loved student, he bent over him with great love and affection and came so close to him that he was within two bows' length or even closer. Then he revealed to the Prophet (sws) whatever he had been directed to reveal:

عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَى وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَى ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى  
فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى فَأَوْحَى إِلَى عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَى (٥٣: ١٠-٥)

He was taught by an Angel, mighty in power, towering in character, endued with wisdom – while he stood poised, being on the higher horizon. Then he drew near and came down within two bows' length or even closer. The Almighty then revealed to His servant that which He revealed. (53:5-10)

These prophets were sent to every community. God had promised Adam (sws) that He would guide his progeny through guidance revealed by Him. This guidance was given to mankind through these very prophets. After receiving revelations from God, they tell what is the truth to people, give glad tidings to those who believe in Him and warn those who do not believe in Him of a dreadful fate. Consequently, at one place, while addressing the Prophet (sws), the Qur'ān says:

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِن مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ (٢٤:٣٥)

We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings and there is no community in which a warner never came. (35:24)

The details regarding these prophets which have been mentioned in the Qur'ān and which should be kept in consideration by everyone for professing faith in them are discussed in the following paragraphs.

### The Essence of Prophethood

Prophethood is the selection of an individual for the purpose of communication with the Almighty. The Qur'ān has informed man that he has been blessed with this honour in two ways:

Firstly, communication from behind a veil. In this case, a person hears a voice but does not see who is conversing with him. God spoke to Moses (sws) in this way. He started to hear a voice from a tree in the valley of the mount Sinai but there was no one he could see.<sup>41</sup>

Secondly, through *wahī*. This word is used for revealing something in the heart of someone. This again has two forms: firstly, God directly reveals His message to the heart of a prophet; secondly, He sends an angel and this angel reveals something to the heart of a prophet on behalf of the Almighty. This phenomenon can occur both when a prophet is awake and in a vision while he is asleep. In case of a vision, whatever is communicated is at times in symbolic form. The way revelations would come to Muḥammad (sws) is described in various Ḥadīth narratives. It is evident from them that in its most intense form, the sound of a ringing bell would precede the process of revelation. Such was the intensity of the whole process that he would be drenched with sweat even in the coldest of weather.<sup>42</sup> The Qur'ān has specified that apart from this observation the nature of *wahī* is beyond the comprehension of man:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

41. The Qur'ān, 28:29-30.

42. *Bukhārī*, No: 2.

(٨٥:١٧)

And they ask you about *al-rūh* [– ie the *wahī* –]. Tell them: “This *rūh* is from among my Lord’s command. Little indeed is the knowledge given to you.” (17:85)

Since revelations come to the prophets without any desire of their own and from the divine part of their soul, they are absolutely sure about their authenticity. However, at various occasions, for their own satisfaction the Almighty shows them extra-ordinary sights and experiences. An example of this is the Prophet’s journey from the Baytullāh to the Aqṣā mosque that occurred in a vision shown to him.<sup>43</sup> Such experiences also occur in real life. Following is an example of such an experience:

وَلَقَدْ رَأَاهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ إِذِ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَىٰ مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَىٰ لَقَدْ رَأَىٰ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَىٰ (٥٣: ١٣-١٨)

And he beheld him once again at the *sidrah* tree, beyond which no one can pass near which is the Garden of Repose. At that time, the *sidrah* tree was covered with that which covered it. [His] sight did not wander, nor did it exceed the limit. [In such a manner] he saw some of his Lord’s greatest signs. (53:13-18)

At one place in the Qur’ān, all these ways of communicating with God are mentioned together:

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بِإِذْنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٥١: ٤٢)

And it is not the status of any mortal that God should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil or He sends a messenger and through His permission, he sends revelation to him of what He wills. Exalted is He, and wise. (42:51)

It is evident from the words of the above verse that divine revelation is not sent to a prophet in the form of an idea or thought;

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43. The Qur’ān, 17:1.



it is in the form of words which he hears, understands and preserves. These words and their style are however something which a prophet is already familiar with so that they are not incomprehensible and alien to him. It is for this very reason that both the words and meanings of a revelation are specific to a prophet depending upon his circumstances and abilities.

### Need for a Prophet

Just as a person has been given the ability to infer through parables and induction, to make a whole through components and then explain the components through the whole, to assimilate ideologies through what is obvious and to draw analogies from what can be felt through the senses for what cannot be felt, he has also been given the ability to distinguish between good and evil and to make a distinction between what is right and what is wrong and in fact he even has a comprehension of his Lord and his justice. We have already alluded to these abilities of man earlier. Thus a prophet is not needed to inform people of these things. All these are ingrained in his nature and innately found in him. The Qur'ānic verse (4:163-165) which has been earlier referred to at the beginning of this section "Belief in the Prophets" shows that the need for a prophet did not arise to inform man of these things; it arose because of two other reasons:

Firstly, for completion of guidance. This means that man be reminded of whatever is ingrained in his nature in concise form and of whatever he has known eternally and all its details be specified for him. In certain verses, the Qur'ān has regarded this to be a completion of divine favour:

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ  
وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ (٧٣:٢١)

And We made these [prophets] leaders to give guidance at Our behest, and revealed to them to do pious deeds, show diligence in the prayer and give *zakāh*. And they worshipped none but Ourselves. (21:73)

Secondly, for *itmām al-hujjah*. This means to awaken man from his slumber of unawareness and after providing the testimony of his intellect and knowledge provide another

testimony through these prophets to such an extent that no one is left with any excuse to deny the truth:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي  
وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا قَالُوا شَهِدْنَا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِنَا وَغَرَّبْنَاهُمُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا  
وَشَهِدُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَافِرِينَ ذَٰلِكَ أَن لَّمْ يَكُن رَّبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ  
الْقُرَىٰ بظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلُهَا غَافِلُونَ (١٣٠-١٣١)

“O Jinn and men! Did there not come to you prophets from among you who proclaimed to you My revelations and warned you of [your] meeting with this day?” They will reply: “We bear witness against our own souls” – And indeed, the life of this world deceived them and they testified against themselves that they were disbelievers – this was because your Lord does not destroy cities because of their oppression if their inhabitants are not aware of the truth. (6:130-131)

### Identifying a Prophet (sws)

The highest of human traits are personified in a prophet and his message is based on what is known and familiar to human nature. The fountainhead of all virtues is two things: remembering the Almighty and showing sympathy to the poor. A prophet is an embodiment of these virtues and urges others as well to adopt them. Whatever he says to people conforms to the highest intellectual standard and what he says relates only to those things about which man can become indifferent or forgetful. Moreover, his prophethood is not something which can be acquired through self-effort. Hence, every right-minded person has no difficulty in recognizing him. If a person has a discerning mind and a vibrant heart, then the very person of a prophet is a miracle:

قُلْ لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَدْرَاكُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ  
أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (١٠:١٦)

Tell them: “Had God pleased, I would never have recited this Qur’ān to you, nor would He have made you aware of it. [It is His decision] because I have spent a life-time among you. Do you not use your senses?” (10:16)

However, besides this, the Almighty blesses a prophet with potent signs which though may not induce his adversaries to openly acknowledge him but are enough to leave them with no excuse to deny his veracity. For this very reason, at one place, the Qur'ān (4:159) has declared that every one from among the People of the Book of the times of Muḥammad (sws) before his own death would profess faith in him. It is evident from the Qur'ān that these signs are given to every prophet and their nature depends upon his times and circumstances. We shall mention a few of these in the following paragraphs.

1. A prophet generally comes in accordance with the prediction of the prophet who precedes him and comes as fulfillment of this prediction. Viewed thus, he is not an un-introduced personality. People are familiar with him and also await him. It is known from the Qur'ān (3:39) that the prophet John (sws) foretold the coming of Jesus (sws) all over Jerusalem. It is evident from the Qur'ān (7:157) that the predictions of the advent of Muḥammad (sws) are mentioned both in the Old and the New Testaments. One of the primary objectives of the advent of Jesus (sws), according to the Qur'ān (61:6), was to prophesy about the coming of an unlettered prophet in Arabia. The Qur'ān (6:20) has presented the fact that the scholars of the Israelites recognize it the way an estranged father recognizes his son as a conclusive proof of its own authenticity. This means that they also fully recognized Muḥammad (sws):

وَأَنَّهُ لَتَتَرِلُّ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِي زُبُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوْلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ آيَةٌ أَن يَعْلَمَهُ عُلَمَاءُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (٢٦ : ١٩٢-١٩٧)

And this has been revealed by the Lord of the Universe with great care and attention. The faithful Spirit has brought it down into your heart so that you may become a warner to people in eloquent Arabic speech. It is also mentioned in the early scriptures. Is not this a sufficient proof for them that the scholars of the Israelites know him? (26:192-197)

2. Whatever a prophet presents as the word and message of God is without any contradiction and inconsistency. Even the most ultimate of geniuses of this world like Socrates and Aristotle, Kant

and Einstein, Ghālīb and Iqbāl, Rāzī and Zamakhsharī cannot make such a claim about the works they have produced. However, the Qur'ān has vehemently asserted about itself that there is not a semblance of contradiction in the philosophy and ideology it presents. Is it possible that for years a person should give speeches on a variety of topics in different situations and circumstances and when these speeches are compiled from the beginning to the end they form such a harmonious and congruous discourse that it has no contradiction of views and does not reflect any effects of mood change of the speaker and also does not depict any revision or change of views? Only the Qur'ān has this characteristic:

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا (٨٢:٤)

Do they not ponder on the Qur'ān? Had it come from someone other than God, they would have found many contradictions in it. (4:82)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī writes:

... so sound and well-knitted is every idea of the Qur'ān, both in its principle and in the corollaries of these principles that even the formulae of Arithmetic and Geometry are not as sound and well-knitted. So connected and linked are the beliefs it teaches that if any one of these beliefs is removed, the whole chain and sequence falls apart. The rituals of worship and other directives it gives spring from beliefs just as branches spring from a stem. The deeds and morals it instructs its followers to obey emanate from their principles in a manner natural and obvious consequences emanate from something. The system of life which comes into existence as a result of its overall teaching is like that of a lead-cemented wall in which each and every brick is attached to the other in a manner that it cannot be separated from the other except if a gap is created in the whole structure.<sup>44</sup>

3. A prophet is blessed with miracles from God. The Qur'ān has specified that one of the reasons for which extra-ordinary miracles were given to Jesus (sws) and Moses (sws) was to authenticate

44. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 347.

them as messengers of God. Consequently, after mentioning the staff of Moses (sws) and his white hand, the Qur'ān says:

فَذَانِكَ بُرْهَانَانِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (٣٢:٢٨)

These are two clear signs from your Lord for the Pharaoh and his leaders. Surely, they are disobedient people. (28:32)

No one can reject these miracles by pronouncing them as magic or trickery. The reason for this is that the reality behind such things is very much known to those adept in such disciplines and they too are compelled to acknowledge such miracles. In order to eliminate the influence of the miracles of Moses (sws) referred to above, the Pharaoh had adopted this very test. The Qur'ān says that he sent for all the top-notch magicians of his country and presented them before people at a festival. He made this arrangement anticipating victory but when these magicians saw the staff of Moses (sws) consuming their spells they prostrated before him at once and declared their faith in the Lord of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws). Since such faith is only produced when someone witnesses a reality through his very eyes, hence such was its strength that when the Pharaoh threatened to haphazardly cut their hands and feet and to crucify them on the trunks of palm-trees, these magicians, who a very short while ago were imploring for reward (the Qur'ān, 7:113) from him, declared vehemently that after witnessing such a phenomenon they did not even care for their lives:

قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْتِيَنَّكَ عَلَىٰ مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ  
إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا إِنَّا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَعْفِرَ لَنَا خَطَايَانَا وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا  
عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ وَاللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ (٢٠ : ٧٢-٧٣)

They replied: “We shall never give preference to you over the clear signs which have come to us and over the being Who created us. Do what you want. At best, you can only decide the fate of this life. We have professed faith in our Lord so that He forgives our sins and forgoes this sorcery you have forced us to adopt. God only is good and He only will remain forever.” (20:72-73)

The miracle given to Prophet Muḥammad (sws) to validate his prophethood is the Qur'ān. When those who are aware of the stylistic features of Arabic language and of its literary tradition and also have a literary appreciation of the language read the Qur'ān, they clearly feel that this could not have been produced by human beings. Thus, at more than one instance, it has challenged its addressees who do not regard it to be of divine origin and regard it to be a fabrication of Muḥammad (sws) to produce just a single *sūrah* that can match the majestic style of the Qur'ān. If, as they say, a person from their people can do such a thing without any literary background, then they too should have no problem in doing this.

This is a very amazing challenge thrown by the Qur'ān. It meant that it is not possible for a human mind to produce anything similar to the Qur'ān. This challenge related to the extraordinary uniqueness of the Qur'ān with regard to its sublime style and eloquence. It required that they present a discourse in which, like the Qur'ān, one could see God speaking in it; it should be a discourse that explains everything that is necessary for mankind and which was never explained by any human being; it should guide them in affairs in which there is no other means of guidance; a discourse on which our intuition bears witness, which is corroborated by established facts derived from knowledge and reason, which enlivens dead hearts the way rain enlivens desolate terrains, which has the same majesty and grandeur felt in each and every word by every person who knows the language of the Qur'ān.

History tells us that no one from among its addressees dared to face this challenge. The Qur'ān says:

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْتُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ (٢٣-٢٤)

And if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, then [go and] produce a single *sūrah* like it. And [for this purpose] also call your leaders besides Allah, if you are truthful [in your claim]. But if you cannot – and of a surety you cannot – then fear the Fire whose fuel is these men [who do not believe] and these stones also [whom they worship].

It has been prepared for these rejecters. (2:23-24)

This Book of God is still with us. Fourteen centuries have passed ever since it was revealed. During this period, our world has undergone tremendous changes. Many ideologies and thoughts were presented by man only to be rejected by him later. Theories regarding man's being and those regarding the universe around him were put forth every now and then. Each underwent a process of acceptance or rejection in various periods of time. His intellectual journey took him through various paths and destinations; however, this Book of God is the only book which is as unassailable and sound today as it was fourteen centuries ago regarding the various facts it presents and which have remained under academic discussion in the past two centuries. Knowledge and intellect helplessly acknowledged its superiority at that time the way they do today. Every statement it has given has stood the test of time. The world, in spite of its astounding scientific and academic discoveries, has failed to present a better alternative to the views it presents:

وَبِالْحَقِّ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَلَ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (١٧:١٠٥)

And We have revealed it with the truth, and with the truth it has come down and O Prophet! We have sent you forth only to proclaim good news [for those who believe] and to give warning [to those who deny]. (17:105)

4. The Almighty informs a prophet of certain unknown things which are impossible to come into the knowledge of any other human being. One example of this is the predictions made by divine revelations which were fulfilled to the utmost. Some of these predictions are mentioned in the Qur'ān and some in the Ḥadīth narratives. Every student of the Qur'ān is aware of the predictions regarding the supremacy of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) in Arabia, the conquest of Makkah and the people entering the folds of Islam in multitudes. Another great prediction made by the Qur'ān was the victory of the Romans after being defeated by the Iranians. The Qur'ān says:

غُلِبَتِ الرُّومُ فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ غَلِبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ فِي بَضْعِ سِنِينَ

لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ بَعْدُ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ بَنَصَرَ اللَّهِ يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَأُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ وَعَدَّهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٠: ٢-٦)

The Romans have been defeated in a nearby land. But in a few years after this defeat, they shall become victorious. Whatever happened earlier, happened because of God's directive and what happens later will happen because of His directive. And on that day, the believers will rejoice because of God's help. He helps whomsoever He wants to and He is the Mighty and Ever-Merciful. This is God's promise and God never goes back on His promise, yet most men do not know it. (30:2-6)

When this prediction was made, then in the words of Edward Gibbon: "No prophecy could be more distant from its accomplishment, since the first twelve years of Heraclius announced the approaching dissolution of the empire."<sup>45</sup> However, it was fulfilled at the very time it was meant to and in March 628 AD the Roman emperor returned to Constantinople with such splendour that four elephants were pulling his chariot and numerous people stood outside the city with lanterns and branches of olive to welcome back their hero.

5. Prophets who are also designated as Messengers (*rusul*) are a symbol of divine justice in this world and decide the fate of their people in this very world. The details of this premise are that if these Messengers abide by their covenant with God, they are rewarded in this world and if they deviate from it, they are punished in this world. The result is that the very existence of these Messengers becomes a sign of God and it is as if they witness God walking with these Messengers on earth and administering justice. It is this situation which becomes the basis of passing judgement by the Almighty both in this world and in that to come. Consequently, the Almighty grants supremacy to these Messengers and punish those who reject their message:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

45. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 2 (New York: The Modern Library, n.d.), 788.



(٤٧:١٠)

And for each community, there is a messenger. When their messenger comes, their fate it decided with justice and they are not wronged. (10:47)

### Prophets are Human Beings

Prophets are human beings. Thus they come in this world, eat, drink, sleep, walk about, marry and die just as all human beings do. None of them was God, His incarnation, a deity or an angel. The Qur'ān has clarified at a number of places that there is no difference between them and other human beings as far as their genre is concerned. The Qur'ān has cited the demand of the addressees of Muḥammad (sws) that if he is a prophet of God, he should make for them houses of gold, generate for them canals and rivers, make the season of spring descend in their deserts, plant for them orchards of grapes and dates, release on them pieces of the heavens, bring God and the angels face to face with them, go to the heavens and bring back a written document for them. Though none of these demands was impossible for God to fulfill but He directed Muḥammad (sws) to clearly tell his addressees that he was a human being and not a super human that such demands be made from him:

قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا وَمَا مَنَّعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذِ جَاءَهُمُ  
الْهُدَىٰ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ بَشَرًا رَسُولًا قُلْ لَوْ كَانِ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
مَلَائِكَةٌ  
يَمْشُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ لَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَلَكًا رَسُولًا (١٧: ٩٣-٩٥)

Say: “Glory be to my Lord! Am I not but a messenger who is a human being?” And nothing prevents men from professing faith when guidance is revealed to them but the excuse: “Can it be that God has sent a human being as a messenger?” Tell [them]: “Had the angels been walking about comfortably in the earth, We would have sent down to them an angel from heavens as a messenger.” (17:93-95)

However, this does not mean that as far as their knowledge and personality, character and spirituality and qualities of head and heart are concerned, they are similar to common people. Certainly not! A study of their life and times shows that they are

the cream of their nation, have exemplary qualities and epitomize human attributes. The Qur'ān has told us that if their Lord pleases, He blesses them with special knowledge and power of judgement for this purpose:

About John (sws), the Qur'ān has said:

يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا وَحَنَانًا مِّن لَّدُنَّا وَزَكَاةً  
وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا وَبَرًّا بَوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُن جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا (١٩: ١٢-١٤)

“O John! Hold steadfast to the Book of God.” And in His childhood We granted him the ability to make judgements and bestowed on him kindness and purity, and he was a pious person and one who honoured the rights of his parents; he was neither arrogant nor rebellious. (19:12-14)

About Moses (sws), the Qur'ān has said:

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَاسْتَوَىٰ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٤: ٢٨)

And when he had reached maturity and grown to manhood, We bestowed on him knowledge and the ability to make judgements. [This was a reward of his qualities]; thus do We reward the righteous. (28:14)

Not only this, the prophets of God are also blessed with the light of innate guidance – the light which every person has been blessed with – in its most ultimate form. They always keep its flame fully alight and shield it from the storms that arise within man's inner-self. Thus before they are blessed with divine revelation from God, their heart and mind are very pure and the truth is already evident to them to a great extent. The Qur'ān calls this state of their inner enlightenment as *بَيِّنَةٌ* (*bayyinah*). It is evident from various incidents from the lives of the prophets that they present divine revelation as an evidence for this inner enlightenment and the vision they possess:

About Noah (sws), the Qur'ān has said

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَأَتَانِي رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ فَعَمَّيْتُ

عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْزَلِمُكُمُوهَا وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ (٢٨:١١)

He said: “O my people! [tell me] if I am on a clear evidence from my Lord and He has bestowed upon me a blessing of His own and you have not been able to see it, can we forcibly stick it on you while you are fed-up with it? (11:28)

About Ṣālīḥ (sws), the Qur’ān has said:

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَأَتَانِي مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ (٦٣:١١)

He said: “O my people! Have you ever thought that if I am on a clear evidence from my Lord and then He has also bestowed on me His grace, then who would protect me from God if I disobeyed Him?” (11:63)

About Shu‘ayb (sws), the Qur’ān has said:

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَرَزَقَنِي مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخَالِفَكُمْ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنْهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ (٨٨:١١)

He said: “O my people! [Tell me] if am on a clear evidence from my Lord and then He has also bestowed on me the gracious gift of *wahī*, [then what should I call you to except this?] and I do not wish to oppose you [and thus] do what I forbid you.” (11:88)

### A Prophet’s Nature

A prophet stands at the zenith of human nature. It is evident from what is mentioned about their lives in divine scriptures that both anger and mercy are found in them. Anxiety and apprehension, grief and distress also touch them and they also experience longing and sorrow. They feel sad too and if they commit some mistake they also feel remorse. Like humble servants of God they too express repentance before Him and at times engage in emphatic debate and discussion with Him. They are equipped with such emotions in order to create harmony between them and their addressees before whom they proclaim the truth to the extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it and in order that these addressees are influenced by them. If, like

the angels, they were devoid of such emotions, their message would not have influenced anyone.

Not only this, besides being exemplary human beings, they are the most perfect individuals among their people. A study of their lives reveals that each prophet is the most outstanding person of his nation, a guardian of its cultural traditions and an embodiment of all its virtues.

No doubt, he is devoid of all the vices of his nation; however, as far as its traits and characteristics are concerned, he is such a complete embodiment of them that both he and his people are like mirrors for each other: they can see themselves in each other. For this very reason, the Qur'an has said that if the Almighty had made the angels as prophets and messengers, He would have made them human beings because without this there would have been no effective channel and means of communication between prophets and their people:

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكًا لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا وَلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِم مَّا يَلِيسُونَ (٩:٦)

And if We had made a prophet an angel, We would have given him the semblance of a human and in this manner would have put them in doubt in which they now are in. (6:9)

However, the matter of prophets – who only come to deliver the truth to the degree that no one among their people would be left with an excuse to deny it – is different to some extent. One example of this is John (sws) and Jesus (sws). By nature, they seemed more akin to angels; thus little did their people benefit from them.

### Innocence of Prophets

Only those people are chosen as prophets who are able to shield themselves from the lures of their inner-self as well as those of Satan, guard themselves against sin and are the righteous and pious among their people. In Sūrah An'am, after enumerating many prophets, it is said (٨٦ : ٦) *كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ* (all of them were among the righteous, (6:86)). At another place the words are:

وَأَذْكُرُ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ الْأَخْيَارِ وَأَذْكُرُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ

وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِّنَ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٨-٤٥ : ٣٨)

And remember Our servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: men of might and vision. We chose them for a special mission – reminding [people] about the Hereafter – and with Us they are counted among the best and the most righteous of men. And also remember Ishmael, Elisha, and Dhū al-Kifl. [We chose all of them] and all of these were the best of men. (38:45-48)

As a reward for exercising care and showing piety, the Almighty also protects them. It is clearly evident from what ensued between the Prophet Joseph (sws) and the royal lady of Egypt that even before being designated as a prophet if a situation arises in which it becomes difficult for him to shield himself, the Almighty does so with His special *burhān* (sign). This *burhān* is the divine spark which is found in every human being. However, according to a divine law, in people who duly honour it and accept its guidance in the vicissitudes of life, it becomes stronger and brighter and in all delicate circumstances glitters and sparkles even more to light up the darkness that might come before the eyes. The result is that they are able to persevere on what is right:

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَى بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ  
وَالْفَحْشَاءَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٢٤: ١٢)

And that woman had advanced to him and Joseph too would have advanced to her, had he not seen a sign from his Lord. Thus did We do in order to keep away evil and wantonness from him. Indeed, he was from among Our chosen servants. (12:24)

The blemish of Adam (sws) mentioned in the Qur'ān should not become a source of misunderstanding for any one. No doubt, the Qur'ān has used the word *'iṣyān* (disobedience) for it; however, the Almighty has clarified in the Qur'ān itself that the reason for this blemish was forgetfulness. It is apparent from this that the act of disobedience did not result because he had not succumbed to base desires nor did he do it wilfully. It is evident from the Qur'ān that when Satan swore many times before him and assured him that he was his well-wisher and made him believe that he would become eternal by eating the fruit of the

very tree that has been forbidden to him, he was enticed by Satan's lures and being overcome with emotions ended up disobeying his Lord. However, he never insisted on his lapse and became very ashamed and repented before God Who graciously forgave him and blessed him with prophethood:

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ فَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَىٰ إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَىٰ وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَأُ فِيهَا وَلَا تَصْحَىٰ فَوَسَّوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَىٰ شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبُلَىٰ فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ ثُمَّ اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَىٰ (٢٠: ١١٥-١٢٢)

And before this We bound Adam in a directive but he forgot, and We found him lacking in determination. And remember when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam." They all prostrated themselves except Satan, who refused. At this, We said to Adam: "He is an enemy to you and to your wife. Let him not turn you both out of Paradise and you end up deprived. Here you shall neither be afflicted with hunger nor remain naked; neither shall thirst bother you nor the scorching heat." But Satan enticed him saying: "Adam, shall I not lead you to the tree of immortality and an imperishable kingdom?" At last, both of them ate of its fruit so that their private parts became evident to them and they began to cover themselves with the leaves of the garden [in which they lived]. Thus did Adam disobey his Lord and strayed from the right path. Then his Lord chose him, accepted his repentance and blessed him with guidance. (20:115-122)

No different was the case of Moses (sws). He never killed anyone deliberately. It was a mere co-incidence that he, while helping an oppressed person, had to encounter the arrogant Coptic oppressor in a brawl. Moses (sws) punched him. Unfortunately, the strike was enough to kill him:

وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَى حِينٍ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ هَذَا مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَاسْتَعَاثَ الَّذِي مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَوَكَرَهُ مُوسَى فَقَضَى عَلَيْهِ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَغَفَرَ لَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٢٨: ١٥-١٦)

And [one day] he entered the city at a time when none of its people noticed him and found two men engaged in a fight; one of them was from his own people and the other belonged to his enemies. Then the person who belonged to his people asked for Moses' help against his enemy. So Moses struck him with his fist and killed him. [Seeing this,] Moses said: "This is the work of Satan; he is indeed an open enemy who leads [people] astray." [Then] Moses prayed: "Lord! I have wronged my soul; forgive me." Consequently, the Almighty forgave him. Indeed, He is the Most Forgiving, the Ever Merciful. (28:15-16)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

... neither did Moses (sws) intend to kill the Coptic nor did he imagine that such a situation would arise. When, absolutely inadvertently, this situation arose, he immediately felt guilt on his folly and repented before his Lord expressing the fact that he had wronged his soul and that he be forgiven for this. Since this folly was an inadvertent act and he immediately sought repentance after it, the Almighty forgave him and he was divinely communicated this forgiveness also. God is Forgiving and Merciful.<sup>46</sup>

These incidents in the lives of Adam (sws) and Moses (sws) took place before they were called to prophethood. According to the Qur'ān, once they are given this position, prophets constantly remain under the protection and supervision of the angels. The Almighty deposes guardians over them from all sides. Every single thing that emanates from them is under scrutiny, and God keeps track whether they have accurately delivered His messages

46. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 5, 663.

in their original form. After such an arrangement, obviously the smallest of blemishes on their part stands safeguarded:

إِلَّا مَنْ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا لِّبَعْلَمَ  
 أَنْ قَدْ أَبْلَغُوا رَسُولَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَأَحْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا  
 (٢٨-٢٧:٧٢)

As for those whom He chooses as His Prophets [they can say nothing of their own] because He guards them from behind and from the front that He may know if they have delivered the messages of their Lord; and He surrounds whatever is around them and keeps count of all their things. (72:27-28)

### A Prophet's Diligence in Worship

Keeping in view the obligation of prophets, at times they are required to be more extensive in their worship. The purpose of this is to provide them with peace of mind and by means of dedicated devotion to God, bless them with purity of emotions and intellect and perseverance on what they believe and what they do. About Moses (sws), the Qur'ān (7:142-145) says that when it was decided that he be given the tablets of the Torah, then, prior to this, in order to train and instruct him to bear this heavy burden he was made to station himself in seclusion at the mount of Sinai for forty days. John (sws) and Jesus (sws) to the extent of monasticism took to intense devotion to God and did not even marry because they wanted to spend every moment of their lives in the effort to communicate the truth to their people whose fate was being decided to the extent that they were left with no excuse to deny it. For this very reason, prophet Muḥammad (sws) would sit in *i'tikāf* every year and keep fasts from time to time. When he was directed to embark upon openly warning his people, besides the five obligatory prayers, another prayer was made obligatory on him. The time of *tahajjud* was fixed for this prayer and he was asked to read the Qur'ān in this prayer for less than half the night or a little more. In Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, this directive is stated in the words (٧٩ :١٧) وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ (and at night time, pray the *tahajjud*; this is a further [obligation] on you, (17:79)). Similarly, in Sūrah Muzzammil, it is stated:



يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَرْمُلُ قُمْ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا نَصَفَهُ أَوْ انْقَصَ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا تَقِيلًا إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْأًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلًا إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبْحًا طَوِيلًا وَاذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا (٧٣: ١-٨)

O you enfolded in your shawl! stand [in prayer] by night, but not all night. Half the night, or even less or a little more and [in this prayer of yours] recite the Qur'an in a slow measured tone. Because soon We shall lay on you the burden of a heavy word [the burden of open warning]. Verily, this rising by night is very suitable for the mind's peace and the heart's resolve and for the speech's correctness. Because during the daytime you will be hard-pressed with [this task; so pray at this time] and remember the name of your Lord and [in this loneliness of the night] devote yourself entirely to Him. (73:1-8)

### Superiority of the Prophets

Prophets hold a general degree of superiority over all human beings. Consequently, the Qur'an, at one place, after mentioning some prophets has said: (وَكَلَّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (٦ : ٨٦) (and to each We bestowed superiority over mankind, (6:86)). However, at another place, the Qur'an has clarified that these prophets amongst themselves – specially, the messengers (*rusul*) among them also hold relative superiority over one another in some aspect:

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ (٢ : ٢٥٣)

Among these messengers We have exalted some above others such that to some God spoke directly, others He raised to a lofty status [in some other capacity] and [at the end] gave Jesus, son of Mary, manifest signs and helped him through the Holy Spirit. (2:253)

It is evident from this that God conversed with Moses (sws). In this particular aspect, he was superior to other prophets. Jesus (sws) was given manifest signs and was helped through the Holy Spirit and in this aspect was superior to others. In a similar manner, other prophets were blessed with some aspects of relative superiority. About himself, Muḥammad (sws) is

reported to have said:

فضلت على الأنبياء بست أعطيت جوامع الكلم ونصرت بالرعب وأحلت لي الغنائم وجعلت لي الأرض طهورا ومسجدا وأرسلت إلى الخلق كافة وختم بي النبيون (مسلم ، رقم: ١١٦٧)

“I have been given superiority over other prophets in six things: (1) I have the ability to say what is comprehensive and concise; (2) I have been helped by means of striking awe [in my enemies]; (3) Spoils of war have been allowed to me; (4) The earth has been made a mosque for me and a means to obtain purity also<sup>47</sup>; (5) I have been sent as a prophet to all mankind; (6) The chain of prophethood has culminated on me.” (*Muslim*, No: 1167)

This then is the correct attitude in expressing superiority of the prophets. At times, the Prophet (sws) has also warned people about it. Once a Companion (rta) addressed him as: يَا خَيْرَ الْبَرِيَّةِ (O the best of mankind!). At this, he replied: “Such is Abraham.”<sup>48</sup> Once, someone asked him: “Who is the most honourable of men?” He replied: “Joseph, the prophet, who is son of a prophet who is the son of another prophet who is the son of Abraham.”<sup>49</sup> Once when a Muslim mentioned in his oath the superiority of Muḥammad (sws) over the rest of the world, a Jew responded: “I swear by the Being who blessed superiority to Moses over the rest of the world.” When the Muslim heard these words, he got infuriated and slapped the Jew. When the Jew complained to the Prophet (sws), the latter said: “Do not regard Moses to be inferior to me. At the Day of Judgement, when I will come out of the state of unconsciousness, he will be holding one corner of the throne. He would perhaps not be unconscious or would come to senses before me.”<sup>50</sup>

47. The implication is that in the *sharī‘ah* given to Muḥammad (sws), the prayer cannot be offered only in places of worship but anywhere on earth and if water is not available, then dry ablution is enough both in place of *wuḍū* and *ghusl*.

48. *Muslim*, No: 6138.

49. *Bukhārī*, No: 3383.

50. *Bukhārī*, No: 3408.

So clear is the guidance of religion on this issue; however, followers of prophets have seldom adhered to it; in fact, they adopted an entirely wrong attitude in place of it because of which biases and prejudices estranged them from one another. So much so, severe animosity developed between them which resulted in clashes and conflicts.

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

... the attitude adopted by the followers of their respective prophets is that whatever prophet they professed belief in they regarded him alone to possess all qualities in their ultimate form which a human being can possibly have, and accepting any degree of pre-eminence for other prophets was deemed contrary to their beliefs. As a result of this bigotry and bias, each nation of prophets became confined in its own shell and the means of benefiting from the guidance and blessings of other prophets were closed on it. If people had adopted the right attitude, then every prophet would have been their prophet and every guidance would have been their guidance and they would also have benefited from the final guidance which was revealed in the form of the Qur'ān. The following verse of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl also alludes to this fact: ( ٥٥ : ١٧ ) *وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّنَ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا* (and We also made certain prophets superior to others and to David We gave the Psalms, (17:55)).<sup>51</sup>

### Obeying the Prophets

An obvious outcome of professing faith in a prophet is that he should be obeyed at the behest of God. The Almighty Himself has made it very clear in His Book that a prophet is not merely to be revered, he is to be obeyed also. He is not sent that people merely regard him to be a prophet and then leave him aside; he is not merely one who counsels and preaches; he is a guide who must be obeyed. The very objective of his coming is that whatever guidance he provides in all affairs of life must be followed without any hesitation. The Almighty says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ (٦٤:٤)

51. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 583.

And whichever Messenger We sent forth, was sent so that he be obeyed by God's directive. (4:64)

The reason for this is that God does not directly interact with His servants. He gives guidance through prophets and messengers. No doubt, the real objective is to obey God. However, the means through which He can be obeyed is by obeying his prophets. In verses such as (۸۰ : ۴) *مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ* (he who obeys the Prophet, in fact obeyed God, (4:80)) and others of similar meaning, the Almighty has alluded to this reality. He has also stated the ultimate limit to which a prophet needs to be obeyed: people must whole-heartedly and without any hesitation accept his decision in disputes which arise among them:

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِي مَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي  
أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا (۶۵: ۴)

I swear by your Lord that they cannot be believers until they accept your decision in their disputes and whatever you decide they submit to without any unwillingness of their hearts. (4:65)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī writes:

... the Almighty has sworn by Himself and said that these people cannot be regarded as believers until they accept Prophet Muḥammad (sws) as their arbitrator in all disputes which arise among them, and at the same time there comes a mental change in them that they accept his verdict without any hesitation whatsoever and with full willingness of the heart and without any reservation, consign themselves to him. Obeying a prophet is tantamount to obeying God; hence the obligation imposed on them is not merely to follow him outwardly but from the depths of their hearts too.<sup>52</sup>

Thus obeying the Prophet (sws) is not merely a ritual. The Qur'ān requires from a believer to obey him with the spirit of following him and with full sincerity and full reverence and

52. Ibid., vol. 2, 329.

devotion. If a person wants to achieve God's love, he has to obey and follow the Prophet (sws):

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٣:٣١)

Tell them: "If you love God, follow me; God will love you and forgive your sins and [you know this well that] God is Most-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful." (3:31)

The Prophet (sws) has explained this reality in various ways. In one narrative, he is reported to have said: "The faith in a person does not stand validated unless he prefers me to his father, sons and all others."<sup>53</sup>

The etiquette taught to the Bedouin tribes that had come from the nearby areas of Madīnah regarding their interaction with the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) also clearly highlights this status of a prophet:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقَدَّمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرِ بَعْضِكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَنْ تَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَشْعُرُونَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَعْضُونَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحَنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ لِلتَّقْوَى لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (٤٩: ٣-١)

Believers! Do not give preference to your opinion before God and His Prophet. Have fear of God. Indeed, God hears and knows all. Believers! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet nor address him in a loud voice as you do to one another, lest your deeds should come to nothing and you are not even aware of this. [Remember] those who speak gently in the presence of God's prophet are the very people whose hearts God has chosen for nurturing piety. For them are forgiveness and a great reward. (49:1-3)

53. *Bukhārī*, No: 15; *Muslim*, No: 169.

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī writes:

These verses instruct the Muslims about the etiquette which must necessarily be observed by them before the Prophet (sws). They say that those who keep their voices subdued in the presence of the Prophet (sws) are the ones whom the Almighty has chosen for nurturing piety in their hearts. The word *امْتَحَنَ* (to test) here actually encompasses the meaning of the word *اصْطَفَى* (to select) or of some similar word. It is evident from this that not every heart is appropriate before God for cultivating and fostering the seed of piety; He, in fact, selects hearts for this purpose by putting them through a trial, and the real basis of His selection in this trial is whether a person has sincere emotions of obedience and true humility towards the Prophet (sws). The more a person has these things, the more is he blessed with piety and the more a person is devoid of them, the farther away is he from piety. The mention of raising one's voice, as we have referred to before, is as an indicator of one's inner-self. A person who tries to raise his voice over that of some other person actually counts himself superior to him. This attitude closes the doors to access the knowledge and wisdom of others. If a student adopts this attitude before his teacher, then he will deprive himself from what he can learn from him. Similarly, if someone adopts this attitude with the Messenger of God, He will not only deprive himself from the prophetic guidance but also from the God-granted urge to do so because a Messenger is a representative of God.<sup>54</sup>

### **Intercession of the Prophets**

The real obligation of a prophet is to warn people of the fate – good or bad – that awaits them in the Hereafter; however, besides this, he also intercedes for his people before God. When a person wants to seek forgiveness from the Almighty then joining him in beseeching God for this forgiveness is called intercession. This is the real meaning of intercession. Thus without a person first taking the initiative in seeking forgiveness from God, it has no basis. A person who intercedes for someone is one who seeks forgiveness together with him

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54. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 7, 489.

and is another voice raised for this purpose and he in fact becomes a means for him in imploring and supplicating before God. The Qur'ān says:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَوَّا رُؤُوسَهُمْ وَرَأَتْهُمِ يَصُدُّونَ  
وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ (٥:٦٣)

And when they are told: “Come, God’s Messenger will seek forgiveness for you,” they wave their heads and you see them drawing away in arrogance. (63:5)

The first instance of intercession arises when a person professes faith, a prophet seeks forgiveness for him. The second instance arises when he commits a sin and after repenting seeks forgiveness from God. The Hypocrites of the times of the Prophet (sws) were, at one instance, urged by God to seek forgiveness from God themselves and also request the Prophet (sws) to do so if they wanted to repent from their sins. If they ask the Prophet (sws) for this, then this would be instrumental in directing God’s mercy towards them. The Qur’ān says:

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ  
لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا (٤: ٦٤)

And if they, having wronged themselves, had come to you and sought God’s forgiveness and the Messenger had also sought God’s forgiveness for them, they would have certainly found God Forgiving and Merciful. (4:64)

At various places, the Qur’ān has urged people to seek forgiveness from the Almighty. In 39:53 and 12:87 it is said: “My servants! If you have wronged your souls do not lose hope of My mercy. Your Lord is Most Forgiving and Ever Merciful. If you turn to Him, He will forgive your sins. Remember! Believers never lose hope of His mercy.” The Almighty has also explained His law about accepting repentance in 4:17-18: A person should repent as soon as he can after he commits a sin. This is because He never punishes people who while being overcome with emotions commit a sin and then repent immediately. However, He does not forgive people who deeply indulge in sin all their

lives and when they see death approaching start to repent and seek forgiveness from the Almighty.

A little deliberation on the contents of these verses shows that the Almighty has not mentioned what will happen to people who after sinning do not repent immediately, yet do not delay repentance till their death. It is these people about whom one can expect intercession. Thus the Qur'ān has affirmed this, and has also negated all the incorrect views that people formed about intercession which actually contradict God's justice and His reward and punishment for people.

The first thing asserted is that only God has the authority of intercession. Without His permission, no one can intercede for anyone. So much so, even the angels who are very close to Him cannot take the initiative in saying anything on their own. Thus it is essential to first please God so that intercession is allowed by Him and then also accepted:

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ شُفَعَاءَ قُلْ أَوْلَوْ كَانُوا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ قُلْ لِلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٤٤-٤٣ : ٣٩)

Have they chosen others besides God to intercede for them? Tell them: "Can they intercede even if they have no power nor understanding?" Tell them: "Only God has authority over intercession. His rule extends over the heavens and the earth. Then to Him shall you be returned." (39:43-44)

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُكْرَمُونَ لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ (٢١ : ٢٦-٢٧)

And they say: "The Merciful has children." Glory be to God! They are but His honoured servants. They do not speak first before Him and obey only His directives. (21:26-27)

The second thing in this regard is that even after being permitted by God to speak, intercession shall be possible only for those about whom God pleases. No one shall be able to say anything about anyone out of his own will:

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنْ ارْتَضَىٰ وَهُمْ مِنْ حَشِيَّتِهِ



مُشْفِقُونَ (٢٨:٢١)

He knows what is before them and behind them. And they intercede for none except those whom He permits and tremble in awe of Him. (21:28)

يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا تَنفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا (٢٠: ١٠٩-١١٠)

On that Day, no intercession will avail except for him who is allowed by the Merciful and words about that person are acceptable to Him. He knows what is before them and behind them, and their knowledge cannot truly embrace Him. (20:109-110)

The third thing is that the person who is acceptable to God to be interceded for – about him too whatever will be allowed to be said would be the absolute truth:

لَا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَانُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا (٧٨: ٣٨)

[On that Day], only they will speak whom the Merciful permits and they will say the truth. (78:38)

This is the point of view of the Qur'ān regarding intercession. All narratives on this topic should be understood in the light of this view of the Qur'ān and anything which contradicts this view should be ignored regarding it to be the handiwork of the narrators.

### Finality of Prophethood

For centuries, prophets continued to come in every nation. The purpose of their advent was to communicate the truth to such an extent before their addressees that they are left with no excuse to reject it. When the arrangement of this conclusive communication of the truth became possible at the global level by the manifestation of God's reward and punishment in this world, the process of prophethood was terminated forever. It began with Adam (sws) until the time came when in one branch of the descendants of Abraham (sws), the Ishmaelites, the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) arrived and the Qur'ān declared that he was the final prophet and after him there would be no prophet

or messenger. Although this was evident from the predictions of various prophets but it was mentioned in the Qur'ān at the instance when the Almighty asked the Prophet (sws) to marry the divorced wife of Zayd Ibn Hārithah (rta). This directive was given to reform an evil custom of the *jāhiliyyah* period regarding adopted children. Consequently, it was said that since he is the last prophet, it is essential that this evil custom be set right through him. Had there been another prophet after him, the Almighty could possibly have delayed this matter. Since this was not to be the case, the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) had to fulfill this responsibility:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ  
اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٤٠:٣٣)

Muḥammad is the father of no man among you but he is the prophet of God and the seal of the prophets and God has knowledge of all things. (33:40)

One expression used in this verse is *خَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ* (*khātam al-nabiyyīn*). The word *خَاتَمَ* (*khātam*) in Arabic means “a seal”. The Prophet (sws) is called *خَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ* (the seal of the prophets) in this verse. When this word is used the way it is here, it always means to close and seal something. Here too it means that through Prophet Muḥammad (sws), the institution of prophethood has been sealed. There is now no possibility of the advent of any further prophet or messenger.

No doubt a seal is also used to testify to something. Linguistic principles dictate that here this word cannot in any way be used in this meaning. However, if someone insists that the word has been used in this meaning and if for the sake of discussion we accept this view, then too the result would be no different. In this case, the verse would mean that without his testimony, no one's prophethood can be accepted. No doubt that we profess faith in prophets prior to Muḥammad (sws) because of his own testimony about them, and this is also a reality that he has neither foretold the advent of any prophet after him nor given such a testimony. In fact, he has repeatedly declared in clear and explicit words that he himself is the last of the prophets. Furthermore, he has also made it clear that not only the rank and

position of prophethood has been terminated, its essence has also been terminated. Thus no possibility remains for a person to receive divine revelations or visions or to converse and come in contact with God. After the termination of the institution of prophethood, all these things have ended too.

Following are the sayings of the Prophet (sws) in this regard:

## I

كانت بنو إسرائيل تسوسهم الأنبياء كلما هلك نبي خلفه نبي وإنه لا نبي بعدي وسيكون خلفاء

Leaders of the Israelites were their prophets. When one prophet would pass away, another would succeed him. But there will be no prophet after me; there will only be successors.<sup>55</sup>

## II

إن مثلي ومثل الأنبياء من قبلي كمثل رجل بنى بيتا فأحسنه وأجمله إلا موضع لبنة من زاوية فجعل الناس يطوفون به ويعجبون له ويقولون هلا وضعت هذه اللبنة قال فأنا اللبنة وأنا خاتم النبيين

I and the prophets before me can be likened to a person who constructed a beautiful building but in a corner there was a gap for a brick. People would roam around this building and express their wonder on it and would ask: “Why was this brick not placed at its place.” He said: “I am that brick and I am the seal of the prophets.”<sup>56</sup>

## III

لم يبق من النبوة إلا المبشرات قالوا وما المبشرات قال الرؤيا الصالحة  
 “Nothing remains of prophethood except for things which give glad tidings.” They asked: “What are these?” He replied: “Good dreams.”<sup>57</sup>

55. *Bukhārī*, No: 3455.

56. *Bukhārī*, No: 3535.

57. *Bukhārī*, No: 6990.

#### 4. Belief in Divine Books

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَيَّ رَسُولِهِ  
وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِن قَبْلُ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا (١٣٦:٤)

Believers! Have faith in God and His messenger, in the Book He has revealed to His messenger, and also in the Book He has previously revealed and [remember that] he who denies God, His Angels, His Books and His Prophets and the Last Day has strayed far. (4:136)

Just as the Almighty has sent prophets to guide mankind, similarly He has revealed His Books to these prophets for this purpose. The purpose of these Books is that people have with them the written guidance of God in His very words so that they can judge between what is right and what is wrong through these Books and are able to resolve their differences through them, and in this manner they are able to adhere to the truth regarding their religion. The Qur'an says:

وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ (٢١٣ : ٢)

And with these [Prophets], He sent down His Book as the decisive truth so that it may settle these differences between people. (2:213)

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ (٢٥:٥٧)

And with these [Messengers], We sent down Our Book which is the Judge [between the right and the wrong] so that [through it] people are able to adhere to justice [regarding religion]. (57:25)

At this point of time, the anthology of books found in the Bible shows that apparently these Books were given to each and every prophet in some form or the other. Just as the Qur'an (87:19) mentions the Torah and the Gospel, it also refers to the scripture

of Abraham (sws). The above quoted verses (2:213; 57:25) also corroborate this premise. All these Books are Books of God. Thus the Qur'ān requires of the Muslims to broadly profess faith in these Books without any discrimination. Out of these, however, four Books occupy exceptional importance: The Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel, the Qur'ān. The following paragraphs introduce these Books.

### The Torah

The Torah was revealed to Moses (sws). It is generally thought to be composed of five books which are found at the beginning of the Bible and which are called the Pentateuch. They are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. A deep deliberation on these books shows that the content of the first four books is historical narration in which the Torah is found in the chronological order, and in Deuteronomy the Torah has been arranged in the form of a book in the same manner as the Qur'ān was. In its present shape, it was probably compiled in the fifth century BC. However, the way the Prophet Jesus (sws) has referred to it, one can say that it has his corroboration to some extent. The Hebrew text of the Torah which is now found in manuscripts and published form is called the Massoretic Text. It is generally accepted that besides this text there were other variants also in ancient times and at places there were important differences between them. The Samaritan Pentateuch and specially the oldest version of the Torah from the Greek Septuagint show evidence of these differences.

The guidance of God provided by the prophets to mankind has two categories: the *sharī'ah* (the law) and the *hikmah* (the wisdom). It is the *sharī'ah* which constitutes the major portion of the Torah and thus it is named so on this basis. The Qur'ān calls it (٢ : ١٧) هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (the guidance for the Israelites, (17:2)) and (١٥٤ : ٦) تَفْصِيلًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ (the detail of everything, (6:154)). The Qur'ān also says that it contains the directive of God (5:43), it is guidance and light (5:44) and is mercy for the people (7:154). No doubt the Qur'ān (5:13) also mentions the interpolations of the Jews; however, this also is a reality that it broadly corroborates its version which was available with the Jews in the times of Muḥammad (sws).

**The Psalms**

The Psalms is the name of the book revealed to David (sws). It is a collection of hymns which are called Psalms. The Book of Psalms now found in the Bible has five books and one hundred and fifty Psalms. Although psalms attributed to other people have also found their way in this collection, but a discerning mind can feel the grandeur of a divine discourse in hymns about which it has been specified that they are from David (sws). Like the Gospel, it is the *hikmah* which constitutes the Psalms and the Qur'an corroborates it as a book revealed by God.

**The Gospel**

The Gospel was revealed to Jesus (sws). One of primary objectives of his advent was to give glad tidings of the last prophet. The word "Gospel" means "good news" and on this very basis it has been named so. As has been the case of divine scriptures, it too was revealed piecemeal keeping in view the needs of preaching and propagation. Before it could be compiled in the form of a Book, Jesus (sws) was lifted from this earth because of the rebellious and arrogant behaviour of his people. Thus it is not an arranged Book but independent orations and speeches which have reached later generations through oral tradition and written memorandums. Many years later, when people started to compile the biography of Jesus (sws) in the form of booklets, these orations were appropriately inserted at various places. These booklets are called the Gospels. In the early days of Christianity, they were present in large number. In 382 AD, the leaders of the Christian church under Pope Damasus selected four of them and abandoned the others and regarded them to be apocryphal. In the Bible, we find the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They were originally written in Greek whereas the language of Jesus (sws) was Aramaic and he delivered his speeches and sermons in this language. The authors of these Gospels converted to Christianity much later than Jesus (sws) and none of these was written before 70 AD and the Gospel according to John was perhaps written a century after Jesus (sws) in the city of Epheus in Asia minor. In spite of this, the sermons, parables and speeches that are found in these Gospels are so conspicuous in divine grandeur that any person aware of the style of divine literature cannot deny them. Thus it can safely be said that a greater part of the Gospel in

which the Qur'ān asks us to profess faith is preserved in these bibliographical booklets.

### The Qur'ān

This was revealed to Muḥammad (sws), the last prophet of God. It is regarded as the *mīzān* (scale that tells good from evil) and the *furqān* (distinguisher between good and evil) by the Almighty in the Qur'ān itself (42:17; 25:1) and a *muhaymin* on the previous scriptures. The word *muhaymin* is an adjective formed from the words هَيْمَنَ فَلَانٌ عَلَى كَذَا which means “a guardian” and “a protector”. It means that the Qur'ān is the real authentic and trustworthy version of the Book of God. Thus, in matters of religion, everything accepted or rejected shall be decided under the guidance of the light provided by it.

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ  
فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ (٥: ٤٨)

And [O Prophet!] We have revealed to you the Book with the truth in confirmation of the Book before it, and standing as a guardian over it. Therefore, give judgement among men according to the guidance revealed by God and do not yield to their whims by swerving from the truth revealed to you. (5:48)

It consists of 114 *sūrahs*, most of which form pairs with regard to their contents. They are composed in seven sections in accordance with the sequence of the preaching endeavour of the Prophet (sws). Its language is Arabic and it has been revealed to the heart of the Prophet (sws) with the directive of God. The Prophet (sws) presented it to his people and from them it was transferred through the consensus and through the verbal and written perpetuation of the Muslims. Consequently, in divine literature, this is the only Book about which it can be said with full certainty that it is present with us in its original form, shape, language and arrangement without the slightest bit of change. The way it has been transmitted through *tawātur* (perpetuation) is a miracle in itself because this is the only Book in this world which even at this time can be read out verbatim from its beginning to the end by thousands who have memorized it. History tell us that in the last fourteen hundred years this mode

of transmission has not ceased for a single day. It is evident from this that it is the Almighty Who has made arrangements to protect the Qur'ān. He says:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ (٩:١٥)

It was We that revealed the Reminder, and shall Ourselves preserve it. (15:9)

A similar verse reads:

وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ لَّا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَتْرِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ  
حَمِيدٍ (٤١:٤١-٤٢)

And there is no doubt that it is a mighty scripture. Falsehood cannot reach it neither from in front of it nor from behind it. It is a revelation from a wise and glorious God. (41:41-42)

The various aspects of protection of the Qur'ān towards which this verse alludes to are explained thus by Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī:

First, during the time of revelation of the Qur'ān the Almighty made arrangements that the devils are unable to interfere in the process of divine revelation in any way. Although there is a permanent arrangement to prevent the devils from eavesdropping and listening to divine matters but ... during the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān, special arrangements were made in preventing devils from meddling in revelations in any way so that nothing is able to enter the Qur'an from in front of it (مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ).

Second, the angel which the Almighty selected to reveal the Qur'ān has been called by the Qur'ān (81:20-21) as “the one endued with power, held in honour before the Lord of the Throne, obeyed in Heavens, moreover trustworthy.” In other words, the angel is so powerful that evil spirits cannot overpower him; he is the head of all angels and he cannot forget anything. Whatever is entrusted to him by the Almighty, he fully protects. There is not a semblance of a chance that the slightest of change can take place in the



revelation entrusted to him. He has a very high rank before the Almighty which shows that he is ahead of all other creatures as far as abilities are concerned – It is obvious that all this elaborate arrangement has been made to close the doors to any evil entering the Qur’ān from its very origin.

Third, the very person who was entrusted with the Qur’ān was firstly, the best of human beings in all respects and secondly, the responsibility of memorizing, arranging and safeguarding the Qur’ān was taken up by the Almighty: **لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَهُ فَاسْتَمِعْ قُرْآنَهُ ثُمَّ إِنَّ** **عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ (75: 16-19)** (to acquire this Qur’ān [O Prophet!] Do not move your tongue hastily over it. Indeed, upon Us is its collection and recital. So when We have recited it, follow this recital [of Ours]. Then upon Us is to explain it [wherever need be], (75:16-19)).

It is evident from various narratives that whatever text of the Qur’ān would be revealed the Prophet (sws), his close Companions (rta) would memorize it. In every Ramaḍān, the Prophet (sws) would read it out to Gabriel or listen from him so that no possibility of any error or omission should remain and this reading out or listening to would be according to the sequence the Almighty had arranged it. Also evident from certain narratives is that in the last Ramaḍān of his life, this mutual presentation of the Qur’ān took place twice. Then in this very arrangement and recital the whole of the Qur’ān was written down and later the rightly guided caliphs sent its copies to various cities. This elaborate treatment was not received by any of the previous scriptures and about the Torah no one knows that when its constituent scriptures were assembled and who was responsible for this task.

Fourth, the Qur’ān is a miracle with regard to its eloquent selection of words and the meanings they convey. And so distinct is it in this aspect to other discourses that they cannot match it. So much so, the words of the Prophet (sws) himself – who was the recipient of the Qur’ān and as the most eloquent among everyone – could not rival it. Thus there is no possibility that any extraneous addition be made into it. Consequently, works of people who have dared to

answer the challenge of the Qur'ān to bring something similar to it are preserved in history and literature. If a person compares them with the Qur'ān, he will notice the same difference between them as between a pearl and a pebble. In this manner, it is as if the doors to any adulteration from the rear too (مِنْ خَلْفِهِ) have been closed.

Fifth, together with the promise of protecting the Qur'ān, the Almighty has also promised to protect and safeguard its language till the Day of Judgement. Because of the fact that the languages of some divine scriptures became extinct a lot of changes and interpolations were introduced by way of translations and we have no clue about them now. However, the real language of the Qur'ān is safe and sound and will remain so till the Day of Judgement. Hence there is no possibility of any evil creeping into it by way of translations and commentaries. If anyone tries to introduce some evil in it, men of learning can easily sift it out by testing it against the original text.<sup>58</sup>

### 5. Belief in the Hereafter

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا وَأَخْرَجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا وَقَالَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا لَهَا يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا بَأْسَ رَبِّكَ أَوْحَىٰ لَهَا يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ (99:1-8)

[They should remember the Day] when the earth is shaken the way it should be shaken, and it casts forth its burdens. And man cries out: “What is the matter with her?” On that Day, she will narrate all her story at the intimation of your Lord. On that Day, men will issue forth individually so that their deeds can be shown to them. Then whoever has done the smallest bit of good he also shall see it, and whoever has done the smallest bit of evil, he also shall see it. (99:1-8)

Belief in the Hereafter is one of the most important tenets of Islam. It occupies the central position in the preaching mission of

58. Amīn Aḥsan Işlāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 7, 113.

prophets. It is on the foundation of this belief that the pillars of *sharī'ah*, virtue and righteousness stand. Prophethood is also based on it. A *nabī* (prophet) is a *nabī* because he actually foretells this *nabā' azīm* (great news).<sup>59</sup> A *rasūl* (messenger) is a *rasūl* because he brings the message of its advent. John (sws) and Jesus (sws), Moses (sws) and Abraham (sws) all have proclaimed it. The Torah tacitly refers to it and the Psalms clearly mention it. In the Gospel, Jesus (sws) has warned that on the Day of Judgement only those people will enter the Kingdom of Heaven who will please his heavenly father. The Qur'ān is a bearer of warning and glad tidings for this Day. It says that the manner in which people wake up from sleep (39:42), the manner in which rain enlivens a dead and desolate terrain (7:57; 35:9), the manner in which a whole human being comes into existence from a mere drop of water (75:36-40), in the same manner mankind will be made to rise one day from their graves. Raising up mankind on that Day would not be of any bother for the Almighty. When the addressees of the Qur'ān expressed their wonder on being re-created and inquired after the being who would enliven these decayed bones, the Almighty replied in the Qur'ān (36:78) that the very being Who created them the first time would create them again. This whole process is as easy for Him as uttering a word for us is:

فَوَرَبِّ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ مِّثْلَ مَا أَنَّكُمْ تَنْطِقُونَ (٢٣:٥١)

I swear by the Lord of heavens and the earth that this shall definitely come [with the same ease] as you speak. (51:23)

The Qur'ān says that it is man's own nature, his quest for justice and his awareness of good and evil that requires the coming of a Day of Judgement. If God is just and fair, then such a day must come. His providence, mercy, power and wisdom as well as His laws and practices all entail that man face a day of accountability. Without belief in such a day, religion is mere wishful thinking. The concepts of virtue, piety, justice, reward and punishment become baseless. Without such a day, the universe has no purpose and can only be regarded as the playground of divine forces.

The testimonies, indications, sites and events of this day are

59. This is a reference to the words of a Qur'ānic verse: 78:2.

described both in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. In the following paragraphs, these details are mentioned.

### The Testimonies

The first thing is man's awareness of good and evil. It is because of this awareness that his chiding conscience rebukes him on every evil. It is a small court of justice which is found within every person which delivers its unbiased verdict at all times. Whether he accepts it or not, a person is able to clearly listen to this verdict after every blemish that emanates in his thoughts and deeds; this continues until he becomes so deeply involved in evil that this evil completely surrounds his faculties thereby lulling the calls of his conscience to sleep. This internal system of rebuke is a testimony of his own inner-self and is called the testimony of the rebuking-self. The Qur'ān presents it and tells man that he will not be left unaccountable for whatever he does. He should know that just as there exists a lesser abode of judgement within man, similarly a greater abode of judgement will one day be set up for the whole world; when it takes place, he will be held accountable before his Lord and rewarded and punished accordingly on the basis of his deeds. If a person denies such a day of accountability, then it is like denying himself and playing mischief before one's conscience:

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ لَنْ نَجْمَعَ عِظَامَهُ  
بَلَى قَادِرِينَ عَلَى أَنْ نُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ يَسْأَلُ أَيَّانَ يَوْمِ  
الْقِيَامَةِ إِذَا بَرَاقَ الْبَصَرُ وَحَسَفَ الْقَمَرُ وَجُمِعَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ يَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ  
يَوْمَئِذٍ أَيْنَ الْمَفْرُ كَلَّا لَا وَزَرَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمُسْتَقَرُّ نَبَأُ الْإِنْسَانِ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِمَا قَدَّمَ  
وَأَخَّرَ بَلْ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ وَلَوْ أَلْفَىٰ مَعَاذِيرَهُ (٧٥: ١-١٥)

[They think that the Day of Judgement will never be]; By no means! I present as evidence the Day of Judgement itself. And [they think that the Day of Judgement is a far-fetched reality]. By no means! I present as evidence this reproaching soul [within you]. Does man think that We will not be able to bring together his bones? Why not? We can put together his very finger tips. [No this is not so]; in fact [the truth is that] man wants to be mischievous before his [conscience]. He asks: "When will the Day of Judgement be?" But on the

day when the sight is dazed and the moon eclipsed and the sun and the moon brought together, this very man will say: “Whither to flee?” – No! there is no refuge now! Towards your Lord that Day is the resting place. On that Day will man be informed what he sent forth and what he left behind. [No he cannot deny it]; in fact, he himself is a witness upon his own self however much he may put up excuses. (75:1-15)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, while explaining this argument of the Qur’ān, writes:

Now the question is that if a person has a guardian within his conscience which chides him on every evil that emanates from him, then how can it be imagined that man will be not be held accountable for his deeds. Why would he go scot-free if he spends a life in whatever manner he wants to while negating the calls of his conscience? If a person will not be held accountable for his deeds, then where has this chiding conscience come into him from? If his Creator is unconcerned about the good and evil which emanates from him, then why and from where has He given him the feeling of being elated at a good deed and being pricked by his conscience at a bad one? Then from here another question arises: If God has set up a miniature court of justice in every person, then why will He not set up a greater court of justice which will hold the whole world accountable for good and evil which emanate from it and not reward and punish people accordingly? Any person who deliberates on these questions while disregarding his desires will reach the conclusion that the very being of a person bears witness that he has innate knowledge of good and evil; he will not be left unaccountable; there definitely shall come one day when he will be punished for any misdeeds he may have done and be rewarded for his good deeds. To remind a person of this very Day, the Almighty has placed a miniature court of justice within a person’s soul so that man does not remain indifferent to it, and if ever he becomes indifferent he can catch a glimpse of it by merely reflecting on his inner-self. It is this very reality which sages have taught us by saying that man is a miniature world and within this miniature world there is a reflection of the greater world. If a person has a

true comprehension of his own self, he is able to comprehend both God and the Hereafter.<sup>60</sup>

The second thing is the nature of man by virtue of which he likes justice and dislikes injustice. No doubt, in spite of this dislike he still perpetrates injustice but this is not because he is not able to distinguish justice from injustice or that he likes the latter – it is because he loses his balance and poise by being overcome with desires and emotions. All of us know that a person may want to steal from another person's house but he would never like someone to steal from his own house; he may kill someone but would never like that anyone take his life or that of his relatives. Similarly, a person may be dishonest in weighing his merchandise for others but would never be happy if others are dishonest with him in this regard. If one asks these thieves, killers and swindlers about their actions they would confess that each of these is a crime and should be eliminated. Thus no one in his senses can regard good and evil to be equal or that both be dealt with in the same manner. The Qur'ān presents these facts and asks the rejecters of the Day of Judgement:

أَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ (٣٦-٣٥ : ٦٨)

Are We to deal with those who submit to Us as We deal with those who transgress? What is the matter with you? What is this judgement you give? (68:35-36)

The third thing is the incompleteness found both in man and in this world. From whatever aspect these two are seen, it is clearly evident that in every single part of theirs the great power and wisdom of their maker is apparent. In everything great meaningfulness, matchless order and sequence, unrivalled mathematical perfection and symmetry, extra-ordinary thoroughness and immense beauty of creativity astounds one's intellect. On the other hand, if one tries to understand both of them in their totality, one sees great incompleteness and lack of purpose in them.

Consequently, man observes that every thing through its very existence proclaims that it has been created for him, but nothing

60. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 9, 80.

in this world tells him his own purpose of creation.

Also, one is not able to see any system which judges if human beings have or have not fulfilled the purpose, if ever there is one, for which they have been created.

Man is innately aware of the fact that he should be held accountable for each favour he has been blessed with; however, he has been left in this world without any such accountability. Thus when he dies, he calmly leaves this world without giving any account of these favours.

To make people adhere to truth and justice is the need of mankind, but man is not able to see any real motive for this in himself or in the world around him. Then the circumstances of this world negate what his conscience desires. It is his natural instinct that justice and oppression and good and evil must be discriminated; however, in this world this natural instinct of his is flouted in the worst possible way. Thus, there are many people who have left this world without being rewarded for their good deeds and there are many who have left this world without being punished for their evil deeds.

Contrary to all other creations like plants, animals and inorganic objects, man possesses an awareness of the future; however, this future always eludes him.

Hidden within him are great desires, but seldom are they fulfilled and often his wishes do not materialize. So much so, the intense desire of observing God running the affairs of this universe once he professes faith in Him is never fulfilled in this world.

Man is not able to go to the extent his imagination can take him. He wants to pierce the skies, penetrate the earth and infiltrate into his own soul as far as he can. To satisfy his ambitions, he has tried to explore the skies and split the atom; however, all this effort has only proven to him that he cannot realize all the potentials of his imagination.

He is always searching for a world in which he can liberate himself from the sorrows and hardships of this world and from its limitations and live a life of happiness and contentment. This desire is found in him since time immemorial. However, he is never able to obtain this sought after world of his; on the contrary, he takes to his grave these cherished desires.

Every single word which a person speaks and every single

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deed that emanates from him are being safely recorded so that they can be recalled whenever required. All his good and evil thoughts are also permanently noted. The passage of time and change in circumstances do not affect these records. However, what is the purpose of this arrangement? Nothing in this world answers this question.

The personality of a human being has an existence of its own which is independent of his corporal being. The innumerable cells from which his body is made keep dying and are replaced every now and then; however, his real personality always remains intact. His knowledge, memory, ambitions, habits and thoughts all remain the same, and are in no way altered by this cycle. Then where does this personality come from and where does it go? We are unable to answer this question too.

Millions of planets, much larger than the planet man inhabits, exist in the universe but there appears no trace of any life in them. Then why have they been created? Man does not know.

These facts are irrefutable. After this, there can only be two possibilities: first, to regard this world as a meaningless place and come to the conclusion that it is the workmanship of a merry-maker and nothing more; second, to understand it in combination with a Day of Judgement and that eternal kingdom of God which has been so vehemently affirmed and declared by His prophets. What is the verdict of intellect? Every person can comprehend:

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ  
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ (٢٣ : ١١٥-١١٦)

So do you think that We have created you in vain and that to Us you would never be returned? So very lofty is the status of God, the true king. There is no god but Him, the Lord of the glorious throne. (23:115-116)

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ لَوْ أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ لَهْوًا  
لَاتَّخِذْنَا مِنْ لَدُنَّا إِنْ كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ (٢١ : ١٦-١٧)

And it was not for gaming and sport that We created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. Had it been Our will to create a game, We could have found one near at hand if We wanted to do this. (21:16-17)



Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, while interpreting these verses, writes:

Mentioned here is the reason that if after this world there is no Day of Judgement, it has always remained in existence and will continue like this forever, whether anyone does virtuous deeds or bad ones or does oppression or justice and its Creator is unconcerned about the good and evil found in it, then this only means that He has created an amusement to entertain Himself: He will amuse Himself with it till whenever He likes, and when He gets bored, He will just end it and create some new amusement for Him for His enjoyment and pastime. The verse therefore stresses that the heavens and the earth and what is between them have not been created for amusement. From the very way it is, this world bears testimony to the fact that it has been created by a just, wise and merciful being. It is not an object of amusement for a merry-maker or a warring place of supernatural beings or a theater of a deity; in fact, every single object of this wisely created world bears witness that its creator has created it with a great purpose and it is an obvious requirement of His justice and wisdom that a day come when this purpose is fulfilled.<sup>61</sup>

This is the judgement passed by sense and reason. However, as soon as one gets to know that the Hereafter exists all these questions get an answer and all voids are filled and all known phenomena are explained and everything becomes set in its place; the world now seems to be complete, which in the absence of the Hereafter it did not; the real grandeur of this universe is thus revealed; man can now die with the certainty that whatever he was not able to obtain before his death, he will definitely obtain it after his death; he too will be blessed with the certitude and the calm which is found in the universe; he will be given an eternal world in which he can realize his innumerable and unending desires and where, on the one hand, there will be the eternal Paradise of pleasure, finesse and meaningfulness, and, on the other, the Fire of Hell where the evil will endure their punishments.

As a result, the relationship between this world and the next is

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61. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 132.

that of what each member of a pair has with the other. Consequently, if causes have been joined with effects, potentials with their devices, natures with their intentions and souls with bodies and as a result are presenting a meaningful whole, then the Hereafter too is one member of the pair of which the other member is the Herein and both complement one another and become meaningful:

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٤٩:٥١)

And We have made pairs of everything so that you may take heed. (51:49)

After this, the heart of every sensitive person shudders at the concept of accountability and it is as if he sees the Day of Judgement before his very eyes. He sees that the earth and the heavens are burdened with it in the very manner a pregnant lady carries the burden of her child about which it cannot be said when it shall be delivered:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي لَا يُجِئُهَا لِوَفْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ثُقُلَتْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا نَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَعَثَةً (١٨٧:٧)

They ask you about the Hour of Doom: When will it come? Tell [them]: “Only my Lord has knowledge of it. None but He shall reveal it when its appointed time comes. Both the heavens and the earth are under its burden. It will suddenly overtake you.” (7:187)

Consequently, a person proclaims to God: “You have not made this world without a purpose; it is against Your grand wisdom and knowledge to do something without a purpose; I know that this world is going to end on a Day of Judgement where people who thought that this world is a place of amusement for its creator will be punished. I seek refuge with You from such a fate”:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (٣: ١٩٠-١٩١)

In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are many signs for men of understanding; those who remember God while standing, sitting, and lying down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth. [Their prayer is:] “Lord, You have not created this without a purpose. Glory be to You for you do not do anything in vain! Save us from the punishment of the Fire. (3:190-191)

The fourth thing is the attributes of God the effects of which are evident in every speck of this universe. The attributes of providence and mercy in particular need one’s attention. After witnessing the extra-ordinary arrangement made by the Lord of this world to nurture and nourish man, how can a person of intellect think that his Lord will leave him unaccountable and how can it be expected from the merciful and gracious God to not punish people who have made this world a place of oppression and injustice. For this very reason, the Qur’ān has pointed out at a number of places that the Day of Judgement is the consequence of God’s providence and mercy, power and wisdom. After professing belief in God, no one can deny it.

In Sūrah An’am, it is said:

كَتَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ لِيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ (٦:١٢)

He has made mercy mandatory on Himself. He will definitely gather you to take you to the Day of Judgement about which there is no doubt. (6:12)

In Sūrah Nabā’, it is said:

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهَادًا وَالْجِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا وَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِيَاسًا وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا وَبَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شِدَادًا وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَهَاجًا وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً نَّجَّاجًا لِنُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا وَجَنَّاتٍ أَلْفَافًا إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفُصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا (٧٨: ٦-١٧)

[They should behold:] Have We not made the earth a cradle and made the mountains [its] pegs? And not created you in pairs? And not made your sleep a means of comfort [for you]?

And not made the night a clothing [for you] and the day a time to earn [your] livelihood? And not built above you seven sturdy [skies]? And not placed [in them] a glowing lamp [this sun]? And not sent down abundant water from dripping clouds that We may bring forth grain and vegetation and gardens of luxurious growth? [All this clearly testifies that] indeed the Day of Judgement has an appointed time. (78:6-17)

In Sūrah Qāf, it is said:

أَفَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنَاهَا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنْ فُرُوجٍ  
وَالْأَرْضِ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ تَبْصِرَةً  
وَذِكْرَى لِكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُنِيبٍ وَنَزَّلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً مُبَارَكًا فَأَنْبَتْنَا بِهِ حَبَّاتٍ  
وَحَبَّ الْحَصِيدِ وَالنَّخْلَ بَاسِقَاتٍ لَهَا طَلْعٌ نَضِيدٌ رِزْقًا لِلْعِبَادِ وَأَحْيَيْنَا بِهِ بَلَدَةً  
مَيِّتًا كَذَلِكَ الْخُرُوجُ (٥٠: ٦-١١)

Have they never observed the sky above them how We have fashioned and adorned it and [do they not see that] it is flawless. And We have spread the earth and set upon it mountains and brought forth in it all kinds of beautiful plants as an insight and reminder for every person who turns [towards the truth]. And We sent down blessed water from the skies with which We thence brought forth gardens and the harvest grain, and tall palm-trees stacked with clusters of dates as a means of sustenance for men and from it We enlivened a dead piece of land. Such shall you rise [from the earth]. (50:6-11)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, while explaining these verses, writes:

Here the Almighty has directed the attention of the rejecters of the Day of Judgement towards the obvious signs of His power, providence and wisdom which can be observed all around man. These signs are enough to create insight and strike a reminder in a person who has a heart which has the ability to turn towards the truth.

First, the Almighty has directed man's attention to His great power and wisdom: have they not seen the sky above them

how it has been raised high and decked with stars? It is a miracle of God's power and wisdom that the immeasurable sky is free from the slightest of flaws. The implication is that how is it impossible for someone whose immense power and wisdom they see above them to create them again?

After this, besides His power and wisdom, the Almighty has directed man's attention to the tremendous system of providence and sustenance found around him. He is asked to observe how the Almighty has spread out the earth beneath their feet and to maintain its balance how He has nailed mountains into its expanse and how great a variety of fodder has He caused to grow from the earth. These plants which provide man with sustenance are also a means of satisfying his aesthetic taste. The implication is that can it be difficult for someone to re-create mankind from dust whose great signs of power, wisdom and providence they are witnessing all around them? Will the Almighty who has made elaborate arrangements for their sustenance leave them to eat, drink and be merry and never ask them of these blessings?<sup>62</sup>

The fifth thing is the manifestation of God's judgement in this very world. It took place through prophets who were elevated to the status of messengers. The Almighty blessed them with extraordinary miracles, helped them through Gabriel and before the actual Day of Judgement set up through these messengers miniature Days of Judgement on this earth. The objective was to prove the existence of God and the Hereafter before the people in the very manner scientific facts are proven through empirical evidence in a laboratory. After this, obviously no one is left with an excuse before the Almighty to not accept the truth.

The methodology adopted for presenting this empirical evidence was that these messengers communicated the truth to their people and then declared that they will set up a court of justice for their people on behalf of the Almighty. The reward and punishment on the basis of one's faith and deeds which they have been informed of will take place for their people in this very world. Just as physical laws are unalterable and manifest

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62. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, 538.

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come what may, in the same manner this moral law of God shall manifest itself before them once they are left with no excuse to deny the truth. Thus those among the people of these messengers who accept their calls shall attain salvation both in this world and in the next and shall be dominant on their adversaries. And those who reject these calls shall be humiliated and will receive divine punishment.

Whenever this prediction was made and about whichever people it was made, it was made in the most impossible and unbelievable of circumstances; however, it is an amazing historical reality that it came true whenever it was made and came true in such a manner that people in fact witnessed God administering justice and the heavens and the earth were filled with His majesty and grandeur. The Qur'ānic words used are: (٤:١٦٥) لِيَأْتِيَ النَّاسَ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ (so that mankind after the coming of these messengers is left with no excuse against the Almighty, (4:165)). Then, as a general principle, it was stated:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قَضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يَظْلَمُونَ (٤٧:١٠)

And for each community, there is a messenger. When their messenger comes, their fate it decided with justice and they are not wronged. (10:47)

It is evident from the Qur'ān that the first instance of this worldly judgement took place with the people of Noah (sws). Noah (sws) had warned them that if they do not give up polytheism and worship God only, they will soon be confronted with a punishment which would wipe them out from the face of the earth. His people responded by saying that it is because of this very stance of his that they think that he has gone far astray. They said that Noah (sws) had insulted their forefathers and now he even has the audacity to warn them of divine punishment. They expressed that his followers were from the lower cadres of the society who were blindly following him. Noah's rejoinder was that it was their misfortune if they were considering him to have gone astray; he continued that he had come to them as a messenger of God and whatever he was informing them of he was informing them on the authority of God without any slightest of alteration; it is the message of God that he is delivering to them and he is doing so as a great well-wisher of

them. If he is proclaiming to them this message in spite of their stubbornness, indifference, derision and animosity then it is only because he is fearful and sad that the Almighty might seize them for their misconduct.

The Qur'ān says that Noah (sws) continued to urge and exhort them to the truth for almost nine hundred and fifty years; however, in spite of this prolonged effort when his people rejected him and were not ready to reform themselves, the Almighty directed him to make a boat. This was in fact an ultimatum to the people that as soon as the boat is built, the respite they have been given would end. Consequently, when the boat had been made and all the believers embarked on it, a tumultuous storm ensued. The earth was directed to expel all its water on the surface and the sky was directed to rain down all its water. The water rose and stopped at the appointed mark and all of his people were drowned in it. Even Noah's son, Canaan, drowned because of his arrogance. The whole sight was serving a great warning to onlookers. Winds were blowing all around. Rain was thumping down. Waves as towering as the mountains were rising up. Noah's boat was battling with these gigantic waves when suddenly Noah (sws) saw his son standing overwhelmed with awe and wonder. Paternal love stirred at this sight and he called out to him that there is still a chance to board the boat and leave the rejecters. However, even this dreadful scenario was not enough for him to give up his stubbornness. He replied that he would seek refuge in some mountain. Noah (sws) warned that this is not mere water that he is facing: it is the wrath of God and no one except God can save him from it. While this conversation was going on, a huge wave came and swept his son away. All other rejecters of Noah (sws) also met the same fate. This was the equitable judgement of the court of God. Only the believers were shielded from its punishment.<sup>63</sup>

This was the first miniature day of judgement that took place to leave people with no excuse to deny the Hereafter. After this, every nation of the world encountered these miniature days of judgement. The accounts of 'Ād, the Thamūd, the people of Shu'ayb (sws), the people of Jonah (sws) besides some other

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63. For details, see the following Qur'ānic verses: 7:59-64; 10:7-73; 11:25-49; 23:23-31; 26:105-120; 29:14-15; 37:75-82; 54:9-16.

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nations which have been mentioned in the Qur'an depict this very judgement. The Qur'an says:

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّهُ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرَدُّوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فِي أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَنَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِى اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُخْرِجَكُم إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى قَالُوا إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَصُدُّونَا عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا فَأْتُونَا بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنْ نَحْنُ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَمُنُّ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نَأْتِيَكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ... وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِرُسُلِهِمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ مِّنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْ لَتَعُوذُنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ وَلَنُسَكِّنَنَّكُمْ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِي وَخَافَ وَعِيدَ (١٤ : ٩-١٤)

Have you not heard what befell those that have gone before you? The accounts of the people of Noah, 'Ād, and Thamūd, and those who came after them whom only God knows? Their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they placed their hands on their mouths [-- the mouths of messengers--] and said: "We will not accept the message with which you have been sent and have baffling doubts about that which you call us to." Their messengers said: "Do you have doubts about God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth? He calls you to Him that He may forgive you your sins and give you respite till an appointed time." They said: "You are but a human being like ourselves. You wish to stop us from worshipping the deities our fathers worshipped then bring us a clear miracle." Their messengers replied: "We are indeed but mortals like yourselves. Yet God bestows His grace on such of His servants as He chooses and we do not have any authority of our own to present a miracle except by God's permission ..." At last these rejecters told their messengers: "Return to our ways or we will banish you from our land." Then their Lord revealed to them, saying: "We shall destroy these wrongdoers and then give you this land to dwell after them. [These are glad tidings for] those



who are fearful of standing before me [one day] and those who fear My threat.” (14:9-14)

The account of Moses (sws) related in the Qur’ān is also a depiction of this worldly judgement. When he presented the message of God before the Pharaoh and his supporters and they rejected this message, he demanded from them to let him and his people migrate from the land. The Pharaoh, however, did not accept this demand just as he did not accept his message. At this, the Almighty sent portent signs one after the other to admonish him after which he, with great hesitation, allowed them to go for a few days. However, when Moses (sws) set off with his people, he changed his opinion and embarked upon their pursuit with his armies. He thought that he would be able to compel them to return. However, the time had come for the decree of God to arrive. Hence, the judgement was delivered and was delivered with such majesty that it seemed as if the Almighty took them in His custody and made them cross the river while this potent ruler of his times and his armies were drowned in it.<sup>64</sup> Then within this great sign of God appeared another great sign: the corpse of the Pharaoh was not accepted by the river and was thrown out so that this could become a means of admonition and a lesson for tyrannical rulers of all times:

وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجُنُودُهُ بَغْيًا وَعَدُوًّا حَتَّى إِذَا أَدْرَكَهُ  
الْعَرَقُ قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنْتُ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ  
الآنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيكَ بِبَدْنِكَ لِنَكُونَ لِمَنْ  
خَلَقْنَا آيَةً وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ عَن آيَاتِنَا لَعَافِلُونَ (١٠ : ٩٠-٩٢)

And We led the Israelites across the sea, and the Pharaoh and his legions pursued them with wickedness and spite. Until when the Pharaoh started to drown, he cried: “I profess faith in the God in whom the Israelites have professed faith and I also am among His obedient people.” “It is now that you have professed belief and before this you were a rebel and a

64. For details, see the following verses of the Qur’ān: 7:103-136; 10:75-89; 17:101-103; 20:40-79; 23:45-48; 26:10-68; 28:36-40; 37: 114-119; 43:46-56; 51: 38-40; 79: 15-26.

mischievous doer. We shall now save your body only so that you may become an exemplary sign for all posterity and in reality many remain indifferent to Our signs.” (10:90-92)

A further step was taken in this regard by the Almighty that after Abraham (sws), He made his progeny a symbol of this worldly judgement. It was thus declared that if the progeny of Abraham (sws) stand by the truth and present with full certainty and with full clarity the truth the way it is before other people of the world, then they will be made dominant over these people in case they do not accept the truth, and if the progeny of Abraham (sws) deviates from the truth they shall suffer the humiliation of subservience through these very people of the world. The mountain of Olive and the village of Fig located on it and the mount Tūr at Sīnā and the city of Makkah are places where this worldly judgement took place for various nations and peoples. It is the mountain of Olives on which the punishment of the rejecters of Jesus (sws) was declared after his departure. The Almighty (Qur’ān, 3:55) declared that those who have professed faith in Jesus (sws) will always remain dominant on the Israelites, and at various periods of history there will be people who will dominate them and give them humiliating punishments (Qur’ān, 7:167). Fig is a village situated on this mountain. It is mentioned in the Gospel of Luke (19:29) that when Jesus (sws) came to Jerusalem, he stayed at this place before entering the city. It is known that it was on the mount of Sinai that the Israelites were constituted as an *ummah*. Makkah was the place where the Ishmaelites began their life as a collectivity and it was here that they were given the custodianship of the Baytullāh, the first centre of worshipping God made on this earth. The Qur’ān has presented them as witnesses to this Judgement with the declaration that what is it that can negate the Day of Judgement after witnessing this worldly Judgement:

وَالَّتَيْنِ وَالزَّيْتُونِ وَطُورِ سَيْنِينَ وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدُ بِالذِّينِ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمِ الْحَاكِمِينَ (٩٥ : ١ - ٨)

The fig and olive bear witness and [so does] the mount of Sinai and this secure city of [yours] that We have created man [at these places] in the best of moulds. Then We reverted him to

the lowest [position] when he himself wanted to become low. Save those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds. For them shall be a reward unending. Now [O Prophet!] what is it that denies you about the Day of Judgement? [Ask them] is not Allah the best of Judges? (95:1-8)

The last time this miniature Day of Judgement took place was in seventh century AD. This amazing event of human history occupies extra-ordinary significance because it took place in the light of known history. Thus the minutest of details about it are preserved and all its phases are before us and anyone can witness them by turning the pages of history.

The prophet who was selected for this was Muḥammad (sws). As regards character and morality, he is unrivalled in the annals of mankind being the best of men epitomizing an ideal human being. He was designated as a prophet at the age of forty. Prior to this, his life was so morally outstanding that he was called *ṣādiq* (the truthful) and *amīn* (the trustworthy) by his people. Each and every person of his nation was ready to bear witness that he was unflinching and incontestable in his honesty and trustworthiness and that he could never lie. Even after being designated as a prophet, his people at all instances always bore witness to these aspects of his character even though they had become his dreadful enemies.

When for the first time he received divine revelation and he expressed his worry to his wife on this experience, she while comforting him said: “By God! Allah will never humiliate you because you are always kind to your kin and are always truthful and you bear the burdens of others; you earn for the poor and are generous to guests and help those in distress.”<sup>65</sup>

He never sought revenge from anyone for his ownself. So much so, even after subduing his greatest foes, he told them: “You are free, and I will not take any action against you.”<sup>66</sup>

His life was an unrivalled example of selflessness. The Quraysh offered him wealth, leadership and even their headship but he totally declined them and said: “If people place the sun on one hand of mine and the moon on the other, I will not give up

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65. *Bukhārī*, No: 4953; *Muslim*, No: 403.

66. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār al-Jayl, 1411 AH), 74.

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my stance.”<sup>67</sup>

As the head of the Islamic state in Madīnah, he led the simplest of lives. In spite of this great change in his circumstances, he did not change his standard of living by the slightest.

In short, he was an outstanding person in every sphere and period of his life. Not a single example can be quoted in known history, in which a person in his practical life so perfectly adhered to the ideologies and objectives he set for himself. Waḥīd al-Dīn Khān, a celebrated scholar of contemporary times, says: “So lofty was he as a human being that if he had not been born, historians would have written that a person who has such a personality as described above can only exist in fantasy and not in reality.”<sup>68</sup>

With this character and disposition, he called upon his people to profess true faith in God and in the Hereafter; however, they refused to accept it. He warned them that he is not merely a prophet (*nabī*), he is a messenger (*rasūl*) also and has been sent by God to set up a miniature Day of Judgement in this world for his people if they deny him even after being convinced of his veracity. This miniature judgement will be in line with and of the same sort which was delivered to the people of Noah (sws), Lot (sws), Shu‘ayb (sws), Ṣāliḥ (sws) and Hūd (sws) by their respective messengers.

This was an extra-ordinary declaration. It meant that those who reject him would be punished by God and those who profess faith in him would necessarily prevail in the land of Arabia. When this declaration was sounded, except for a few close companions, he had no other supporters. Later also, he faced perilous times during the course of his struggle. His companions had to migrate to Abyssinia to seek refuge from the hostility of their enemies; they had to vacate Makkah forever and when they reached Madīnah, the whole of Arabia united to eliminate him and his message. Means such as power, money, propaganda and internal conspiracies were adopted to sabotage his mission. Every instant it seemed that enemies would be able to overpower and seize him. In these circumstances, it was very improbable

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67. Ibn Ishāq, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2004), 196; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d.) 474.

68. Waḥīd al-Dīn Khān, *Madhhab awr Jadīd Challenge*, (Lahore: al-Maktabah al-Ashrafiyyah, n.d.), 143.

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that he would be able to prevail over his enemies; however, the Qur'ān in every situation assured him that he is the messenger of God and, in spite of all this antagonism, God will have him prevail over his enemies:<sup>69</sup>

بُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ هُوَ  
الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ  
الْمُشْرِكُونَ (٦١ : ٨-٩)

They seek to extinguish the light of God with their mouths and God has decided that He will perfect His light, much as the disbelievers may dislike it. It is He who has sent forth His messenger with guidance which is the religion of truth so that he may have it prevail over all religions [of Arabia], much as the idolaters may dislike it. (61:8-9)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادِّثُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ فِي الْأَذَلِّينَ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا  
وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٥٨ : ٢٠-٢١)

Indeed those who are opposing Allah and His Messenger are bound to be humiliated. The Almighty has ordained: "I and My Messengers shall always prevail." Indeed Allah is Mighty and Powerful. (58:20-21)

The Baytullāh was a sign of leadership for the people to whom the Prophet (sws) was sent. They were its custodians. No one could even imagine that one day he would remove them from its custodianship and the leadership of the Quraysh would one day be humbled before him. This was because of the extent of influence they commanded in Makkah and in its whereabouts. However, right at the instance they were planning to turn him out of Makkah, the Qur'ān declared:

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ إِنَّ شَانِئَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ (١٠٨ : ١-٣)

Upon you [O Prophet!] have We bestowed this abundance of

69. See also: 6:4-5, 66-67, 158; 10:13, 102-103; 11:8; 13:40-41; 17:77, 18:57-58; 27:71-72; 37:171-173; 40:51, 77-78; 43:41-42; 46:35; 48:22-25, 28; 54:43-45; 92:21; 93:5; 94:5-6.

good [this House of Ours]. So pray only for your Almighty and offer sacrifice only for Him. Indeed, it is this enemy of yours who is rootless: none of his followers will remain. (108:1-3)

Then these concise words were explained and after naming Abū Lahab, the biggest foe of his call, the Qur'ān asserted:

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ سَيِّئَلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ  
لَهَبٍ وَامْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ (١١١ : ١-٥)

The hands of Abu Lahab have been broken and he himself has perished. Neither did his wealth benefit him nor the [good] he earned. Soon shall this man [of glowing countenance] be put in a glowing Fire and [with him] his wife also such that [in Hell] she will be carrying firewood on her back [for her own self]; [like a slave woman], there will be a twisted rope round her neck. (111:1-5)

What would happen after this? The Qur'ān mentioned each and every phase with great clarity: The help of God would come and Makkah would be conquered and the Prophet (sws) would see from his very eyes his people entering the folds of Islam in multitudes:

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا فَسَبِّحْ  
بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا (١١٠ : ١-٣)

When comes the help of God and that victory [which We have promised you O Prophet!] and you see men embrace the religion of God in multitudes, extol His glory while being thankful to Him and seek His forgiveness. For, indeed, He is ever disposed to mercy. (110:1-3)

At another instance, the words are even more clear:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا  
اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ  
مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ

فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٥٥:٢٤)

God has promised those of you who professed belief and did good deeds that He would grant them political authority in the land the way He granted political authority to those who were before them and He would strongly establish [here] their religion He chose for them, and replace their fear by peace. They will worship Me and serve none besides Me, and he who again rejects after this, will indeed be among the disobedient. (24:55)

These were not the words of a human being which have all the chances of not being materialized. They were the words of God which were spoken by His messenger. Thus they materialized and became part of history – in fact created history which has no parallel in the annals of this world. Consequently, the help of God arrived, the rule of the Prophet (sws) was established in Madīnah, the battle of Badr ensued and all hostile and antagonistic enemies of the Prophet (sws) were killed in it.<sup>70</sup> Abū Lahab did not take part in the battle in an effort to save himself from torment. However, just seven days after the battle of Badr, this prediction of the Qur’ān was fulfilled word for word and this leader of the Banū Hāshim was killed by plague. And such was the condition of his dead body that no one came near it till three days after his death. Ultimately, his body got decomposed and a stinking smell started to come out from it. Eventually, his corpse was placed near a wall and covered with stones.<sup>71</sup> Makkah was conquered, the custodianship of the Baytullāh was transferred to the Muslims, the rituals of the prayer and animal sacrifice were specifically offered for the Almighty only after the Baytullāh was cleansed of the idols, most Arabs became Muslims and every one saw with his very eyes people entering the folds of Islam in multitudes as predicted by the Qur’ān. Consequently, Islam found a hold in the society, the *sharī‘ah* of God was enforced and thenceforth no other religion held dominance in Arabia. After this, people who still insisted on denial were

70. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1411 AH), 263-272.

71. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Ihyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d. ), 479.

vehemently told in 9<sup>th</sup> AH at the occasion of the grand *hajj* that once the sacred months pass, they shall have to face punishment and shall be executed where found.<sup>72</sup> After the death of the Prophet (sws), his successors conquered all the countries to whose heads the Prophet (sws) had written letters calling them to Islam. In these letters, he had told them that if they wanted peace they should accept Islam because after the truth has been communicated to them by the Messenger of God, they will have to live in subjugation and that their own independent states could no longer persist. Among these countries were those of Rome and Iran also about whose mutual conflict the Qur'ān, at one instance, had predicted that though the Romans have been subdued by the Iranians, soon they will subdue the Iranians and this amazing prediction of the Qur'ān was fulfilled word for word as were the other predictions it made.<sup>73</sup>

### The Signs

When will the Day of Judgement come? The Qur'ān has made it clear that no one except God has knowledge of this. Only He knows when it will come and He has not disclosed this matter even to any of His prophets and angels (7:187, 20:15, 41:47). However, the signs and portents which will signal its advent are mentioned in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth and also in previous divine scriptures. Some of these signs are very general and others are in the form of specific incidents and happenings. The signs of this first category are not mentioned in the Qur'ān. Only the Ḥadīth literature mentions them. Of the signs of the second category too, only one is mentioned in the Qur'ān: the onslaught of Gog and Magog. Therefore, this only is the certain sign. Other signs which are generally known in this regard are found in narratives which the scholars of Ḥadīth technically regard as *ṣaḥīḥ*. Some of these signs have already manifested themselves and others, if their ascription towards the Prophet (sws) is correct, shall definitely manifest themselves in future.

The signs of the first category relate to the moral degradation that will appear in the whole world before the Day of Judgement. Thus it is reported that knowledge will be lifted, ignorance will increase, fornication, drinking and killings and lootings would

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72. The Qur'ān, 9:5.

73. The Qur'ān, 30:1-6.

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become rampant so much so that innocent people will be killed; women will outnumber men to the extent that the affairs of fifty women will be entrusted to one man; only evil people will exist in this world and it will become devoid of people who take God's name.<sup>74</sup>

Of the signs of the second category, the most important is the onslaught of Gog and Magog. The Qur'ān says:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ وَهُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ وَاقْتَرَبَ  
الْوَعْدُ الْحَقُّ فَإِذَا هِيَ شَاخِصَةٌ أَبْصَارُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِي غَفْلَةٍ  
مِّنْ هَذَا بَلْ كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (٢١ : ٩٦-٩٧)

Until the time arrives that Gog and Magog are let loose and they launch an onslaught from every hill and the certain promise of the Day of Judgement nears its fulfillment then behold that the disbelievers shall stare in amazement; At that time, they will say: "Woe be to us! We remained indifferent to it; in fact, we have wronged our souls." (21:96-97)

Gog and Magog are from the descendents of Noah's son Japeth who inhabited the northern areas of Asia. Later, some of their tribes reached Europe and after that settled in America and Australia. In the book of Ezekiel, they are called the leaders of Russia, Moscow and Tobalsac (Rush, Meshech and Tubal are present day Russia, Moscow and Tubalsac):

The word of the LORD came to me: Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Rush, Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him. (Ezekiel, 38:1-2)

Son of man, prophesy against Gog and say: This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Rush, Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you from the far north. (Ezekiel, 39:1-2)

It is evident from the revelation of John the Baptist that the onslaught of Gog and Magog will begin sometime after a

74. *Bukhārī*, Nos: 80-81; *Muslim*, Nos: 375, 6785, 7304.

thousand years have passed on the advent of Muḥammad (sws) as a Prophet. At that time, they would be surrounding the earth from all sides. When the disorder they would spread reaches its culmination, fire will descend from the heavens and the tremors of the Day of Judgement will begin:

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves<sup>75</sup>. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. (Revelation 20:7-9)

This same period of time is ascertained by the signs which the Prophet (sws) mentioned in a question posed to him by Gabriel when he came to him in human form to instruct people. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

أن تلد الأمة ربتها وأن ترى الحفاة العراة العالة رعاء الشاء يتطاولون في  
البنين (مسلم ، رقم: ٩٣)

One sign is that a slave-lady will give birth to her mistress and the second is that you will see these indigent [Arab] shepherds walking about bare-footed, bare-headed trying to compete one another in making tall buildings. (*Muslim*, No: 93)

The second of these signs is very obvious. Every person can see how it has manifested itself in Arabia ever since the last century. However, people have generally found it difficult to determine what is implied by the first of these signs. It is very evident to me: its implication is that slavery as an institution shall stand abolished. Both these events have taken place simultaneously. Viewed thus, these two predictions absolutely determine the period of proximity of the Day of Judgement.

The signs which will manifest after these two have been

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75. “the camp of God’s people” is a reference to Madīnah, and “the city he loves” is a reference to Makkah. So evident are these allusions that anyone acquainted with the style of divine scriptures and with the history of these two cities cannot fail to decipher them.

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mentioned by the Prophet (sws) at one instance and these include the onslaught of Gog and Magog. He is reported to have said:

إن الساعة لا تكون حتى تكون عشر آيات خسف بالشرق وخسف بالمغرب وخسف في جزيرة العرب والدخان والدجال ودابة الأرض وأجوج ومأجوج وطلوع الشمس من مغربها ونار تخرج من قعر عدن ترحل الناس وريح تلقى الناس في البحر (مسلم ، رقم: ٧٢٨٦)

The meaning of this narrative is that these are the ten signs of the Day of Judgement and unless they appear, the Day will not come. These signs are:

1. The sinking of the earth in the East.
2. The sinking of the earth in the West.
3. The sinking of the earth in the Arabian peninsula.
4. Smoke; this could refer to a great atomic explosion also.

5. *Dajjāl*; This is an adjective meaning “a great deceiver”. It has also been referred to as *al-masīh al-dajjāl*. The implication is that before the Day of Judgement, a person will falsely claim to be Jesus (sws) and while making use of the notion of the return of Jesus (sws) found in Muslims, Jews and Christians will deceive people through some of his magical powers. It is mentioned in some narratives that he would be blind in one eye and his deception would be so evident to the believers that it would be as if they would see disbelief written on his forehead.<sup>76</sup>

6. A land animal which will probably be born directly from the earth, the way all creatures were created directly in the beginning.

7. The onslaught of Gog and Magog; this has already begun and is gradually going towards its culmination.

8. The rising of the sun in the West.

9. A fire that will rise from a pit of the Yemenite city of Eden and drive the people from behind.

10. A wind that will blow people away into the sea.

Besides these, the advent of Mahdī and that of Jesus (sws) from the heavens are also regarded as signs for the Day of Judgement. I have not mentioned them. The reason is that the narratives of the advent of Mahdī do not conform to the

76. *Bukhārī*, Nos: 1882, 3439, 7131; *Muslim*, Nos: 425, 7363, 7375.

standards of Ḥadīth criticism set forth by the *muḥaddithūn*. Some of them are weak and some fabricated; no doubt, some narratives, which are acceptable with regard to their chain of narration, inform us of the coming of a generous caliph;<sup>77</sup> however, if they are deeply deliberated upon, it becomes evident that the caliph they refer to is ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz who was the last caliph of the early history of the Muslims. This prediction of the Prophet (sws) has thus materialized in his personality word for word. One does not need to wait for any other Mahdī now. As far as the narratives which record the advent of Jesus (sws) are concerned, though the *muḥaddithūn* have generally accepted them; however, if they are analyzed in the light of the Qur’ān, they too become dubious.

Firstly, the personality of Jesus (sws) has been discussed in the Qur’ān from various aspects. The Qur’ān has commented on his *da‘wah* mission and his personality at a lot of places. The cataclysm that will take place on the Day of Judgement is also a very frequently discussed topic of the Qur’ān. The advent of a celebrated prophet of God from the heavens is no small an incident. In spite of the fact that there were many instances in which this incident could have been mentioned, we find that there is not a single place in which it is mentioned in the Qur’ān. Can human knowledge and intellect be satisfied at this silence? One does find this hard to digest.

Secondly, the Qur’ān has recorded a dialogue of God with Jesus (sws) which will take place on the Day of Judgement. During the course of this conversation, the Almighty will ask him about the real sphere in which the Christians had gone astray: the divinity of Jesus (sws) and Mary. He will ask Jesus (sws) if it was as per His instructions that he had told people to deify himself and his mother whilst leaving aside God. In response to this question, among other things, Jesus (sws) will say that he instructed his people in the very manner he was asked by God and that as long as he remained among them he watched over what they were doing and that after his own demise he was not aware of what good or evil they did and that after his death it was God who watched over them. In this dialogue, one can clearly feel that the last sentence is very inappropriate if Jesus (sws) had also come in this world a

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77. *Muslim*, No: 7318.

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second time. In such a case, he should have responded by saying that he knew what happened with them and that a little earlier he had gone to warn them of their grievous faults. The Qur'ān says:

مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ  
شَهِيدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتَ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ  
شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (١١٧:٥)

Never did I say to them except what You commanded me to do: “Worship Allah my Lord and your Lord,” and I was a witness over them while I dwelt with them. When You gave death to me, You were the Watcher over them and You are a witness over all things. (5:117)

Thirdly, in one verse of the Qur'ān, the Almighty has disclosed what will happen to Jesus (sws) and his followers till the Day of Judgement. This is an instance in which the Almighty has stated what was to happen to Jesus (sws) and his followers till the Day of Judgement; sense and reason demand that here He should also have disclosed his second coming before the advent of this Day; however, we find no such mention. If Jesus (sws) had to come, why was silence maintained at this instance? One is unable to comprehend any reason for it. The verse is:

إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ  
فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ  
فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٥٥:٣)

“O Jesus! I have decided to give death to you and raise you to Myself and cleanse you from these people who have denied [you]. I shall make those who follow you superior to those who reject faith till the Day of Judgement. Then to Me you shall all return and I shall give My verdict in what you have been differing in.” (3:55)

### The Events

How will the Day of Judgement come about? The details of what will ensue at the advent of this day are mentioned in the Qur'ān at a number of places. What will happen to the heavens

and the earth and what will befall the sun and the moon, the planets and stars and what situation will be faced by the creatures of the earth and how people will emerge from their graves to gather around their Lord is all portrayed in the Qur'ān. A study of pre-Islamic Arabic literature shows that Arabs relished parables more than similes. The Qur'ān while taking this into account has portrayed the picture of the cataclysm that will take place on that day in such a graphic manner that the reader feels and sees all these events happening before him. The sequence of events which will take place as per the Qur'ān is the following:

1. People would be deeply involved in their life-routine. Some would be on the way, some in the market, some in a gathering and some at their homes and no one would have the slightest inkling that this whole world is about to be disrupted when suddenly the trumpet would be blown and the upheaval of the Day of Judgement would take place:

وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَفَزِعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ  
اللَّهُ (٨٧:٢٧)

And remember the day when the trumpet is sounded and all who are between the heavens and the earth will be horror-struck except for those whom God will choose to spare. (27:87)

The word *al-ṣūr* has been translated as “the trumpet”. What actually would be the nature of this trumpet of course cannot be determined, and as such it belongs to the *mutashābihāt* category. However, one can have some idea of what it implies because the word trumpet does give us an idea of what it would be. In order to delineate the system and affairs of His world, the Almighty uses words found in the vocabulary of human beings which are akin to their own system and affairs. The purpose is to take us closer in our imagination to what is being discussed and the purpose is not to make us understand the exact nature and form of what is being discussed the way it is found in this world. In ancient times, the trumpet was sounded during royal processions or to herald an attack. It is evident from the Qur'ān that a similar thing would be sounded to announce the advent of the Day of Judgement. As the Qur'ān (81:4-5) portrays, this sound would strike panic and fear

among the creatures of this earth causing people to even forget their dearest possessions and animals of the forest would gather together in utter confusion. Finally, all creatures of the earth would pass out because of this horrific sound:

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ  
(٦٨:٣٩)

And the trumpet shall be sounded and all those between the heavens and the earth shall fall down fainting except those whom God shall spare. (39:68)

At various places, the Qur'ān has graphically depicted what will happen to the creatures of this earth when this commotion ensues. When after the first earthquake tremor the second tremor comes, the state of the earth would be much like a ship which is being swept by the tumultuous waves around it and whose inhabitants as a result would be trembling with fear with eyes horror-struck and they would be so overcome and stricken by the situation as if the horrific punishment of God has driven them mad. The Qur'ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ  
يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ  
مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمَلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَى  
وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَى وَلَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ (٢٢: ١-٢)

O People! Have fear of your Lord. The cataclysm of the Day of Judgement is very dreadful indeed. The day you see it, on that day every suckling mother shall forget her infant and every pregnant female shall cast her burden, and you shall see mankind in a state of inebriation though they would be not inebriated but it would be because God's punishment would be so grave. (22:1-2)

2. It would be at this time when great disruption in the physical world will begin. Such great commotion would ensue all over this universe that mountains would be crushed to grains, seas would burst forth and all galaxies and heavenly bodies would be displaced and would fuse into one another. So great would this

all-embracing upheaval be that minds cannot imagine it and words cannot describe it. This turmoil would continue for a period known only to God:

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ ... عَلِمْتَ نَفْسَ مَا أَحْضَرْتَ (٨١: ١-٦، ١٤)

At the time when the sun ceases to shine, and when the stars are bedimmed, and when the mountains are set moving, and when camels, ten-months pregnant are left untended, and when wild beasts [forgetting all their enmities] are herded together, and when the seas burst forth ... then [O people! each one of you] will know what he has brought forward. (81:1-6,14)

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ (٨٤: ١-٥)

That day when the sky is rent asunder, and obeys its Lord's command as is befitting for it. And when the earth is stretched out and casts out all that is within her and becomes empty and obeys its Lord as it should do. [That will be the day when you shall meet your Lord]. (84:1-5)

3. After this, the second phase will begin. In the Qur'ān this phase has been called the phase in which mankind will be re-created. Thus from this very turmoil, a new physical world will emerge:

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ وَعَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا إِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ (٢١: ١٠٤)

Remember the day when We shall roll up the heavens like a scroll wrapped in parchment. Just as We brought about the first creation, so will We do it again. This is a promise liable on us and We shall assuredly fulfill it. (21:104)

In what manner would this next phase come about? The Almighty has told us that all heavenly bodies including this



earth, sun, moon and galaxies made of billions of stars and planets would change into a earth and heavens having new physical laws: (يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ) (48:14) (keep in mind the day when the earth is changed into a different earth and the heavens also, (14:48)). According to the Qur'ān, at this juncture, the trumpet would be sounded once again after which mankind would rise from their graves and would advance to the court of justice set up by their Lord for them:

ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَىٰ فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ (39:68)

Then the trumpet will be blown again and they shall suddenly rise and look around them. (39:68)

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَإِذَا هُمْ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَنْسِلُونَ (36:51)

And the trumpet will be blown and all of a sudden they will rise up from their graves and hasten to their Lord. (36:51)

### Phases and Abodes

The phases through which a person passes and the abodes in which he is lodged during his journey to meet his Lord are also mentioned in the Qur'ān. Slowly but surely, he is moving to encounter his Lord. The first phase of this journey is death. After a short stay in this world, every single person passes through this phase. There is no escape from it. The Almighty has said: (كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ) (3:185). It can come in the morning and it can come in the evening; one may taste it even before one's birth or right after birth. It can come in childhood, in youth or in old age at any time and every person has to submit to it whether he likes it or not. According to the Qur'ān, at death, the real personality of a person which is called the soul by the Qur'ān and which is independent of his body is separated from his mortal being. The Almighty has told us that initially also it was given to man at the culmination of his mortal being which took place after passing through various phases and today also it is given to it once about 120 days elapse on the embryo.<sup>78</sup> Death is the name of separating this personality of a

78. The Qur'ān, 32:6-9; 23:12-14; *Bukhārī*, No: 7454; *Muslim*, No: 6723.

person from his body. A specific angel – who has a whole staff of angels – is deputed for this task.<sup>79</sup> He formally comes and claims a person's soul just as a government official entrusted for collecting something discharges his responsibility:

قُلْ يَتَوَفَّاكُمْ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ (١١:٣٢)  
 Tell them: “The angel of death deputed over you shall claim your souls. Then to your Lord shall you be returned.” (32:11)

At this instance, what happens to a person is also depicted in the Qur'an. The souls of people who have deliberately rejected their prophets even after being convinced of their veracity are claimed by the angels whilst they hit and strike these disbelievers and at this very juncture of death they inform them that a terrible torment awaits them because of their evil deeds:

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ (٥٠:٥١-٥٠)

And if you could see the angels when they take away the souls of these disbelievers whilst striking them on their faces and their backs and [say:] “Taste now the torment of the fire! This is the punishment for the deeds you committed with your own hands and [you should know that] God does not do the slightest of injustice to His servants.” (8:50-51)

On the other hand, people who profess faith in their prophets and are absolutely without any stain of disbelief or polytheism and have also not infringed upon the rights of others or been oppressive in any manner are presented with salutations from the angels and given glad tidings of Paradise:

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ يَقُولُونَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٣٢:١٦)

To those whose souls the angels claim such that they are

79. The Qur'an, 4:97; 6:93; 16:28.

virtuous, they say: "Peace be on you. Enter [this] Paradise as a reward of your deeds." (16:32)

After this, are the abodes which are called Barzakh, Maḥshar, Hell and Paradise. The various details about these places which are mentioned in the Qur'ān are outlined below.

### Barzakh

This word is an arabicized form of the Persian word *pardah* and is used for the boundary beyond which the dead shall be kept till the Day of Judgement. It is, so to speak, an obstruction that prevents them from coming back. (وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (١٠٠:٢٣)) (beyond them is a barrier till the Day they are raised [back to life], (23:100)). The "World of Barzakh" is a term which has originated from this word. In some Ḥadīth narratives, the word "grave" has been figuratively used for this world. Here mankind would be alive but this life would be without any corporal form. Here, the awareness of the soul, the nature of emotions, observations and experiences would be similar to the one found during dreams. Thus it has been mentioned in the Qur'ān that when the trumpet is sounded, this dream will end and the wrongdoers, while suddenly finding themselves alive with bodies and souls in the large field of Maḥshar, will cry out: (يَا وَيْلَنَا مَنْ بَعَثَنَا مِنْ مَرْقَدِنَا هَذَا (٥٢:٣٦)) (who has roused us from our resting-place?) (36:52)). It is evident from the Qur'ān that people whose fate would be absolutely clear whether they are the righteous who have remained faithful to God and to their human beings in an exemplary way or are the haughty who have rejected the truth in sheer arrogance, for them punishment and reward will begin in this world of Barzakh. The reason for this is that taking an account from them would not be required.

Examples of the first category are the Companions (rta) of the Prophet (sws) who fought with him against the forces of evil and were martyred as a result. The Qur'ān says that they are alive even though people are not aware of the nature of this life and are benefiting from the blessings of their Lord:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزُقُونَ  
فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِنْ

خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ مِنْ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ  
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣: ١٦٩-١٧١)

And [in this battle] do not in any way regard those who have been slain in the cause of God to be dead. [They are not dead]. They are alive in the presence of their Lord and are being provided for, delighted with what God has blessed them from His favours whilst receiving glad tidings about those they left behind, who have not yet joined them that [in this Kingdom of God] there is neither any fear for them nor sorrow rejoicing in God's grace and bounty and from the fact that God will not deny the faithful their reward. (3:169-171)

An example of the second category is the Pharaoh and his people who did not profess faith even after the truth had been communicated to them by Moses (sws) to the extent that they were left with no excuse to deny it. Thus as a recompense of their sin, they were punished in this world and in the world of Barzakh also they are made to see Hell every morning and evening:

وَحَاقَ بِآلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ  
السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ (٤٠: ٤٥-٤٦)

And a dreadful torment encompassed the Pharaoh's people. The Fire of Hell before which they are brought morning and evening and the day when that Hour comes it will be ordered: "Put the Pharaoh's people through a sterner torment!" (40:45-46)

It is this torment of the graves which is mentioned in certain narratives.<sup>80</sup> The Prophet (sws) has further informed us that the first question that would be asked from the people to whom he was sent was regarding his own status.<sup>81</sup> The reason for this is obvious. Once a *rasūl* (messenger) is sent to his people, it is he who becomes the only distinguisher of good and evil for them. Hence after professing faith in him, there is no need to ask anything else from any other person.

80. *Bukhārī*, No: 1379; *Muslim*, No: 7211.

81. *Bukhārī*, No: 1374; *Muslim*, No: 7216.

### The Maḥshar

The next place people would encounter is the Maḥshar. The Qur'ān says that after the trumpet is sounded the second time all mankind born from Adam (sww) till the Day of Judgement would be raised to life again. This raising to life in the language of the Qur'ān is called *ḥaṣhr*. We have already alluded to the fact that after the great upheaval on this Day, a new earth would come into existence. This raising to life would take place on that new earth. The details of the events and incidents which would take place once people are created again are as follows:

1. All mankind would be given life and would rise from their graves. Each person would be given a body and a soul. This very re-creation is called “the second life” by the Qur'ān (40:11). The previous body of each person would be replaced with a new one which would be appropriate to endure God’s blessings as well as His wrath; however, each person would have the same personality at that time as he had in this world:

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَإِذَا هُمْ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَنْسِلُونَ (٥١:٣٦)

And the trumpet will be blown and suddenly they will rise up from their graves and hasten to their Lord. (36:51)

وَقَالُوا أَإِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرُفَاتًا أَيْنَا لِمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا قُلْ كُونُوا حِجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا أَوْ خَلْقًا مِّمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ فَسَيَقُولُونَ مَنْ يُعِيدُنَا قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَسَيُنْغِضُونَ إِلَيْكَ رُءُوسَهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هُوَ قُلْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ قَرِيبًا (٥١:١٧)

And they say: “When we are turned to bones and bits of dust, shall we be raised to life again?” Tell them: “Whether you turn into stone or iron, or any other substance which in your opinion is even harder than these [even then you shall still be gathered to Us].” They will then ask: “Who will re-create us?” Tell them: “The One Who created you the first time.” At this, they will shake their heads before you and will ask: “When will this be?” Tell them: “It may well be near at hand.” (17:49-51)

2. In this second life, the abilities and powers of a person

would greatly increase. Whilst being stationed at his own place, he would even be able to see anyone he wants to however far that person may be and would also be able to converse with him. It is mentioned in the Qur'an that when a person dwelling in Paradise would remember a friend of his in the previous life, he, from where he is, would easily be able to see that friend residing in the depths of Hell:

قَالَ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُطَّلِعُونَ فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَآهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْحَحِيمِ قَالَ تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كِدْتُ  
لَتُرْدِينِ وَلَوْ لَا نِعْمَةٌ رَبِّي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ (٣٧: ٥٤-٥٧)

He will say: "Just take a peep inside." After saying this as soon as he will bend down, he will see his friend in the very midst of Hell. [Then] will say: "By the Lord! you almost wrecked me! Had not the grace of God been with me, I would have surely been among those who have been brought in seized." (37:54-57)

3. This would be a new world whose earth will be lit up with the light of God. His majesty would surround Him and angels would encircle Him. Everything would declare His praise; even criminals would reach His presence whilst declaring His praises and exaltedness:

ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَى فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا (٣٩:  
٦٨-٦٩)

Then the trumpet will be sounded again and they will suddenly rise whilst staring around them and the earth on that Day will be lit up with the light of her Lord. (39:68-69)

يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ وَتَظُنُّونَ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (١٧: ٥٢)

On that day, He will summon you all, and you shall obey Him whilst declaring His praises and exaltedness and you will think that you had stayed just for a small period. (17:52)

وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ  
بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٩: ٧٥)

And you will see the angels encircling the Throne, giving glory to their Lord and declaring His praises and judgement will be passed with fairness between people and it will be declared: "Gratitude is for God, Lord of the Universe!" (39:75)

4. On that Day, the earth and the heavens will be in God's grasp. For those who deny it in this world, this Day will be such that its severity will turn the young into old:

وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْفِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى  
عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٦٧:٣٩)

And on the Day of Judgement, He will hold the entire earth in His grasp and the heavens will be folded up in His hand. Glory be to Him! Exalted is He above those whom they associate with Him! (39:67)

فَكَيْفَ تَتَّقُونَ إِن كَفَرْتُمْ يَوْمًا يَجْعَلُ الْوِلْدَانَ شِيبًا السَّمَاءُ مُنْفَطِرَةٌ بِهِ كَانَتْ  
وَعَدُّهُ مَفْعُولًا (٧٣:١٧-١٨)

So if you deny, how then will you save yourself from the Day which shall make the children grey-haired. The heavens are ripping apart with its burden and the promise of God [undoubtedly] is certain to be fulfilled. (73:17-18)

The deeds done by people will be evident from their very faces. Everyone will be only thinking of his own self and will have no concern for others. A brother will not respond to the wailings of his own brother and sons will be heedless to the cries of their parents; men will forget their wives and children:

فَإِذَا حَاءَتْ الصَّاحَةُ يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ وَصَاحَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ لِكُلِّ  
أَمْرٍ مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُسْفِرَةٌ ضَاحِكَةٌ مُسْتَبْشِرَةٌ وَوُجُوهٌ  
يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرَةُ الْفَجْرَةُ (٨٠:٣٣-٤٢)

So when the deafening blast comes [ask them: where will they go]. On that Day, man will flee from his brother and from his mother and his father, his wife and his children. Every one will be concerned with his own self. Many a face on that day will

be bright, smiling and rejoicing, and many a face on that day will be gloomy, veiled in darkness. They will be of these very disbelievers, these wrongdoers. (80:33-42)

The wrongdoers on that day will be dragged by their forelocks. They will follow the very leaders there who they used to follow in the previous world. These wrongdoers will be recognized from their faces and will be brought from their graves in such a manner that one angel will be pushing from behind and another will be marching along him to bear evidence against him. They will be asked to prostrate in order to humiliate them but they will not be able to do so:

يُعْرِفُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ بِسِيمَاهُمْ فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِي وَالْأَقْدَامِ فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٥٥ : ٤١-٤٢)

The wrongdoers will be recognized through their looks; then they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet [and thrown into Hell]. At that time, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? (55:41-42)

فَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَا أَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيدٍ يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ وَبِئْسَ الْوَرْدُ الْمَوْرُودُ (١١ : ٩٧-٩٨)

But they followed what the Pharaoh said to them even though what he said to them was not right. On the Day of Judgement, He shall stand in front of his people and shall lead them into the Fire. What an evil place to reach where they have reached. (11:97-98)

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ ذَلِكَ يَوْمُ الْوَعِيدِ وَجَاءَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَعَهَا سَائِقٌ وَشَهِيدٌ (٥٠ : ٢٠-٢١)

And the trumpet shall be sounded. That day is the one in which Our threats will manifest and every soul shall come such that there will be one who drives it on and another to bear evidence. (50:20-21)

يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ وَيُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ خَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ



تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ وَقَدْ كَانُوا يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ وَهُمْ سَالِمُونَ (٤٣-٤٢ : ٦٨)

They must remember the day when a great tumult will take place and they will be called to prostrate and they will not be able to do so. Downcast shall be their looks; ignominy shall cover them. [These wrongdoers! their backs have now become stiff whilst] they also used to be called to bow in adoration when they were capable of it. (68: 42-43)

5. Mankind on that day will be divided into three groups. The foremost in faith, the righteous and the wrongdoers. The second of these two groups will be given their record in their right hand, whilst the hands of the third of these groups will be tied and they will be given their record from behind in their left hand:

وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً فَأَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ وَأَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ  
مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ أُولَئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (١١-٧ : ٥٦)

And on that Day, you will be divided into three groups: the companions of the right hand so what to speak of the [good fortune] of the companions of the right hand and the companions of the left hand so what to speak of the [misfortune] of the companions of the left hand and the foremost are then the foremost. They indeed are the near ones. (56:7-11)

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُو بُيُوتًا وَيَصْلَى سَعِيرًا (١٠-١٢ : ٨٤)

And he whose record is handed out to him from behind his back [into his tied up hands] will call for death and shall enter the blazing fire of Hell. (84:10-12)

6. The reality behind the differences between people shall be disclosed. When they will be brought forth for accountability, each and every deed of theirs will be justly presented before them and with the weight it carries. At that time, neither will friendships avail people nor any sale/purchase, ransom or intercession will be of any use to anyone. No one will be wronged. Every thing will stand clear in the utmost manner:

إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٤٨:٥)

To God shall you all return and then He shall inform you about that in which you were differing. (5:48)

وَتَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ  
مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ (٤٧:٢١)

And on the Day of Judgement, We shall set up the scales of justice so that no man shall in the least be wronged. And if a person has done a deed as small as a grain of a mustard seed We shall bring it forward and sufficient are We for taking account. (21:47)

وَأْتَقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ  
مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ (٤٨ : ٢)

And guard yourselves against the day when no soul shall be of use to another in anyway and no intercession shall be accepted and no compensation be taken from it nor will people be helped. (2:48)

7. Witnesses shall be presented so that the wrong-doers are left with no excuse to deny their sins. Prophets of God shall also be presented as witnesses. Even the tongues, hands, feet, ears, eyes and skins of people will bear witness. After this, judgement shall be passed:

وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَقُضِيَ  
بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٣٩ : ٦٩)

And the earth shall be lit up with the light of her Lord, and the register of accounts shall be laid open and all the prophets shall be called and those also who were given the responsibility of bearing witness, and people shall be judged with fairness such that none shall be wronged. (39:69)

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٤ : ٢٤)

On the day when their own tongues, hands, and feet will bear witness to their deeds. (24:24)

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا مَا جَاؤُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ وَقَالُوا لِجُلُودِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ خَلَقَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٤١: ٢٠-٢١)

So that when they come near it, their ears, their eyes, and their very skins will bear witness to what they had been doing in the previous world. “Why did you bear witness against us?” they will ask their skins, and their skins will reply: “God, who gives speech to all things, has given us speech.” And it was He who created you the first time and now to Him are you being returned. (41:20-21)

8. It is at this instant that the deities whom the polytheists worshipped shall regard them as liars, leaders shall disown their followers and the eternal enemy of man – Satan – shall also renounce his followers and regard them as sinners:

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا شُرَكَاءَهُمْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ شُرَكَائُنَا الَّذِينَ كُنَّا نَدْعُو مِن دُونِكَ فَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلَ إِنَّكُم لَكَاذِبُونَ (١٦: ٨٦)

And when they who indulged in polytheism [in this world] will see their deities, they will say: “Lord, these are the deities whom we called up whilst leaving you.” At this, they [– the deities –] will retort: “You surely are liars!” (16:86)

إِذ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ (٢: ١٦٦)

At that time when those who were followed will disown their followers and will face punishment and the ties which now unite them will suddenly break asunder. (2:166)

وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعَدَ الْحَقُّ وَوَعَدْتِكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتِكُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَن دَعَوْتُكُم فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُمُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنفُسَكُم مَّا أَنَا بِمُصْرِحِكُمْ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِحِي إِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَا أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِن قَبْلُ إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (١٤: ٢٢)

And after the judgement has been passed, Satan will say to

them: “Indeed, true was the promise which God made with you and I never fulfilled the promises I made with you. And I had no power over you. I only called you and you responded to my call. Do not now blame me, but blame yourselves. Here I cannot address your grievances nor can you address mine. I have already denied your making me a partner [with God]. Indeed, it is for such wrong-doers that there is a grievous penalty.” (14:22)

## Hell

Hell is the abode of punishment for the sinners. It is also a place in which their sins are cleansed and purged. It has been mentioned in the Qur’ān with various names. At some places, it has been called Jahannum and at others Saqar. It has also been called al-Sa’īr, al-Nār and al-Nār al-Kubrā. It is the worst of abodes according to the Qur’ān (2:126, 206; 3:151; 14:29). The Almighty has informed us that it will have seven doors and for each door there will be a certain share of sinners (15:44). If the sins which the Qur’ān has called deadly are enumerated, they can be categorized as seven (17:22-39). Satan tries to induce people into one or all of these sins in order to lead them to Hell. In all probability, each of these seven doors of Hell are for these seven deadly sins. The extent and size of Hell is also intended to be made evident from this description. It will be so huge that it will have seven doors through which sinners will be made to enter in accordance with the sins they had committed. It has also been stated in the Qur’ān that nineteen angels are in charge of it:

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سَقَرٌ لَا تُبْقِي وَلَا تَذَرُ لَوْ اِحْتِ لِبَيْشَرٍ عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ (٢٧-٣٠)

And what do you know what this Hell is? It will not show mercy nor spare anyone. It scorches the skin. [Deputed] over it are nineteen. (74:27-30)

At various places, in the Qur’ān, it has been mentioned that people who deliberately associate partners with God and profess disbelief in Him shall be punished eternally. Similar will be the punishment of a Muslim who kills another Muslim deliberately. People who disobey the laws of inheritance are also promised this doom. This fate will also await those who have committed some similar crimes. No doubt, there will be people who will be

taken out of Hell once they complete their term of punishment; however, it is evident from the Qur'ān that in order to punish the previously mentioned criminals, Hell will always be kept intact. In spite of this, it can be expected that one day, Hell too shall cease to exist. The reason for this is that its torment is a threat from the Almighty and not a promise and the Almighty certainly has the right to reduce the punishment of these sinners or turn them into dust and ashes and eternally bury them in Hell:

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَقُّوا فَنَفِي النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ  
وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ (١١: ١٠٦-١٠٧)

Then the damned shall be cast into the Fire; here they will groan and scream like donkeys and shall abide in it as long as the heavens and the earth [of that world] exist unless your Lord ordains otherwise. Indeed, your Lord is able to accomplish what He wants to. (11:106-107)

The Qur'ān also mentions the spiritual and corporal punishments which will be meted out to the sinners in Hell: There will be the punishment of the fire (22:9). This fire will scorch skins (74:29), disfigure faces (23:104), pluck out skins (70:16), reach the hearts (104:6-7) and its flame will be larger than castles (77:32); neither will people die nor receive any comfort in it (35:36; 87:12-13); such boiling water will be given to them for drinking that it will cut their intestines to pieces (47:15); this boiling water will also be poured on their heads (22:19); they will be made to drink the fluid in which wounds are washed (69:36-37; 78:24-25); thorny bushes and the tree of *zaqqūm* will be the food they will be given and this tree will boil in their stomachs like the boiling of scalding water (88:6; 44:43-46); it will neither nourish them nor satisfy their hunger (88:7); they will wear garments of fire (22:19), their necks will have yokes and their feet will be in chains (40:71; 76:4); everything will become a yearning for them (19:39). The greatest punishment will be that sinners will not be able to see the Almighty nor receive any attention from Him (83:15). The Almighty will not even like to look at some of them (3:77):

إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا لِلطَّاغِينَ مَابَا لَابِثِينَ فِيهَا أَحْقَابًا لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا

بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَعَسَاقًا جَزَاءً وَفَاقًا إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ حِسَابًا  
وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كِذَابًا وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ كِتَابًا فَذُوقُوا فَلَنْ نَزِيدَكُمْ إِلَّا  
عَذَابًا (٧٨ : ٢١ - ٣٠)

Indeed, Hell lurks in ambush, a place for the transgressors. They will abide therein for ages. Nothing cool will they taste therein nor will they have anything to drink save hot water and pus. A recompense according to their deeds. These people are those who did not expect any account [of their deeds] and had recklessly denied Our revelations, [whereas] We have counted all their doings by writing them down. So taste [you O people!] We shall only increase torment for you. (78:21-30)

### Paradise

This is the abode of the righteous. Jesus (sws) has called it: "The Kingdom of Heaven."<sup>82</sup> The Qur'ān has also called it Rawḍah (garden), Firdaws (orchard), Jannah al-Na'im (orchard of blessings), Jannah al-Khuld (orchard of eternal life), Jannah 'Adan (orchard of eternal abode) besides some other similar names. It is as expansive as the Universe, and is a place of eternal bliss where in contrast to this world, there is no concept of death with life, sorrow with happiness, worry with satisfaction, hardship with ease and torment with blessings. Its comfort is eternal, its bliss endless and its days and nights unending. Its peace is forever, its happiness will never cease and its majesty is everlasting and its perfection immaculate:

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ سَعِدُوا فَفِي الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا  
مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ عَطَاءٌ غَيْرَ مَجْدُودٍ (١٠٨ : ١١)

And as for the fortunate, they shall abide in Paradise and remain there as long as the heavens and the earth [of that world] endure, unless your Lord ordain otherwise. As a favour never ending. (11:108)

Believers will be led into it with such majesty that before them

82. *Matthew*, 5:19-20; 7:21.

and behind them and on their right and on their left – everywhere there will be angels of God. These angels will escort them in their company to Paradise where its guards will welcome them with salutations and greetings:

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا حَتَّى إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا  
وَقَالَ لَهُمْ حُرَّتُّهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ (٧٣:٣٩)

And those who feared their Lord shall be led in throngs to Paradise. Until when they draw near, its gates will be opened for them and its keepers will say to them: “Peace be to you; rejoice and enter into it to dwell forever.” (39:73)

The Qur’ān has portrayed the life of Paradise by depicting the life of royal and regal people so that man in this transient world is able to have some idea of the blessings of Paradise. Hence it is for this purpose that lush green orchards, flowing streams, luxuriant gardens, towering castles, very expensive utensils, slaves wearing golden waste-bands, thrones made of gold, clothes of satin and brocade, goblets of crystal, blissful gatherings and stunning virgins are mentioned:

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا حَدَائِقَ وَأَعْنَابًا وَكَوَاعِبَ أَتْرَابًا وَكَأَسًّا دِهَاقًا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ  
فِيهَا لَعْوًا وَلَا كِذَابًا جَزَاءً مِنْ رَبِّكَ عَطَاءً حِسَابًا (٧٨: ٣١-٣٦)

However, for the God-fearing, there is great success on that Day. Gardens [to dwell in] and grapes [to feast on] and blooming maidens of equal ages [to be charmed with] and overflowing cups [to be drunk in their companionship]. They will not hear therein any idle talk or any false accusation. This will be the reward from your Lord – exactly according to their deeds. (78:31-36)

فَوَقَّاهُمُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا وَجَزَاهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً  
وَحَرِيرًا مُتَّكِنِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا وَلَا زَمَهْرِيرًا وَذَانِيَةً  
عَلَيْهِمْ ظِلَالُهَا وَذُلَّتْ قُطُوفُهَا تَذَلِيلًا وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِآنِيَةٍ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ  
كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرَ قَوَارِيرٍ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ قَدَرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ

مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّى سَلْسَبِيلًا وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُونَ إِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَّنثُورًا وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ تَمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمَلَكًا كَبِيرًا عَلَيْهِمْ ثِيَابٌ سُنْدُسٌ خُضْرٌ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٌ وَحُلُّوا أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا إِنَّ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيَكُمْ مَشْكُورًا (٧٦: ١١-٢٢)

So Allah [their Lord] saved them from the affliction of that Day and bestowed them with freshness and joy, and as reward for being patient [in this world] gave them Paradise [to live in] and robes of silk [to wear]. They will be reclining in it on thrones and will feel neither the heat of the sun nor the cold of the winters. The shades of its trees will bow down over them and the clusters of their fruits will be within their easy reach. And dishes of silver [to eat from] and goblets of crystal [to drink from] will be passed around them. And the crystal will be of silver which they [—their attendants—] will have aptly arranged [for every service]. [Besides this], they will be given to drink a wine flavoured with Zanjabīl. This is also a spring therein called Salsabīl. And they will be attended by boys graced with eternal youth; they will be running around. When you see them, you will think that they are pearls scattered about. And wherever you look, you will see great bliss and a kingdom glorious [such] that even the outer garments of [the dwellers of paradise] will be of green silk and brocade and satin. And they were adorned with bracelets of silver [and then they reached the place where] their Lord entertained them with pure wine. Indeed, this is a reward of your deeds and [congratulations to you that] your endeavours have been acknowledged. (76:11-22)

Similarly, the Qur'ān has said that the dwellers of Paradise will get whatever they desire (41:31; 43:71; 50:35). Their hearts will be cleansed from envy and malice; like brothers they will sit on thrones facing each other (7:43; 15:47). They will never be turned out from Paradise nor will they ever get fed-up and want to come out of it and nor will they face any sort of difficulty there (15:48; 18:108; 35:34-35). The blessings and favours of Paradise will come before them every time with a new taste, pleasure and beauty. When the same fruit will be given to them again and again, each time it will have a new taste, a fresh



outlook and provide them with a unique pleasure (2:25). Purity and cleanliness will abound everywhere (56:25). Neither will there be any regret of the past nor any fear of the future (2:62, 112, 262, 274, 277). Most of all, the dwellers of Paradise will be blessed with the pleasure of God: He will be pleased with them and in return the whole atmosphere will resound day and night with cries of exaltation, gratitude and praise for the Lord from these dwellers (9:72, 10:10, 19:62, 22:24, 39:73).

The Prophet (sws) has further explained that the dwellers of Paradise shall eat and drink but will neither spit nor need to urinate or defecate; neither will there be any fluid coming out of the nose nor will there be any saliva and cough; even their sweat will smell of musk; they will live in such luxuries that they will encounter no hardship; neither will their clothes rot nor will these people lose their youth. A caller will call: there is such health here which has no illness, there is such life here which has no death, there is such youth here which has no old age. The faces of people will be shining like the moon and the stars.<sup>83</sup>

All this portrayal is to bring these sites closer to our comprehension. What exactly is their reality? The best answer to this question is the one given by the Prophet (sws) that in Paradise the Almighty will provide His servants with that which eyes have not seen, ears have not heard and never has any person ever been able to imagine what is in it.<sup>84</sup> On a similar note, the Qur'ān too has said:

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٧:٣٢)

Then no one knows what bliss has been kept hidden for him as a reward for his deeds. (32:17)

83. *Bukhārī*, No: 3327; *Muslim*, Nos: 7149, 7157.

84. *Bukhārī*, No: 3244; *Muslim*, No: 7132.